

# Ancestors help the living

## Language

Facts and figures, giving reasons

## Level

Pre-intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level A2–B1 and above)

## Comment

This eLesson looks at the growth in availability and popularity of mammoth ivory. It is arguably an ethical alternative to elephant ivory, although not without its problems. Ideally this lesson can provoke a reaction to whether it is in fact ethical, but on a more fundamental level, it simply makes for an interesting, factual text.

## How to use the lesson

- 1 Start by reading out these riddles about natural materials. 1: It's a natural material; it's found underground or in rivers; it's valuable and many people wear it when they get married (gold). 2: It's a natural material; it's grown all over the world; it's made from a plant; it's very soft and white; many of us are wearing it right now (cotton).
- 2 Before giving out the worksheet, read aloud the first paragraph at a fairly slow pace, for students to absorb the words. Stop at the question *What is it?* and wait for suggestions. Give the answer. At this point show a visual / drawing of the woolly mammoth. Pre-teach *ivory* and *tusk*, pointing to the visual.
- 3 Elicit ideas about how the mammoth ivory is obtained and what it might be used for. Then students read the text and complete exercise 1. Feed back.
- 4 Give students more time to complete the second reading task in exercise 2. If you have a stronger group, let them read the facts and figures and the text once more. They should then cover the text and try to remember. Let students compare answers in pairs before whole class feedback.
- 5 The questions in exercise 3 require students to read parts of the text more closely. Take whole class feedback or simply let them check in pairs, as appropriate.
- 6 Exercise 4 is a discussion task which invites students to think of the broader implications of using ivory. If you have the facilities, show a picture of African elephants and let students think for a couple of minutes before they talk. Put students in small groups and encourage them to give fuller answers. Their response to this task may depend on their age, interest and outlook.
- 7 Students cover the text and complete the lexical task in exercise 5. These items express reasons in the same way as *because* but work differently in a sentence; *thanks to* and *because of* are followed by a noun phrase (*thanks to* usually goes with a positive idea too). *As* and *due to the fact that* are followed by a clause. For stronger students, provide further active practice with these two sentences:
  - a Carvers like ivory **because** it is an easy material to work with.
  - b African elephants are still in danger **because of** illegal poaching.

Where possible, they should use the other target words to convey the same ideas.
- 8 For homework, students could research the woolly mammoth, finding 5–10 facts for discussion the following lesson. Suggested headings: *diet, dates, habitat, size, appearance, young, differences from elephants*.

### Answer key

#### 1

Paragraph 2: d  
 Paragraph 3: e  
 Paragraph 4: c  
 Paragraph 5: a  
 Not needed: b

#### 2

Facts:

Mammoth ivory was exhibited this year at the Russian pavilion in the **Shanghai Expo**.  
**Michelle Obama** was photographed wearing a (designer) mammoth ivory necklace.  
 Siberian ivory is exported mainly to be carved in **Hong Kong and China**.  
 Most of the mammoth skeletons and tusks are in **Siberia** (north-east Russia).  
 The patterns in the ivory tell age, rather like **the rings of a tree** in a tree trunk.

Figures:

There are **three months** of the year when the ice melts, and people can locate the skeletons.  
 The mammoth tusks can reach **five metres** in length.  
 In **1989** the use of elephant ivory was banned, to stop poaching and to protect the animals.  
 Around **50,000 kgs** of mammoth ivory are currently being exported per year from Russia.  
 Good quality ivory can fetch up to **\$1,000** per kilo.  
 The mammoth skeletons, and therefore the ivory, are between **10,000–40,000** years old.

#### 3

- 1 No. Elephant ivory was more popular in the last century; the demand for mammoth ivory took a while to get (re)started.
- 2 Climate change means that the Siberian tundra, where most skeletons are, is melting.
- 3 jewellery and ornaments
- 4 They think it will re-ignite a fashion for ivory and that people will try to disguise elephant ivory as mammoth ivory.
- 5 It can tell us about the animals' age, sex, diet and also about environmental details of the time.

4 Students' own answers.

#### 5

- |                             |                          |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 as / due to the fact that | 3 thanks to / because of |
| 2 due to the fact that / as | 4 because of / thanks to |

### Related websites

The following websites might be useful, for either yourself or your students.  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2010/sep/27/mammoth-ivory-ethical-jewellery> (Michelle Obama wearing mammoth ivory)  
[http://en.rian.ru/expo\\_news/20100906/160483871.html](http://en.rian.ru/expo_news/20100906/160483871.html) (Expo 2010)  
<http://www1.american.edu/ted/mammoth.htm> (general information on the mammoth)  
<http://www.cbc.ca/technology/story/2010/09/29/f-mammoth-ivory.html>  
<http://www.mysinchew.com/node/43301?tid=10>