

A look back at 2010

2010 started tragically with a huge earthquake in Haiti, in which about 230,000 lost their lives and another one million were made homeless. Six months later in Pakistan, around 15 million people were affected by flooding. Meanwhile, Russia experienced extremely high summer temperatures and devastating forest fires; Moscow itself was covered in thick smoke. Earlier in the spring, air traffic in many European countries was also affected by clouds of ash from a volcano in Iceland.

2010 was the year in which the computer giant Apple overtook Microsoft as the world's biggest technology company. There was a continued change in the way people interact and in the way that news is spread. Social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook continued to grow: Russia's former president Vladimir Putin joined Twitter; half a billion people across the globe were said to be active users of Facebook. The year ended with the Wikileaks internet site publishing secret government and business information.

Last year was a good one for countries such as China and Brazil in economic terms; China overtook Germany as the world's leading exporter. However, countries in the Euro zone such as Greece and Ireland needed to be rescued by the EU as their economies started to collapse. Other countries' governments introduced serious cuts to help protect their own economies; in France one million people protested against pension cuts in a single day!

2010 saw the largest ever oil spill of its kind. It took place off the coast of Mexico and caused huge environmental and economic problems. This situation angered those people who want the world to use renewable sources of energy.

There were also some happy events. 33 trapped miners in Chile were freed after 69 days underground, although mining accidents in other countries such as New Zealand had less happy endings. In South Africa, a couple yachting were lucky to escape with their lives when their yacht was capsized by a whale. The whale was also unhurt!

At the Large Hadron Collider in Switzerland scientists continued their exciting experiments to understand the laws of nature, achieving a temperature of 10 trillion degrees Celsius when smashing particles together.

For sports enthusiasts, 2010 was the year of the World Cup in South Africa, the first time it had ever been held on that continent. The competition was won by Spain, which was another 'first'. It was also decided that Russia (2018) and then Qatar (2022) would be future World Cup hosts – yet more 'firsts'. Meanwhile, preparations for the Olympic Games for 2012 in London were said to be on schedule.

Finally, for Harry Potter fans, the first Potter theme park opened in June 2010 in the US, while the eighth and final film is to be released this year, completing 10 years of Harry Potter films.

1 In groups brainstorm what you can remember about events in 2010 in relation to the topics below.

sport	positive events	the economy	the environment
science	natural disasters	entertainment	technology

2 Read the text very quickly and match the paragraph to the topic heading above.

3 Read the text again and find out if you had the same ideas.

4 According to the text, what happened in the following countries?

Chile _____	Mexico _____
China _____	Pakistan _____
France _____	Russia _____
Germany _____	South Africa _____
Greece / Ireland _____	Switzerland _____
Haiti _____	UK _____
Iceland _____	US _____

5 In pairs, make as many questions as you can about the text. Then ask another pair to answer them, without looking.

6 Without looking at the text, see if you can remember the actual verb or verb phrase used in the text, to replace the words in italics with the same meaning.

- 1 The year started tragically with a huge earthquake in Haiti, in which about 230,000 *died* (_____) and another one million were made homeless.
- 2 Russia *had* (_____) extremely high summer temperatures and devastating forest fires.
- 3 China *went ahead of* (_____) Germany as the world's leading exporter.
- 4 Countries in the Euro zone such as Greece and Ireland needed to be *saved* (_____) by the EU as their economies started to *break down* (_____).
- 5 Other countries' governments *brought in* (_____) serious cuts to help protect their own economies.
- 6 2010 saw the largest ever oil spill of its kind. It *happened* (_____) off the coast of Mexico.
- 7 The eighth and final [Harry Potter] film is to be *made available* (_____) this year.

7 Choose one of the following topics and prepare to give a mini talk.

- Why was last year an important or memorable one for you?
- Why was last year an important or memorable one for your country?
- Why was last year an important or memorable one for the world for a reason not mentioned in the text, eg arts, science, nature, health?

Glossary

affect (*verb*) - to change or influence something, often in a negative way: *the disease affects many parts of the body*

ash (*noun*) - the grey powder that remains after something has burned

collapse (*verb*) - to suddenly fail or stop existing: *the country's economy is collapsing*

devastating (*adj*) - causing a lot of harm or damage

interact (*verb*) - if people interact, they communicate with and react to each other

miner (*noun*) - someone whose job is to dig for coal, gold, diamonds, etc from a mine

overtake (*verb*) - to become better, bigger or faster than someone or something else

spill (*noun*) - an amount of liquid that has accidentally fallen out of its container: *an oil spill*

schedule (*noun*) - a plan of activities or events and when they will happen. If something is **on schedule**, it means that it is at the time it was planned