

The Climate Connection



Lesson plan

Storm coming!

Extreme weather, reducing global heating, news and media

Online teaching lesson plan

Suitable for use with secondary learners of English

CEFR level B2 and above

#TheClimateConnection

www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection

Storm coming!

Topic

Extreme weather, reducing global heating, news and media

Learning outcomes

- Use vocabulary and collocations related to extreme weather events
- Listen for specific information in news reports about extreme weather events
- Give some examples of how we can reduce chances of the climate becoming more extreme
- Participate in a role play to prepare the public for an extreme weather event

Age and level

13-17 (B2)

Time

Approximately 95 minutes or two shorter lessons

Materials

- Presentation (PDF or PowerPoint)
- Audio (MP3)
- You will also need an online noticeboard tool, e.g. Padlet. Before the lesson, create a noticeboard and copy the link so that learners can post there.

Introduction

This lesson is part of the Climate Action in Language Teaching series of engaging lessons about the climate emergency and biodiversity loss. It explores different topics connected to the crisis.



In this lesson, learners will learn extreme weather vocabulary and read and listen to news reports about weather events. They then collaborate in groups and role play an emergency meeting to prepare their region for an extreme weather event.

This lesson would be suitable as a supplement to a unit on weather, geography or the environment; after a recent extreme weather event; or near World Meteorological Day on 23 March.

Procedure

1. Task 1:

Personalising questions and vocabulary review (10 mins)

- Display **slide 2** with Task 1. Ask question 1 with the whole class, then elicit one or two examples of 'extreme weather' to check that learners understand the term. Put learners in breakout rooms in pairs or small groups to discuss questions 2-4.
- After a few minutes, bring the class together again and nominate learners to answer questions 2-4. If necessary, explain the terms.
 - A blizzard is a snowstorm with strong winds.
 - Hurricanes, cyclones and typhoons are names for the same phenomenon, but that hurricanes form over the North Atlantic and Northeast Pacific Oceans, cyclones over the South Pacific and Indian Oceans, and typhoons over the Northwest Pacific Ocean.
 - Smog is a mixture of smoke and chemicals that reduces visibility. It is typical over cities and industrial areas.
 - A tornado is a column of violently rotating air which extends from the base of a storm cloud to the Earth's surface.
 - A tidal surge is a flood on the coast caused by an abnormal rise in the sea level because of a storm.
- End the discussion by identifying the most common weather problems in the learners' country or region. Learners may suggest other problems e.g. extreme cold.

Note: If learners are finding question 3 difficult, you might ask them to research the question 'Are weather patterns changing?' or refer them to an interactive site such



	<p>as https://www.carbonbrief.org/mapped-how-climate-change-affects-extreme-weather-around-the-world.</p>
<p>2. Task 2: Introduce weather-related collocations (10 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display slide 3 of the presentation. Explain that this is an extract from a news report about a weather event. • Ask learners to say which of the weather events listed in Task 1 the extract is talking about (drought). If necessary, point out the clues ('exceeding 40° ... chance of rain ... destroy harvests'). The gaps in the extracts are places. Ask learners to write in the chat box where in the world this event could be happening (e.g. India, Africa). Slide 4 of the presentation gives the answer. • Display each extract on slides 5–16 in turn and discuss the answers after each one. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Drought – many parts of the world are affected, e.g. India, Africa. 2. Flooding – many parts of the world are affected, e.g. Europe, Latin America, Bangladesh. 3. Forest fires – many parts of the world are affected, e.g. Australia, China, the US. 4. Snowstorms/blizzards, e.g. Canada, Northern Europe and Russia, Japan, etc. 5. Smog, e.g. cities in China, Iran 6. Tornadoes, e.g. the US or Canada 7. Tidal surges, e.g. Pacific Islands, Caribbean
<p>3. Task 3: Vocabulary search (10 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display slide 17 with all seven extracts on and the expressions in bold. Explain that the words and expressions in bold in the extracts are useful for talking about extreme weather. • Refer learners to words and expressions a-h on slide 17. Explain that learners should find synonyms for each word and expression a-h in the extracts. They should try to match them with words and expressions in bold. Make sure they understand that there are expressions in bold that they do not need for this exercise.



- Ask them to type their answers into the chat box with the letter, e.g. a = poor ocean conditions.
- When the learners have identified all eight words and expressions, display the answers on **slide 18**, matched by colour. Give learners a minute to make a note of the synonyms.

Answers: a. poor (ocean) conditions, b. threat, c. hazardous, d. caused a great deal of damage, e. exceeding, f. blocked, g. evacuate, h. heavy rains/snowfall

**4. Task 4:
Listen for
specific
information
(15 mins)**

- Display **slide 19**. Tell the learners that they are going to listen to three news reports from different parts of the world. Focus their attention on the three questions and ask them to make notes for each report as they listen.
- Before you play the audio, explain that these reports come from different parts of the world, so they will hear a range of accents. Reassure them that they don't have to understand every word to successfully complete the task.

Audio script (3:06 minutes)

[Spoken by Indian/Bangladeshi speaker of English]

Farmers in Eastern India are feeling the effects of another bad monsoon this month. Overall, June was 19 per cent down on average rainfall, and July looks as if it's going to continue affecting the east and central provinces of the country. Although not likely to reach the devastating conditions of 2032, a poor harvest is expected, and the Indian economy is likely to be affected.

In 2032, almost half of India, home to more than 500 million people, experienced drought-like conditions, and the accompanying heatwave killed many people in the eastern state of Bihar. Many more vulnerable families are being forced to leave their lands and take shelter in relief camps.

Since the 2020s, which were much drier than normal, there has been on average five per cent more rain on average in India than before 2020. The rain



is falling at unusual times of year, causing damage to crops. But this year, it looks likely that we are returning to the other extreme: drought conditions.

[Spoken by Russian speaker of English]

Areas of eastern Siberia are experiencing unusually high temperatures, leading to wildfires across the region. While it isn't uncommon for these areas of tundra to burn in summer, scientists say there is reason to be worried. Marianna Vinogradov, professor in environmental geography at the Moscow School of Economics, said that the size of the fires has not been seen since 2027.

The fires are further north than usual, and the explanation, unsurprisingly, is human-caused global heating. The Arctic region is experiencing rising temperatures at more than twice the speed than the rest of the planet.

The good news is that these fires are a long way from towns or villages. What is not so good is that they will only make the situation worse in future years. It seems the fires are burning through 'peat', which is soil that keeps the carbon locked in the ground. When they burn, carbon stores emit greenhouse gases, which further exacerbate global warming, leading to more fires.

[Spoken by Arabic speaker of English]

The Red Sea coast of Saudi Arabia is under several centimetres of snow this morning as the region south of Mecca experiences snow for the second time this winter. Families were out enjoying the cold snap. One group of children decided that a snowman was boring and built a snow camel instead.

It's not all fun, though. The local traffic police are warning drivers to be especially careful in the snowy conditions.

Although snow has always been a regular feature of the northern mountain regions, the first record of snow in this part of the country wasn't until 2021. Since then, despite hotter summers in recent years, Saudis have enjoyed regular snowfall in winter in many parts of the country. As with most other parts of the world, weather is becoming more extreme and less predictable because of human carbon emissions.



- Elicit the answers from the learners. Ask which news reports surprised them most. Check that learners understand that these are imaginary news reports from the future, but that they are all based on real events that have happened already.

Answers:

First report: drought (monsoon failing) in India, sometime after 2032.

Second report: tundra fires in Siberia in Russia, sometime after 2027.

Third report: snowfall in Saudi Arabia, sometime after 2021.

All the weather events are caused by effects of climate change (global heating).

- You may decide to explore the listening experience with different accents. Ask the learners which accents they found easiest and hardest to understand, and which they liked listening to the most. Also ask them which of these accents they may hear again in the future when using English. Explain that because English is the main language for international communication, it is important to get experience listening to many different accents.

**5. Task 5:
Listening for
more detail
(10 mins)**

- Display **slide 20**. Tell the class that they are going to listen again, and that this time they must decide which event is the answer to each question a–f. They should note the name of the country.
- Go through the answers with the class, nominating different learners for each question. If they struggle to understand the detail, consider showing them the audio scripts to read along as they listen the second time. The scripts are available on **slides 23-25**.

Answers:

- Russia (a long way from towns or villages)
- India (vulnerable families forced to leave lands ...)
- India (the Indian economy is likely to be affected)
- Saudi Arabia (families were out enjoying the cold snap ... children ... built a snow camel)



	<p>e. Saudi Arabia (snow ... a regular feature of the northern mountain regions, the first ... snow in this part of the country wasn't until 2021)</p> <p>f. Russia (exacerbate global warming, leading to more fires)</p>
<p>6. Task 6: Discussion (10 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display the two questions on slide 21 and give the class 5 minutes to discuss them. Put learners in pairs or small groups in breakout rooms. • As they discuss, visit each breakout room, listening to the discussion, responding and making suggestions. • You may decide to conduct the discussion as a whole class instead if you think that some learners will find it hard to answer the questions. Invite some pairs / groups to share their answers. <p>Possible answers:</p> <p>The Indian news is worrying because it affects so many people, many of them poor, so the number of deaths could be high; the Russian news is worrying because it is making global heating worse (this is known as a 'feedback loop', where the consequence of a rise in temperature causes fires which release more carbon, thus making global heating worse); the Saudi news is worrying if we accept that the snow is a sign that weather is getting more extreme in many parts of the world.</p> <p>This is a big question, but the short answer is that we need to burn less carbon (coal, gas and oil) in order to slow down global heating. There are many things we can do on a personal level (fly less, eat less meat, use public transport more, etc.), but more important is to put pressure on governments and corporations to stop funding fossil fuel extraction, invest in renewable energy such as wind and solar power, and encourage people to act responsibly for the future.</p>
<p>7. Task 7: Role play and group writing (30-40 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display slide 22. Tell learners that they are going to work in groups to plan communications for an extreme weather event. As a class, choose a weather event which is realistic in their region. • Explain that you will put learners into groups. The members of group 1 will play the role of police officers; the members of group 2 will play the role play of local



politicians; and the members of group 3 will play the role of emergency service planners. Members of the groups should work together to plan what they need to do to prepare the region for the event and keep everyone safe. They can search online for ideas. Put learners into breakout rooms and give each group one of the three roles (police officer, local politician, emergency service planner).

- Visit the groups and help if necessary. Examples:
 - Police officers: prepare for emergency calls; prepare to evacuate people and animals
 - Local politicians: set up a rest centre for people evacuated from homes; plan local services (e.g. transport)
 - Emergency services planner: prepare vehicles and equipment; prepare hospitals and staff
- After 10 minutes (or more if research is involved), bring the class together. Explain that they will now join different groups. Each group will have at least one representative from group 1 (police officers), group 2 (local politicians) and group 3 (emergency service planners).
- Explain that each group is now an Emergency Planning Committee. They need to discuss what is important information to communicate to the public. This could include information they need to know such as travel / evacuation, and information about what they can do to stay safe. The advice will depend on the weather event.
- Put the learners into groups and number each group. Make sure each group has at least one 'police officer', 'local politician' and 'emergency services planner'. Share the link to the noticeboard page that you have set up and tell them to write social media messages on the noticeboard. Make sure they write the number of their group at the top of each message. Open the breakout rooms.
- While learners are working, visit each group and check that they are on task and writing clear messages. Help them with language where necessary.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When they have finished, bring the class together again and display the noticeboard.• Give the class a few minutes to read the messages from the different groups. Ask them to decide which group has communicated the most effectively.
Homework	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask learners to find an article or video clip about a recent extreme weather event and read or watch it in order to report it to the class in the next lesson.

Contributed by

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