

You're grounded!

If you hear a parent saying 'You're grounded!' to her or his teenage daughter or son then it means that they probably did something bad and now they can't go out to see their friends or do what they want to do. They have to stay at home. The expression dates back to the 1950s and was used as a military term when pilots were unable or not allowed to fly. When a plane is grounded, it can't fly. And for several days in April, planes in many countries were grounded when a cloud of volcanic ash spread over Europe.

The result of the shutdown was dramatic. Around 95,000 flights were cancelled, leaving hundreds of thousands of travellers stranded in different countries. The total cost to the airlines is estimated at over £2 billion and many countries are still counting the cost of lost tourism over the six-day period. In London alone, the loss has been calculated at £100 million.

While some people decided to extend their holidays and stay a few more days lying by the hotel pool, others were determined to get home using other forms of transport. The British actor John Cleese spent £3,300 on a taxi journey from Oslo to Brussels while others tried to find places on buses, trains and ferries. For many people it was possibly the most memorable journey they had ever made.

The shutdown had repercussions in many different areas of life. The movement of food was stopped; people in hospitals had to wait longer for transplants; schools had to close because they had no teachers; many world leaders couldn't attend the funeral of President Lech Kaczynski in Poland; and film stars couldn't attend premieres for films such as *Iron Man 2*, a film about a super-hero who can fly.

The effects of planes being grounded made many of us think about a world without planes. People living near airports were suddenly able to listen to the sound of birds singing instead of the constant noise of planes landing and taking off. Alain de Botton, the philosopher and writer, imagined a future world without air travel in which airports would become museums.

Most of us know someone who was affected in some way by the events of April. We have all become so used to taking planes for business or for pleasure, for travelling to the other side of the world, or for a weekend break in a neighbouring country. Maybe it's a positive thing to be reminded that it can all be taken away from us without warning. In this case it was a volcanic eruption under the Eyjafjallajökull glacier in Iceland that told the world: You're grounded!

1 Match the numbers from the text with the correct phrase.

2	4	6	3,300	95,000	2 billion
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- 1 a film sequel _____
- 2 a taxi fare _____
- 3 flights cancelled _____
- 4 lost revenue _____
- 5 period of days _____
- 6 month _____

2 Complete the sentences with one of the options.

- 1 If a young person is grounded, they must _____.
- a do something bad
- b stay at home
- c work harder

- 2 If a plane is grounded, it must _____.
- stay on the ground
 - fly home
 - be dangerous

- 3 The shutdown was caused by _____.
- volcanic ash
 - pilots
 - stranded travellers

- 4 The volcanic eruption took place _____.
- in the mountains of Iceland
 - in Eyjafjallajökull
 - under a glacier

3 Match the sentence halves.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 People living near airports ... | a couldn't go to an important ceremony. |
| 2 A British actor ... | b lost money from tourism. |
| 3 Many world leaders ... | c could suddenly hear birds singing. |
| 4 A famous philosopher ... | d took a taxi to Brussels. |
| 5 London was one of the cities that ... | e imagined a world without aeroplanes. |
| 6 Thousands of travellers ... | f couldn't return home. |

4 Write the verbs in the past passive.

- Pilots _____ to fly. (not allow)
- Planes in many countries _____. (ground)
- Thousands of flights _____. (cancel)
- In London the loss at £100 million _____. (calculate)
- The movement of food _____. (stop)
- Most of us know people who _____. (affect)

5 Answer the questions.

- Do you know anyone who was affected by the shutdown?
- Do you live near an airport? Did you notice any change during the shutdown?
- Do you think the world would be a better place without planes?
- In what ways would a world without planes be different?
- A journey or holiday when things go wrong is often the most memorable. Can you remember a journey or holiday when things went wrong?

Glossary

ash (*noun*) – the grey powder that remains after something is burned

determined (*adjective*) – not allowing anything stop you doing what you want to do

glacier (*noun*) – a very large mass of slow-moving ice

memorable (*adjective*) – easy to remember

neighbouring (*adjective*) – near

repercussion (*noun*) – a bad effect that something has

spread (*verb*) – to affect or cover a larger area

stranded (*adjective*) – left somewhere with no way of going anywhere else

transplant (*noun*) – a medical operation in which a new organ is put into someone's body