

Natural Disasters

Topic

Extreme weather and natural disasters

Aims

- To review vocabulary related to weather and natural disasters
- To practise reading skills
- To practise question formation
- To develop process writing skills
- To develop speaking skills through a debate

Age group

12 - adult

Level

B1 +

Time

60 – 90 minutes

Materials

1. Natural disasters student worksheet
2. Internet links: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/4588149.stm> - animated guide to extreme weather phenomena.
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/natural-disasters> - Guardian archive of articles about natural disasters and extreme weather.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/search?v2=true&q=natural_disasters#keypoints - Key facts about natural disasters.

Introduction

Natural disasters are constantly in the news and provide a good topic of conversation for your students, as they will all have some knowledge of the subject. Depending on where in the world you are teaching you can use events that are closer to the students' countries as a talking point. Obviously, if you are living very close to the location of a recent natural disaster you'll need to be extra sensitive to your students' feelings. To connect the topic back to the UK, you could mention the flooding of the village of Boscastle in Cornwall last summer or any floods or storms you remember.

Task 1 is a drawing dictation to introduce the topic. Task 2 is a simple sentence completion activity. Task 3 is a low level reading task using the context of a website message board. Task 4 is a higher level speaking and writing task and Task 5 is a group role play based on the idea of survival.

Procedure

1. Task 1 - Disaster dictation

Tell students you are going to describe a scene that you would like them to draw. Read out the following text: (adapt as appropriate for higher/lower levels – as long as they produce some kind of natural disaster scene, anything goes!)

“Draw three houses on the right in the middle. Each house has four windows and a door. On the roof of one of the houses there are two people and a dog. Draw two trees on the left in the middle. At the top of the picture draw some clouds. The clouds look grey and it's raining a lot. In the sky there is a helicopter. Around the houses there is water. The water touches the top windows of the house....”

Ask students to look at their pictures. Ask them what they think has happened in the scene? Answers may vary from flood, hurricane, tsunami. When they have suggested some answers ask them to think of as many different natural disaster as they can. Drill pronunciation.

2. Pictionary

Copy and cut up a set of the word cards. Divide the board in two and the students into two teams. Ask one volunteer from each team to come up to the board and show both students one of the word cards. Ask them to draw the word on the board and their team must guess what it is. The first team to guess the word wins a point. Two more students come up to draw the next word, and so on.

If your students aren't up for drawing, use the word cards for them to simply take and describe the word to the group. The student who guesses the word correctly wins the card. The student with the most cards wins.

Suggested words to use:

Hurricane	Tsunami	Tornado
Flood	Drought	Earthquake
Typhoon	Cyclone	Rescue Team
Fire fighters	Survivor	Volcano

3. Task 2 – Fact

Ask your students to read the sentences and complete the gaps with a number from the

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finding	<p>box below. Get them to do the task individually, then compare their answers in pairs.</p> <p><i>Answers:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1500 2. 500 3. 26.5 4. 10
4. Task 3- Natural disasters message board.	<p>Ask your students if they've ever read any message boards on the internet. If not, just explain that they are spaces for people to share their opinions on different topics. Ask them to read the opinions of the four people and then put them into groups to discuss the questions and write their own opinion in a message. When students have written their own message, ask them to compare their ideas to see if they agree or not.</p>
5. Task 4 – Newspaper article	<p>This is a task for higher levels. The end product of this task is a group writing, but the process of the task will generate a lot of conversation. You will need to prepare a little in advance by finding a newspaper article about a natural disaster from the internet (see link below). Read the article through before the class and take it with you into the classroom.</p> <p>Tell students that you have a newspaper article about a natural disaster. Show them the article if there's a photo or a headline that will give them some clues to use as starting points. Invite students to ask you questions about the event in the article to find out as much as possible about it. Tell them that later they are going to write about the article in a group so they should pay attention to everyone's questions and take notes. Set a time limit or a limit of the number of questions they can ask. When you think they have enough information to write a summary of the event, get the students to work in small groups. You can monitor and offer help as they write. At the end, give the students a chance to read the other groups' summaries.</p> <p>Try this link for a huge selection of articles about natural disasters: http://www.theguardian.com/world/natural-disasters</p>
6. Task 5 – Survival role play (optional)	<p>This is an adaptation of the classic 'hot air balloon debate' where a group of people decide who has to jump from a falling balloon in order to save the others. Each person has to justify why they should be saved. Give students a situation where a natural disaster has taken place and they are waiting to be rescued. As this situation is actually played out in real life all too frequently, be very sensitive to your students and depending on where you are teaching, adapt a situation accordingly to make it as realistic as you feel appropriate, but not too close to home. Assign a role to each student- you could invent more roles, ask them to think of reasons why they should survive over the others and then get them to debate in groups.</p>

Contributed by

Jo Budden