The majestic and the cute

Language

Wh- questions, lexical chaining, homonyms

Level

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

Comment

This eLesson is a jigsaw reading which looks at the conservation of pandas and tigers, in the context of some recent good news for both animals. Students at lower levels may need more time and support with the text and tasks.

How to use the lesson

1 If possible, present two pictures (or short internet video clips) of pandas and tigers, to find out what students know about the animals: where they live, what they eat, what threats they face, etc. With lower level students, elicit key ideas and words like *bamboo, habitat, extinction, protect, threaten, deforestation, captivity.* Take feedback and then elicit some adjectives to describe both animals. At this point, elicit or teach the words *majestic* and *cute*. Students say which adjective refers to which animal.

2 Tell students that they are going to find out information about one of the animals. Put them into A/B pairs and explain that it is a jigsaw reading. Ask them to look at the grid in exercise 1, explaining that they will only be able to complete one column. Less confident readers could work with same-text partners, to check their answers before the information exchange. Monitor as students work and assist where necessary.

3 Prepare students to exchange information (exercise 2). Ask them to turn over the text and think about whether they can explain their information clearly just from their notes. When ready, put students in mixed pairs to listen and take notes. Take feedback on any areas of interest or difficulty.

4 Students work in pairs to make the questions for the answers given in exercise 3. If you have a strong group, you could challenge them to attempt the task initially without looking at the text. Take feedback.

5 Exercise 4 is an oral fluency exercise. Let students think for a few minutes; encourage them to think of reasons to support their answers. Put students in twos or threes for the discussion. Even if you think that your students will find these points difficult to respond to, give them the opportunity to speak. Monitor for interesting ideas and language.

6 Exercise 5 focuses students on an aspect of discourse – lexical chaining – where different words are used as (near) synonyms, to avoid repetition. If necessary, do an example together first. Omit this task if you do not think it is appropriate for your group.

7 Exercise 6 is another lexis task, focusing on the use of homonyms. The words are in the original texts but with a different meaning. First write the words in bold on the board and discuss their meaning in the texts. Then students work in pairs to decide what the words mean in the sentences in exercise 6. They can check their answers in a dictionary, to avoid the need for whole class feedback.

8 This topic lends itself well to further research on these or similarly threatened animals, leading to presentations or poster displays. You could also have a 'balloon' debate, where students have to choose which endangered animal should go, out of a group of 5–8 choices.

Answer key

1, 2

	Tigers	Pandas
1	3,200–3,500	1,000–1,600
2	Human activity (construction, deforestation. poaching), climate change.	Food source (bamboo forests) is disappearing because of building and agriculture. Breeding is difficult as pandas are no longer all in the same place.
3	Tigers have been found high up in the Himalayas; a tiger conference has promised to protect them and double numbers by 2022.	Panda centres are breeding pandas in captivity very successfully and there are now around 300 captive pandas.
4	More money has been promised and countries are going to work together to protect tigers.	Bamboo forests have been bought; at one centre carers wear panda suits (to avoid human contact) because the young pandas may later be released into the wild.

3 Possible answers:

1 How long have pandas been around?
2 How many pandas are there in captivity worldwide?
3 At what height were tigers recently found to be living?
4 Where was the tiger conference?
5 How many panda births are twins?
6 How many days a year can a female panda become pregnant?
7 How many tigers were there a hundred years ago?
8 What percentage of the pandas' habitat has been destroyed in recent decades?
9 What do the carers at one centre wear?
10 How many tigers are left in the wild?

4 Students' own answers.

5 These words are used to avoid repetition and to add colour and sophistication to the text.
Tigers (para 2): huge cats, majestic animals
Pandas (para 3): (twins/twin), panda cub, babies, young pandas

6

1 to poach an egg / to poach an animal (both verbs)
2 something suits (verb) a person / you can wear a suit (noun)
3 you bear something negative (verb) / a bear is an animal (noun)
4 the middle of something / a place used for a particular purpose or service (both nouns)
5 the soil / the planet (both nouns)
6 even, not hilly (adj) / standard (noun)

Related websites

The following websites might be useful, for either yourself or your students.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-11828922
http://modrnghanaweb.com/india-named-most-dedicated-country-towards-tiger-conservation-health-103094.htm
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-11368475 (includes video clip)
http://www.globalanimal.org/2010/11/02/record-number-of-pandas-born-in-captivity-this-year/21496
http://news.sky.com/skynews/Home/World-News/Baby-Boom-Hope-To-Save-Giant-Pandas-In-China/Article/201010415771164 (includes video clip)
http://www.panda.org.cn/english/index.htm