

**Е.А. ИВАНОВА**

**АНГЛИЙСКИЙ ЯЗЫК  
READING COURSE**

УЧЕБНО-МЕТОДИЧЕСКОЕ ПОСОБИЕ

**МИНИСТЕРСТВО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ И НАУКИ РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ**  
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**университет»**

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Учебно-методическое пособие предназначено для студентов IV и V курсов факультета иностранных языков, изучающих английский язык в качестве второй специальности. Пособие может быть использовано для проведения лабораторных работ по дисциплинам «Практикум устной и письменной речи на II иностранном языке (английский язык)», «Практикум профессиональной коммуникации на II иностранном языке (английский язык)», а также для самостоятельной работы студентов. Цель пособия – развить навыки чтения и говорения.

Пособие включает тексты на английском языке разнообразной тематики. Различные упражнения способствуют совершенствованию профессионально ориентированных речевых умений и навыков.

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## ПРЕДИСЛОВИЕ

Учебно-методическое пособие предназначено для студентов IV и V курсов факультета иностранных языков, изучающих английский язык в качестве второй специальности. Пособие может быть использовано для проведения лабораторных работ по дисциплинам «Практикум устной и письменной речи на II иностранном языке (английский язык)», «Практикум профессиональной коммуникации на II иностранном языке (английский язык)», а также для самостоятельной работы студентов. Цель пособия – развить навыки чтения и говорения.

Пособие состоит из двух разделов: "Reading and speaking" и "The English we speak". Первый раздел включает статьи из англоязычных газет и тексты из современных английских учебных пособий продвинутого уровня. Тематика текстов соответствует темам модулей изучаемых дисциплин и включает следующие темы: карьера и выбор профессии, Интернет и современные технологии, защита окружающей среды, проблемы современного общества, глобализация, национальная идентичность и ряд других. Второй раздел пособия включает небольшие статьи, которые знакомят студентов с современными английскими словами и словосочетаниями, а также с употреблением уже известных слов и выражений в новых контекстах.

Упражнения, предлагаемые после каждого текста, нацелены на развитие умений перевода, проверку понимания прочитанного, активизацию лексики по изучаемой теме, а также совершенствование таких видов речевой деятельности, как чтение и говорение. Часть упражнений составлена в соответствии с форматом международных экзаменов. Отдельные задания пособия направлены на то, чтобы читатели аргументированно выражали свое мнение по прочитанному материалу. В этих случаях им необходимо отрываться от текста и свободно выражать свои мысли. Поэтому такой вид работы способствует развитию спонтанной речи студентов.

Материалы учебно-методического пособия «Английский язык. Reading Course» могут быть использованы для аудиторной и самостоятельной работы студентов, а также индивидуального и домашнего чтения. Предложенные в пособии тексты и упражнения могут послужить основой для устных сообщений, диалогических высказываний, дискуссий, сочинений и т.д. Студенты могут использовать тексты пособия для подготовки к экзаменам по английскому языку, одно из обязательных заданий которых включает чтение и передачу прочитанного на английском языке.

## PART I. READING AND SPEAKING

*Read an article about social media's damaging effects on young people.*

### FACEBOOK AND TWITTER 'HARM YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH'

Four of the five most popular forms of social media harm young people's mental health, with Instagram the most damaging, according to research by two health organisations. Instagram has the most negative impact on young people's mental wellbeing, a survey of almost 1,500 14-to 24-year-olds found, and the health groups accused it of deepening young people's feelings of inadequacy and anxiety.

The survey, published on Friday, concluded that Snapchat, Facebook and Twitter are also harmful. Among the five only YouTube was judged to have a positive impact. The four platforms have a negative effect because they can exacerbate children's and young people's body image worries, and worsen bullying, sleep problems and feelings of anxiety, depression and loneliness, the participants said.

The findings follow growing concern among politicians, health bodies, doctors, charities and parents about young people suffering harm as a result of sexting, cyberbullying and social media reinforcing feelings of self-loathing and even the risk of them committing suicide. "It's interesting to see Instagram and Snapchat ranking as the worst for mental health and wellbeing. Both platforms are very image-focused and it appears that they may be driving feelings of inadequacy and anxiety in young people," said Shirley Cramer, chief executive of the Royal Society for Public Health, which undertook the survey with the Young Health Movement. She demanded tough measures "to make social media less of a wild west when it comes to young people's mental health and wellbeing". Social media firms should bring in a pop-up image to warn young people that they have been using it a lot, while Instagram and similar platforms should alert users when photographs of people have been digitally manipulated, Cramer said.

The 1,479 young people surveyed were asked to rate the impact of the five forms of social media on 14 different criteria of health and wellbeing, including their effect on sleep,

anxiety, depression, loneliness, self-identity, bullying, body image and the fear of missing out. Instagram emerged with the most negative score. It rated badly for seven of the 14 measures, particularly its impact on sleep, body image and fear of **missing out** – and also for bullying and feelings of anxiety, depression and loneliness. However, young people cited its **upsides** too, including self-expression, self-identity and emotional support. YouTube scored very badly for its impact on sleep but positively in nine of the 14 categories, notably awareness and understanding of other people’s health experience, self-expression, loneliness, depression and emotional support.

However, the leader of the UK’s psychiatrists said the findings were too simplistic and unfairly blamed social media for the complex reasons why the mental health of so many young people is suffering. Prof Sir Simon Wessely, president of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, said: “I am sure that social media plays a role in unhappiness, but it has as many benefits as it does negatives. We need to teach children how to cope with all aspects of social media – good and bad – to prepare them for an increasingly digitised world. There is real danger in blaming the medium for the message.”

Young Minds, the charity which Theresa May visited last week on a campaign stop, **backed** the call for Instagram and other platforms to take further steps to protect young users. May, who has made children’s mental health one of her priorities, highlighted social media’s damaging effects in her “shared society” speech in January, saying: “We know that the use of social media brings additional concerns and challenges. In 2014, just over one in 10 young people said that they had experienced cyberbullying by phone or over the internet.” In February, Jeremy Hunt, the health secretary, warned social media and technology firms that they could **face sanctions**, including through legislation, unless they did more **to tackle** sexting, cyberbullying and the trolling of young users.

1. *Explain the meaning of the highlighted words and phrases.*
2. *Render the article and express your opinion on the issue.*

*You are going to read a magazine article about five people who each write a personal blog. For questions 1–14, choose from the people (A–E). The people may be chosen more than once.*

**Which person ...**

1. started writing the blog as a way of improving career prospects?
2. says they use the personal blog in professional activities?



3. warns prospective bloggers about a loss of privacy?
4. mentions having certain difficulties as a teenager?
5. made a decision to improve the quality of the blog?
6. is not concerned about making errors in the blog?
7. felt no need to learn anything new before starting to write blogs?
8. believes that blogging has improved their language skills?
9. initially lacked confidence in their ability to attract readers to the blog?
10. was surprised by the response to the blog?
11. compares the ease of writing blogs to other types of writing?
12. values the fact that the blog provides a break from work?
13. remembers other people being less open about what they had written?
14. has offered other new bloggers help in starting their blogs?

### **WHY DO PEOPLE START WRITING BLOGS?**

#### **A Ann Handley**

Like many of my school friends, I used to spend hours every day writing a diary. But while they kept them hidden under their beds, I needed an audience, interaction and feedback. One day, my teacher encouraged me to join a pen friend organization and I used to write pages of fascinating detail about my teacher, my friends, my dog ... I even invented a few personalities, the details of which were far more interesting than my own life. So when one of my colleagues explained to me what blogging was all about – the frequent postings, the feedback, the trackbacks – I felt confident that I already knew all about it. I am now a marketing specialist and my blog is a business tool. But at the same time I am reliving the joy of communicating and the thrill of the conversation.

#### **B Dave Armano**

A year ago I was a professional minding my own business. When I started reading blogs, I would say to myself: 'There's so much information out there - so many smart people.' I decided to start my own blog, but I had no idea what I was doing. I was basically a nobody and I was trying to get people to listen to me. What was I thinking? But then I created a visual for my blog and before I knew it, I had all these other blogs linking to me – doing weird stuff like trackbacks. I had no idea what a trackback was, but I went from forty hits a day to close to a hundred overnight. It was amazing! That's when I stopped to think: if I wanted traffic, I needed to get some good content there, and that's what really worked for me.

### **C Carol Krishner**

It's great to have my personal blog because I feel free and if I make mistakes I learn from the experience. I'm a lecturer, and it's refreshing to be able to step outside my academic interests and into a different world. But it's interesting that when you choose topics to write about you give others hints about yourself, and people do get to know you. So it's not the thing to do if you want to remain anonymous. One of the first lessons I learnt is that the blogosphere is a genuine community. After asking a question in a blog comment about what qualities are needed in a good blog, I soon got spot-on advice from a blogger I didn't even know. Then I had an invitation to a local face-to-face blogger meet-up, which was an amazing experience.

### **D Debbie Weil**

I started my first blog exactly three years ago for a very practical reason. It was clear to me that blogs were going to become a useful tool in my future job as a journalist. I needed to know how to use this new tool, and I figured blogging myself was the quickest way to get up to speed. I learnt quickly and since then I've helped others launch their own personal blogs. The simplicity of blogging software enables me to write short entries without any problems or delays. Writing a 750-word article is a daunting task, but a quick blog entry takes less than a minute. And yet the effect is so significant – I get calls from companies saying they've read my blog and would I be available to give a presentation, for a large fee.

### **E Tristan Hussey**

Writing has been a struggle for me for most of my academic life. In my first high school year I had serious spelling problems all the time. At college, thanks to a spell checker and some practice, I did fine. In 2004, I was in an administrative job and feeling that I was only using a small portion of my skills. I had heard about this blogging thing and decided I should give it a go. I wrote one blog but deleted it after a couple of days. Then I realised that if I wanted a better job, I'd need to get good at this. So I started reading blogs, writing blogs – it was a daily ritual of reading and writing. And guess what, my writing was getting better, and, incredibly, I got noticed by employers. Today I work for a blog software company.

*You are going to read a magazine article about students who travelled around Australia alone during their long summer vacation. For questions 1–10, choose from the students (A–D). The students may be chosen more than once.*

**Which student mentions ...**

1. a daily activity that was not enjoyable alone?
2. a good way of keeping travel plans flexible?
3. appreciating not having to waste time organising practical details?
4. becoming more tolerant of other people?
5. feeling better after keeping in touch with others?
6. having doubts at the beginning of a trip?
7. liking not having to agree an itinerary with others?
8. meeting people with a similar outlook on life?
9. missing having someone to help with decision-making?
10. the advisability of going for the best accommodation you can afford?

**SOLO TRAVEL IN AUSTRALIA**

**A Phil Morston**

I remember sitting in the plane thinking to myself: ‘What have I let myself in for?’ The first few days were scary: I was all on my own on the other side of the world with nothing planned. But I soon met up with people to travel with. Of course, some you get on with, others you don’t. Some, for example, had every day planned out day in minute detail, when in practice things can change and it’s great to have the freedom to go with the flow. And that’s easy enough to do. You can take the Oz Experience bus down the west coast, jumping off whenever you want, then catching the next bus when you’re ready to move on again. Being away for a year, you do occasionally get lonely. To cheer myself up, I’d sit down and write a fortnightly email home about everything I’d been up to.

**B Leila Stuart**

Without doubt, you meet all sorts of people when travelling alone. I even made a friend on the plane out there. Some people are keener to make friends than others, of course, but if someone’s chosen to do the same type of trip as you, you’ve probably got lots of ideas in common. The advantages of a pre-planned tour are that you can get an

agency to take care of all the arrangements, which can be time-consuming to do yourself – but it does mean that you’re tied to a predetermined itinerary, which wouldn’t suit everyone. There’s also the safety aspect in terms of the places you visit often being very remote. If you go off trekking in the wilds of a foreign country alone, it could be difficult to get help if things went wrong.

### **C Danny Holt**

Travelling solo creates opportunities to meet people. There’s no substitute for sharing the experiences of the day with a companion, and being alone forces you to seek someone out. I’d never have met so many people if I’d been travelling with friends. There’s also the wonderful freedom to do what you like, when you like, without having to convince anybody that it’s a good idea. However, there are downsides; meal times are something I’ve never really got to grips with in all the years I’ve travelled alone. But my advice would be to give solo travel a go it can be very liberating. Maybe try a short trip to begin with, just in case it’s not for you. Another thing is stay in the nicest places your budget permits. Miserable hostels can really spoil a trip. And if you really are happy being anti-social, a pair of headphones can ensure the person in the next seat doesn’t bore you to death on the plane!

### **D Kerry Winterton**

Fun as it is, travelling solo also has its low points, including occasional loneliness and the pressure that you’re under to make your own mind up about everything. I chose to travel alone because I wanted to do something different, but I did miss people from home, and sometimes fell out with other travellers I’d teamed up with along the way. But I learnt to accept that some people have different attitudes to mine; that you have to put up with irritating people in hostels and accept not having as much privacy as you’re used to at home. The best thing for me about travelling alone was that it was a brilliant experience that enhanced my independence and helped me feel more self-assured. I knew I was on my own, which made me make more effort to speak to people and by doing so I made lots of great friends.

*You are going to read a magazine article about a language course. For questions 1–8, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.*

### TRAVELLING TO LEARN

Having decided in later life that it might actually be quite nice to master another language, rather than dusting off my schoolgirl French, I opted for a clean break: Spanish. Three years of half-finished evening classes later, thanks to the enthusiastic teachers efforts I could order in a restaurant and ask directions, but my conversational skills were limited to asking everybody how many brothers and sisters they had. The only true way to master a language is to live and breathe it for a period of time. I toyed with the idea of taking a language ‘immersion’ course abroad, but two little words always stopped me: home stay. Then I saw that tour operator Journey Latin America had started offering Spanish courses in Peru, amongst other places. The opportunity to realise two long-held ambitions in one holiday – to improve my Spanish and to see Machu Picchu – proved irresistible.

My misgivings evaporate the moment I am met by my home-stay family, the Rojas, at Cusco airport. They greet me warmly, like an old friend. Carlos is an optician and Carmucha owns a restaurant. With their four children they live in a comfortable house right in the centre of town. Then I’m whisked off to a family friend’s birthday party, where I understand nothing apart from the bit where they sing ‘Happy Birthday’. By the end of the evening my face aches from holding an expression of polite, but uncomprehending interest, and I fall into bed wondering what I’ve let myself in for.

The following morning, I’m off to school and get to know my new school chums. We’re aged between 19 and 65, each spending up to a month studying before travelling around Peru. We had all clearly hit it off with our new families, though one of us is a bit alarmed at the blue flame that jumps out of the shower switch in the morning, one of us has a long bus ride in to the school, and another is disconcerted to find that his host mother is actually six years younger than he is. We’re all keen to meet our teachers and see which class we’ll be joining, but after sitting the placement test, we learn that as it’s not yet high season and the school is not too busy, tuition will be one-on-one. Although some find the prospect daunting, to my mind, this is a pretty impressive ratio – though even in high season the maximum class size swells to only four pupils.

As the week unfolds, I slip into a routine. Four hours of classes in the morning, back home for lunch, then afternoons free for sightseeing. Cusco will supply anything it can to

lure the feckless student away from his or her homework. It's all too easy to swap verb conjugations for a swift beer in a bar, although it's at least three days before anybody plucks up the courage to suggest that maybe we don't have to go back to our respective families for dinner every night. Once the seed of rebellion has been planted we queue up like nervous teenagers outside the phone box plucking up the courage to ring our 'Mums' and ask if we can stay out late – all the more strange when you consider that our average age is probably thirty-three. But after one strangely unsatisfying restaurant meal, decide that true authenticity is back home at the dinner table with Carmucha. As the week wears on, a strange thing starts to happen: the dinner-table chatter, which at first was so much 'white noise', starts to have some meaning and, miraculously, I can follow the thread of the conversation. What's more, I've started to dream in Spanish!

*1. How did the writer feel after her courses of evening classes?*

- A** proud of what she'd learnt so far
- B** frustrated at her slow rate of progress
- C** critical of the attitude adopted by her teacher
- D** unable to perform simple tasks in the language

*2. What put the writer off the idea of doing an 'immersion' course?*

- A** having relatively little time to devote to it
- B** the thought of staying with a host family
- C** her own lack of fluency in the language
- D** the limited range of locations available

*3. The word 'misgivings' refers to the writer's*

- A** reasons for choosing Peru for her trip.
- B** first impressions of the city of Cusco.
- C** plans to do more than learn the language.
- D** doubts about her decision to come on the trip.

*4. How did the writer feel after the party she attended?*

- A** upset that people assumed she could speak Spanish
- B** confident that she was beginning to make progress
- C** unsure how well she would cope during her stay
- D** worried that she may have seemed rude

5. *What did the writer discover when she met her fellow students?*

- A** Some were less happy with the arrangements than she was.
- B** They would all be studying together for a fixed period.
- C** Some were much older than the teachers at the school.
- D** They did not all like their host families.

6. *The word 'daunting' suggests that the writer's fellow students viewed one-to-one lessons as*

- A** a disappointing change of plan.
- B** good value for money.
- C** an unexpected bonus.
- D** a difficult challenge.

7. *A 'feckless' student is one who*

- A** plans study time carefully.
- B** is easily distracted from studying.
- C** completes all homework efficiently.
- D** balances study with other activities.

8. *How did the writer feel when her fellow students suggested a night out together?*

- A** embarrassed by their immaturity
- B** thinks her hosts are too rebellious
- C** amused by their behaviour
- D** unwilling to take part

*Read an article about people's awareness of air pollution in London.*

#### **BRITISH PEOPLE UNAWARE OF POLLUTION LEVELS IN THE AIR THEY BREATHE**

People across the UK are underestimating the impact of the air pollution crisis in their local areas, according to a new survey. Almost two thirds of respondents said they were concerned about the issue of air pollution, but only one in 10 said they thought the air they breathe is bad.

Last week the Guardian revealed that there are 802 educational institutions in the capital where pupils as young as three are being exposed to illegal levels of air pollution that can cause serious long term health problems. And government statistics show 38 out of 43 UK “air quality zones” breach legal limits for air pollution.

Friends of the Earth, which carried out the latest survey, said that despite the growing evidence many people – particularly outside London – were still unaware of the dangers of air pollution. “With only 1 in 10 British adults rating their air quality as poor despite swathes of the country breaking legal limits for air pollution, it seems the message about the scale and danger of air pollution isn’t getting through,” said Oliver Hayes, a Friends of the Earth air pollution campaigner. “Often you can’t see it or smell it, but it’s there – and air pollution is risking the health of an entire generation of children.”

To coincide with the findings Friends of the Earth has launched what it says will be the “biggest ever citizen science air pollution experiment”. People can apply to the charity for clean air kits, enabling them to test the air quality where they live, and FoE will provide tips on how to avoid air pollution and what people can do to help support the campaign for clean air.

Hayes said: “Our clean air kits help people to find out about the air quality in the places they care about most: on the street where they live, where they work, where their children go to school and at the heart of their communities. The results will help us build up a localised picture of the state of our nation’s air to really bring home why everyone, from individuals to businesses and politicians, must do all they can to make the air we breathe safer.” Air pollution is linked to heart disease, lung cancer, worsening asthma and poor lung development in children and leads to the premature deaths of around 40,000 people every year in the UK.

The Friends of the Earth report coincided with a separate study for the Greater London Authority which found a much higher awareness of air pollution in the capital. It found that nine out of 10 people in London believe air pollution is at crisis levels and two thirds describe air quality in their local area as bad. It also found that every London borough has recorded illegally high levels of air pollution in the last two years. Hayes said: “Whilst Londoners are starting to understand the air pollution crisis, in part due to welcome attention from politicians and the media, outside of the capital it’s a very different story.” Friends of the Earth said it hoped thousands of people will join in the charity’s experiment so



it can create a comprehensive national air pollution picture. It said the data generated will feed into a national map which will help create a “state of the nation” report on air pollution.

1. *Render the article. Describe the “biggest ever citizen science air pollution experiment” that has been launched by Friends of the Earth.*

2. *How do you think your country would compare with regard to the problem touched upon in the article above?*

*You are going to read an article about plastic bottle recycling schemes.*

### **COULD A MONEY-BACK SCHEME CLEAN UP THE UK'S PLASTIC BOTTLE PLAGUE?**

More than 4m plastic bottles a week could be prevented from littering streets and marine environments in Britain if authorities adopted the kind of **deposit-return schemes** that operate in at least a dozen other countries, according to new evidence.

A report for the last parliament that was never published suggests there could be a dramatic reduction in the number of bottles littered if people paid a deposit that would be **refunded** if they returned used bottles. Dominic Hogg, chairman of the environmental consultants Eunomia, who produced the report for the environmental audit committee, said: “We need to address the significant impact of litter in the UK and to cut down on the sources of plastic entering the **marine environment**. “A growing number of private companies are getting the message that it’s not good for business to be a brand that despoils the beaches and pollutes the oceans,” he said. “A deposit scheme will generate higher quantities of material of higher quality for recycling, with attendant benefits for the global climate.”

The calls for such a scheme come as recycling rates in Britain fell to 44% last year after flatlining for five years, according to Keep Britain Tidy. More than half of the 35m plastic bottles sold in Britain every day are not collected for recycling but instead are left as litter or put into landfill. Recycling rates for plastic bottles in Britain stand at 57%, compared with more than 90% in countries that operate deposit return schemes such as Germany, Norway and Sweden.

Coca-Cola in Britain and Europe has **U-turned** on deposit schemes and now supports adoption in the UK, after pressure from Greenpeace. “We believe a new approach is

needed,” Coca-Cola said in a report to the environmental audit committee, before its inquiry into plastic bottles was dropped after the dissolution of parliament.

In Australia, users say the contrast between states with deposit schemes and those without is stark. Nina Springle, who lives in Victoria, said one thing you notice when entering from the neighbouring state of South Australia – which operates the country’s longest-running bottle refund scheme – is “you can see garbage as soon as you cross the border”. “There is a marked difference in the environmental landscape. In Victoria there’s a marked increase in the amount of plastic pollution that you see with the naked eye.” New South Wales and Queensland are introducing coordinated schemes in December this year and July 2018 respectively. Western Australia will introduce a scheme in 2018 too, and the system will be harmonised across all states.

In Finland a small deposit – 40 cents for a 1.5 litre plastic bottle – is added to the price and consumers can return the bottles to specialist bottle banks in supermarkets with a barcode reader, which allows them to collect the money back as they drop the bottle. Similarly, in Norway, supermarkets often install “reverse vending machines” that scan barcodes and give consumers vouchers against their shopping or make a donation to charity in return for bottles.

In Britain, concerns about a deposit scheme have been raised by local authorities who fear that the removal of plastic bottles – a high-value recycled product – from kerbside collections could make their own schemes uneconomical to run.

Detractors say that, while some countries with schemes achieve high levels of recycling, others have rates that are similar to or lower than Britain – 52% in Oregon and 61% in Hawaii – and that improving traditional kerbside collections is the best way to boost recycling rates.

Stuart Foster of Recoup, which is funded by manufacturers and the recycling industry, said deposit schemes were a distraction. “We have a kerbside system, and there is so much more we can do to put in the infrastructure and get people to use the system we have,” he said. Foster said that in Wales, where plastic bottle recycling rates have reached 75% as a result of a consistent collection scheme, higher targets set by the Welsh government and increased funding was proof of how a well-run kerbside collection operation, with legislative and financial support, could work.

The British Plastics Federation (BPF) – which opposes any forms of taxes or charges on plastic bottles – accepts evidence that deposit schemes in Germany, Norway and Sweden

achieve high rates of bottle recycling. But the trade body questioned whether a deposit scheme would have a significant impact on reducing plastic waste in Britain. The BPF said: "The degree of recycling is not guaranteed, nor is the degree to which it will impact litter clearance costs or plastics in the oceans. DRS may well undermine existing kerbside schemes which aim to improve recycling of all packaging and not just a part of it." The federation said a full impact assessment was needed if a deposit scheme was to be considered in Britain.

*1. Explain the meaning of the highlighted words and phrases.*

*2. Find in the article the synonyms for the following words: to reduce, to understand, to fail to increase, dump, to operate, to encourage to improve, effect / influence, evaluation.*

*3. Render the text. What measures are taken by Russian authorities to cut down on plastic waste? Search for some additional information, present it in the class.*

*Read an article about the plans to stop the negative effects of global warming.*

#### **WORLD HAS THREE YEARS LEFT TO STOP DANGEROUS CLIMATE CHANGE**

Former UN climate chief Christiana Figueres among signatories of letter warning that the next three years will be crucial to stopping the worst effects of global warming.

Avoiding dangerous levels of climate change is still just about possible, but will require unprecedented effort and coordination from governments, businesses, citizens and scientists in the next three years, a group of prominent experts has warned. Warning over global warming have picked up pace in recent months, even as the political environment has grown chilly with Donald Trump's formal announcement of the US's withdrawal from the Paris agreement. This year's weather has beaten high temperature records in some regions, and 2014, 2015 and 2016 were the hottest years on record.

But while temperatures have risen, global carbon dioxide emissions have stayed broadly flat for the past three years. This gives hope that the worst effects of climate change – devastating droughts, floods, heatwaves and irreversible sea level rises – may be avoided, according to a letter published in the journal *Nature* this week. The authors, including former UN climate chief Christiana Figueres and Hans Joachim Schellnhuber of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, argue that the next three years will be crucial.

They calculate that if emissions can be brought permanently lower by 2020 then the temperature thresholds leading to runaway irreversible climate change will not be breached. Figueres, the executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, under whom the Paris agreement was signed, said: “We stand at the doorway of being able to bend the emissions curve downwards by 2020, as science demands, in protection of the UN sustainable development goals, and in particular the eradication of extreme poverty. The opportunity given to us over the next three years is unique in history.”

Schellnhuber, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, added: “The maths is brutally clear: while the world can’t be healed within the next few years, it may be fatally wounded by negligence [before] 2020.” Scientists have been warning that time is fast running out to stave off the worst effects of warming, and some milestones may have slipped out of reach. In the Paris agreement, governments pledged an “aspirational” goal of holding warming to no more than 1.5C, a level which it is hoped will spare most of the world’s lowest-lying islands from inundation. But a growing body of research has suggested this is fast becoming impossible. Paris’s less stringent, but firmer, goal of preventing warming from exceeding 2C above pre-industrial levels is also in doubt.

The authors point to signs that the trend of upward emissions is being reversed, and to technological progress that promises lower emissions for the future. Renewable energy use has soared, creating a foundation for permanently lowering emissions. Coal use is showing clear signs of decline in key regions, including China and India. Governments, despite Trump’s pronouncements, are forging ahead with plans to reduce greenhouse gases.

They set out six goals for 2020 which they said could be adopted at the G20 meeting in Hamburg on 7–8 July. These include increasing renewable energy to 30% of electricity use; plans from leading cities and states to decarbonise by 2050; 15% of new vehicles sold to be electric; and reforms to land use, agriculture, heavy industry and the finance sector, to encourage green growth.

While the greenhouse gases poured into the atmosphere over the last two centuries have only gradually taken effect, future changes are likely to be faster, scientists fear. Johan Rockström of the Stockholm Resilience Centre said: “We have been blessed by a remarkably resilient planet over the past 100 years, able to absorb most of our climate abuse. Now we have reached the end of this era, and need to bend the global curve of emissions immediately, to avoid unmanageable outcomes for our modern world.”

1. Find in the article the words and word collocations related to the topic "Environment protection".

2. Speak about the six goals that could be adopted at the G20 meeting. What do you think about the realization of the programme to prevent exceeding warming and climate changes?

Read an article about wildlife tourism.

### **ELEPHANT CONSERVATION**

Wildlife-based tourism is growing rapidly worldwide as the number of tourists continues to grow and as we, as travellers, seek out new and more enriching personal experiences with local cultures and wildlife. This is what inspired me to take six months unpaid leave from the grind of legal practice many years ago and backpack around South America with my little sister. Experiencing the natural beauty of places like the Amazon rainforest, Iguazú Falls and Machu Picchu and the local people fighting to protect them was life-changing.

The UN World Tourism Organisation estimates that 7% of world tourism relates to wildlife tourism, growing annually at about 3%, and much higher in some places, like our Unesco world heritage sites. A WWF report shows that 93% of all natural heritage sites support recreation and tourism and 91% of them provide jobs. In Belize, more than 50% of the population are said to be supported by income generated through reef-related tourism and fisheries.

I've just come back from the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya, where I saw amazing work with local communities to protect wildlife. The trust's mix of funding includes almost 30% of revenue coming from tourism. It employs over 1,000 Kenyans. I spoke with local people who told me that the rhino and the elephant bring them security, healthcare and education, and no one must interfere with these animals. They are today the best protectors of the wildlife, working with local rangers. Their development is being achieved through conservation.

The result: in this region elephant poaching is down by 50%. No rhinos have been poached for four years. Tourism revenue is growing. And it is not the only example: wonderful examples of success exist in many other places, including in the Chitwan national park in Nepal, where again local people are front and centre.

But the very assets that underpin this wildlife-based tourism – the wildlife itself – are under severe threat. The threats come from a multitude of sources: habitat loss, pollution, infrastructure, climate change, over-exploitation and illegal trade, the most immediate threat to wildlife. If we lose the wildlife, we lose the wildlife-based tourism and the jobs that goes with it.

The surge in illegal wildlife trade witnessed in recent years is industrial in scale and is driven by transnational organised criminals. They target high-value wildlife without regard for the animals or people's lives. They corrupt local officials, recruit and arm local poachers, plunder local wildlife, create insecurity and put local communities into a poverty spiral.

The international community is fighting back. There is a global collective effort underway to take on these criminals. But they are hard to beat. We cannot rely on law enforcement alone. We need the private sector, especially the transport, travel and tourism sectors, to join the fight. It is true that, if poorly managed, tourism can have negative impacts on wildlife and the environment, as we have seen in the Galapagos, where there sheer volume of tourists poses a serious threat to the islands' unique wildlife. But on a crowded planet of over 7 billion people, growing to over 9 billion, we need viable land use options that support wildlife, and wildlife-based tourism is a critical part of the mix in ensuring the survival of wildlife and in fighting wildlife crime.

Well-managed wildlife-based tourism can offer an economic opportunity that supports wildlife. It must be responsibly managed and operators must engage with staff, customers and, most importantly, local people. Staff can be eyes and ears for the police, and customers can stop buying illegally or unsustainably sourced wildlife products. Engaging local people is the key, and that takes effort. Tourism operators have the power to lift local people out of poverty in a manner that will be mutually beneficial and self-sustaining. Or they can choose not to engage with local communities and to invest in a manner that sees all of the profits go offshore – in which case I would say they are no better than the poachers and the smugglers.

The reality is that the tourism sector is not a fringe player in the fight against illegal wildlife trade – it is right at the centre of it. Tourism operators are on the front line of this fight along with the customs and rangers and inspectors.

But operators can't do it alone. How we behave as individual tourists is ultimately what counts, and that is our choice. We have a personal responsibility to hold operators' feet to the fire. We cannot support the bad ones, no matter how good the price. And let us never forget: wildlife and the local people living among it are to be not just enjoyed but respected by all of us.

*1. Find these sentences and phrases in the text and explain their meaning.*

1) This is what inspired me to take six months unpaid leave from the grind of legal practice many years ago...

2) ...where again local people are front and centre.

3) They target high-value wildlife...

4) ...to lift local people out of poverty in a manner that will be mutually beneficial and self-sustaining.

5) How we behave as individual tourists is ultimately what counts...

*2. Render the article and express your opinion on the issue.*

*Read an article about a downside of doing yoga.*

#### **HOW YOGA CAN WRECK YOUR BODY**

On a cold Saturday in early 2009, Glenn Black, a yoga teacher of nearly four decades, whose devoted clientele includes a number of celebrities and prominent gurus, was giving a master class at Sankalpah Yoga in Manhattan. Black is, in many ways, a classic yogi: he studied in Pune, India, at the institute founded by the legendary B. K. S. Iyengar, and spent years in solitude and meditation. He now lives in Rhinebeck, N.Y., and often teaches at the nearby Omega Institute, a New Age emporium spread over nearly 200 acres of woods and gardens. He is known for his rigor and his down-to-earth style. But this was not why I sought him out: Black, I'd been told, was the person to speak with if you wanted to know not about the virtues of yoga but rather about the damage it could do. Many of his regular clients came to him for bodywork or rehabilitation following yoga injuries. This was the situation I found

myself in. In my 30s, I had somehow managed to rupture a disk in my lower back and found I could prevent bouts of pain with a selection of yoga postures and abdominal exercises. Then, in 2007, while doing the extended-side-angle pose, a posture hailed as a cure for many diseases, my back gave way. With it went my belief, naïve in retrospect, that yoga was a source only of healing and never harm.

After the class, I asked Black about his approach to teaching yoga – the emphasis on holding only a few simple poses, the absence of common inversions like headstands and shoulder stands. He gave me the kind of answer you’d expect from any yoga teacher: that awareness is more important than rushing through a series of postures just to say you’d done them. But then he said something more radical. Black has come to believe that “the vast majority of people” should give up yoga altogether. It’s simply too likely to cause harm. Not just students but celebrated teachers too, Black said, injure themselves in droves because most have underlying physical weaknesses or problems that make serious injury all but inevitable.

According to Black, a number of factors have converged to heighten the risk of practicing yoga. The biggest is the demographic shift in those who study it. Indian practitioners of yoga typically squatted and sat cross-legged in daily life, and yoga poses, or asanas, were an outgrowth of these postures. Now urbanites who sit in chairs all day walk into a studio a couple of times a week and strain to twist themselves into ever-more-difficult postures despite their lack of flexibility and other physical problems. Many come to yoga as a gentle alternative to vigorous sports or for rehabilitation for injuries. But yoga’s exploding popularity – the number of Americans doing yoga has risen from about 4 million in 2001 to what some estimate to be as many as 20 million in 2011 – means that there is now an abundance of studios where many teachers lack the deeper training necessary to recognize when students are headed toward injury.

**Among devotees**, from gurus to acolytes forever carrying their rolled-up mats, yoga is described as a nearly miraculous agent of renewal and healing. They celebrate its abilities to calm, cure, energize and strengthen. And much of this appears to be true: yoga can lower your blood pressure, make chemicals that act as antidepressants, even improve your sex life. But a growing body of medical evidence supports Black’s contention that, for many people, a number of commonly taught yoga poses are inherently risky. In 2009, a New York City team based at Columbia University’s College of Physicians and Surgeons published an ambitious worldwide survey of yoga teachers, therapists and doctors. The answers to the survey’s central question – What were the most serious yoga-related injuries (disabling and/or of



long duration) they had seen? – revealed that the largest number of injuries (231) centered on the lower back. The other main sites were, in declining order of prevalence: the shoulder (219), the knee (174) and the neck (110). Then came stroke.

**Almost a year** after I first met Glenn Black at his master class in Manhattan, I received an e-mail from him telling me that he had undergone spinal surgery. “It was a success,” he wrote. “Recovery is slow and painful. Call if you like.” He was operated on and the surgery was a necessity. Black is one of the most careful yoga practitioners I know. When I first spoke to him, he said he had never injured himself doing yoga or, as far as he knew, been responsible for harming any of his students. I asked him if his recent injury could have been congenital or related to aging. No, he said. It was yoga. “You have to get a different perspective to see if what you’re doing is going to eventually be bad for you.”

1. *Find in the text words and collocations connected with the following topics:*

- *yoga;*
- *medicine and injuries.*

2. *Speak about benefits and healing effects of yoga. What risks may people run if they take up yoga without considering their lack of flexibility and other physical problems.*

*Read an article and find out how prolonged walks can affect our health and mood.*

#### **FOR EXERCISE, NOTHING LIKE THE GREAT OUTDOORS**

Long walks can improve moods and reduce anxiety, but the benefits may be greatest if the walks take place outdoors rather than in a gym, according to a new study by researchers in Austria. And while the Alps may be a particularly fine place to hike, a vigorous walk in the woods or paths near home may provide the mental boost we need to keep us moving.

In recent years, many scientists and other experts have focused their attention on short, intense workouts, typically called high-intensity interval training, because the duration is so slight, lessening the likelihood that people will be too busy to exercise. But while many people who take up high-intensity interval training report being pleased by the workouts’ brevity, they often also say that the intensity is not fun for them, which, over the long term, could discourage them from continuing.

So for the new study, which was published last month, researchers at the University of Innsbruck in Austria and other institutions decided to investigate whether flipping a

workout's focus and emphasizing its length while playing down its intensity might increase people's enjoyment and, potentially, participation. In other words, the researchers wondered whether long, relatively gentle walks would make people happy and, if so, whether some types of walks would be more pleasurable than others.

To find out, they first recruited about 40 healthy men and women from in and around Innsbruck and asked them to complete a series of detailed questionnaires about their moods and level of anxiety, both at that moment and in general. Then they asked each volunteer to complete several prolonged workouts.

One of these involved hiking in the mountains above the town of Innsbruck with a guide. Before they started, the volunteers repeated the mood tests. Then they walked in groups of three or four along a popular mountain trail that climbs sinuously and persistently. The volunteers wore heart rate monitors and were told to move at a brisk but not punishing pace, so that they were breathing rapidly but could converse with one another. Midway through the hike, they stopped at a hut and told researchers how strenuous the walking had felt, on a scale of 1 to 20, before descending and repeating the questionnaires about their moods. The entire walk lasted about three hours. On a separate day, each volunteer completed virtually the same workout on a treadmill at a gym in Innsbruck. The machines' inclines were set to simulate the uphill hike for the first half of the workout, with flat walking after that (since the machines could not be set for negative altitude gain). Volunteers walked next to one another and were encouraged to chat. They all also completed the estimations of effort and mood.

Then on a final day as a control session, they all sat for about three hours in a communal room at the university equipped with computers, magazines and couches, where they could surf or talk and, before and after, assess their moods. At the end, the scientists compared their mood scores and other assessments.

The mountain hiking turned out to have been, objectively, the most strenuous of the workouts. Although the altitude gains during the indoor and outdoor walking had been comparable, people's heart rates had risen higher during the mountain hike. But, interestingly, almost all the participants reported that the outdoor effort had felt less strenuous to them than their time on the treadmill. And their mood scores were much higher after the outdoor hike than the treadmill workout, indicating that they had enjoyed that workout more than being in the gym.

On the other hand, the long walk in the gym had left them almost uniformly happier and more relaxed than after sitting and using a computer or chatting for several hours. In essence, walking had been “more pleasurable” than not walking, even though the walks’ duration had been long, says Martin Niedermeier, a professor of sport science at the University of Innsbruck who led the study. But walking outside in the serene, shadowed beauty of the mountains provided additive benefits for mood, he says, suggesting that people might be more likely to continue with a walking program on paths and trails than treadmills. These results could have particular resonance for people who have tried brief, intense workouts and disliked them. Long, brisk walks might turn out to be more appealing, he says.

But of course, this study looked only at a single instance of each workout; it did not follow people to see if they would voluntarily keep walking or measure the extent to which the prolonged walks affected their health and fitness. It also cannot tell us how to carve out the time for a prolonged hike, although summer days are long, weekend hours are plentiful and, for most of us, parks if not peaks are nearby.

*1. Match up the verb-noun collocations and use them in the sentences of your own:*

- |                        |                                |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>1) to reduce</i>    | <i>a) health</i>               |
| <i>2) to focus</i>     | <i>b) a questionnaire</i>      |
| <i>3) to take up</i>   | <i>c) resonance</i>            |
| <i>4) to complete</i>  | <i>d) attention (on)</i>       |
| <i>5) to affect</i>    | <i>e) anxiety</i>              |
| <i>6) to provide</i>   | <i>f) training</i>             |
| <i>7) to carve out</i> | <i>g) benefits</i>             |
| <i>8) to have</i>      | <i>h) the time (for smth.)</i> |

*2. Describe the experiment that was initiated and carried out by the researchers at the university of Innsbruck.*

*3. Would you like to participate as a volunteer in the experiment described in the article? How do you think which type of a workout you would find most appealing?*

You are going to read an article about a sporting event. For questions 1–6, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

#### A HOP, SKIP AND A JUMP AWAY

Audrey Pirog talks about her first triple-jump competition.

‘I want you warming up. Do some bounding on the grass while you wait to sign in.’ It was Paula, our coach. I wasn’t too keen on this idea, knowing it would only tire me. My eyes met those of my three fellow triple-jumpers. We all sighed in agreement, all wanting to conserve our energy. Nobody moved. What’s more, I needed to qualify for the state championships. It was all I could think about. I had to jump twenty-nine feet, six inches to do this.

The sun was bright in the cloudless sky as I looked down the runway to the sand-filled triple-jump pit. Sounds of feet pounding on the track and cheers filled the air. I closed my eyes and tried to imagine it; the perfect jump. I’d only recently taken up this event and wished I’d had more practice. It’s so much more than a hop, skip and a jump. It’s a take-off. The announcer’s voice boomed, ‘All triple-jump girls please sign in now.’ About nine of us meandered down to the pit where he was holding a clipboard and measuring tape.

Waiting for my turn, I checked out the competition, seeing who had the longest legs or greatest muscle tone. My legs were still aching a little from the hundred-metre hurdles. I stretched them out, feeling the lump in my left one, the remnants of a pulled muscle. When I heard my name called, I began to feel nervous. What if I didn’t make it? This was the last chance to qualify and I had three jumps to do it. I bounced on my toes as I watched the girls before me jump. Analysing their form, you could see those who didn’t have enough momentum from the board.

Finally my turn came. I stepped onto the runway and found my chalk mark. Steadying myself, I narrowed my eyes and took a deep breath. Pushing off my back foot, I lunged forward into a sprint. One, two, three, four, five and by six strides I was on the board. The actual jump is hard to remember; a one-legged hop, a skip and a long jump into the hot sandy pit. A long breath escaped me as I stepped out of the pit and waited to hear my measurement. ‘Twenty-eight feet, five-and-a-half inches,’ called the clipboard guy.

I walked down the runway to be met by Paula, and was thankful for her kind face. ‘I want you to try something. Alright? Where’s a relaxing place for you?’ ‘In the water, I guess. Swimming.’ It was the first thing that came to mind and I didn’t realise how silly it must sound. ‘Perfect’, she responded. ‘Right before you jump, I want you to imagine you’re in the water, just floating, OK?’ I agreed, smiling to show my appreciation. I paced until my name was called again.

'Pirog, you're up!' I closed my eyes and imagined the water running over me, soothing me. My muscles relaxed and I exhaled as I pushed into take-off. This sprint felt loose and free. When I took off from the second board, I was sure my first phase was too high, that my second was chopped, and my landing wasn't quite what it should have been. I stood up, shaking off the sand as the officials drew out the long measuring tape. The suspense was killing me.

'Twenty-nine feet, ten inches.' I couldn't stop myself from screaming and jumping into the air. My team-mates rushed to me, I was encircled and soon my hand stung from the force of all the customary high-fives. It was a relief finally to have made it and my success couldn't be put down to sheer luck. My face ached from smiling but I knew I wouldn't stop. I found Paula and ran to hug her. 'That was all thanks to you.' She smiled in return: 'Thank the water.'

*1. From the first paragraph we understand that Audrey*

- A** was already feeling very tired.
- B** needed to beat the other jumpers.
- C** had a specific aim in mind that day.
- D** felt guilty about ignoring her coach.

*2. The word 'it' in line 9 refers to*

- A** background noise at the event.
- B** the place where this event is held.
- C** the amount of practice needed for the event.
- D** a technically good performance in the event.

*3. In the third paragraph, Audrey reveals that*

- A** she once suffered a leg injury.
- B** she had already won another event that day.
- C** she felt confident in her ability to achieve her goal.
- D** she was impressed by the performance of the other jumpers.

*4. When she was talking to Paula, Audrey felt*

- A** embarrassed by a question her coach asked her.
- B** amused by a suggestion her coach made.
- C** sad that she'd let her coach down.
- D** grateful for her coach's support.

5. *During her second jump, Audrey*

- A was still feeling very tense.
- B felt unhappy with one aspect of her jump.
- C was rather self-critical of her performance.
- D felt that everything was going better than last time.

6. *When she heard the length of her second jump, Audrey*

- A realised that she had actually been very lucky.
- B acknowledged the contribution of her coach.
- C was surprised by her team-mates reaction.
- D was lost for words for a few moments.

*Read an article and find out a current trend for adults to spend their leisure time.*

#### **BALL PITS AND BOUNCY CASTLES FOR ADULTS: GOOD CLEAN FUN OR DESPERATE NOSTALGIA?**

It's 9pm on a Saturday night and 21-year-old Megan is out with her mates. But she's not at the pub or a club. She's not at the cinema, or even a standup show. Instead, she's at a giant inflatable playground in a leisure centre on the outskirts of Edinburgh. She's not the only one. Tonight, Meadowbank Sports Centre is filled with adults reliving the halcyon days of their youth. To a soundtrack of blasting house music, two balding men are chasing each other up a brightly coloured inflatable ramp. Nearby, a trio of lads are whacking a blow-up cannonball between them, while a group of glamorous young women stagger round a bouncy castle platform. Energetic children's entertainer types offer advice and gee up the 200-strong crowd. Everyone looks like they are having the time of their adult lives.

This is Wacky World, the massive bouncy-castle obstacle course that has been touring the country since February. It began as a kids-only concern, but after his first event, managing director Haydn Price says he was inundated with requests from adults who wanted a slice of the fun. Since then, all his events have had an over-18s slot. Wacky World is just one example of the many kids' activities that are now being marketed to grown men and women.

The leisure trend for acting your shoe size, not your age, isn't happening in a vacuum. It's part of a world where adults play brightly coloured iPhone games, wax lyrical about Harry Potter, ride scooters and wear onesies; where the adult colouring book industry has

taken off, two men were able to open a cafe entirely dedicated to sugary cereal, and sales of toys for adults have increased by two-thirds over the past five years. There's one obvious explanation for all this – today's adults are consumed by a raging desire to revisit the past. Yet, according to Dr Tim Wildschut, a psychology professor at the university of Southampton, it would be bad science to suggest that nostalgia is especially rife among millennials, who seem to make up the bulk of customers at these events. "I'm not sure if people are more nostalgic now than they were before," he says.

With its focus on looking backwards, nostalgia was "regarded as something feeble and weak for a long time," says Wildschut. Yet that begun to change in the late 20th century. "More and more people started to embrace it and it turned out that nostalgia serves a lot of important functions for them – it makes them feel more socially connected, it gives them a template for what the future might look like and that creates optimism and inspiration. You may think back to things you did in the past that may give you a sense of continuity – when I was young, I enjoyed playing football, and I still do and I probably always will," he explains. "Or if you experience life as a little bit weird and meaningless at the moment, you may think back to valuable and meaningful experiences in the past and that may then restore your sense of meaning in life."

Dr Jane Pilcher, a sociologist from the University of Leicester, has her point here. She believes this trend for arrested development activities is down to economic shifts around adulthood. "For millennials it's so hard to achieve what we've come to expect as the traditional markers of adulthood – full-time stable employment, buying somewhere to live with your sexual partner, getting a mortgage, forming an independent household," says Pilcher. "Young people are being captured in an extended period of dependency – they're not quite children but they're not quite adults as we would understand them traditionally to be because they're not achieving the adult milestones. There's another reason why millennials are spearheading this trend: they actually have idyllic childhoods to resurrect. Those born in the 60s and 70s simply don't have the same memories to recreate. These days, she says, "we have this notion that childhood is the best time of a person's life and it should be defined by play and innocence, and parents spend a lot of time trying to create that idyllic set of activities for their children".

The nostalgia boom and adulthood crash might have created the demand, but the leisure sector was also ready to exploit it. "Competitive socialising" is becoming more and more popular. It's a concept of combining a night out with a game or physical activities such

as crazy golf, curling, The Crystal Maze (ping-pong, darts and escape rooms are also popular). They say that binge drinking is slowing down; people are saying, "hang on a second, what else can we do in this bar rather than just sit here and drink?" The phrase "competitive socialising" also has overtones of personal branding, and the performative social media posts that go with it – sharing photos of your unusual and highly visual surroundings so everyone can see how enviably you've been spending your free time. And it's not just good personal PR – kidult culture also has other virtues. People get so wrapped up in this rat race of having to succeed and having to 'do', that they may forget just how to 'be' and this is such a wonderful opportunity to fully enjoy the moment.

It may be true that the infantilisation trend is a symptom of a bleak economic outlook, where property ownership, career progression and the very notion of maturity seem like fading dreams. But the upshot is that adults are spending their free time more memorably, actively and healthily. And it's a craze that is showing no sign of slowing.

*1. Explain in your own words or paraphrase the following words, collocations or phrases from the article:*

reliving the halcyon days of their youth; act your age, not your shoe size; onesie; millennial; traditional markers of adulthood; competitive socialising; binge drinking; personal branding; kidult culture; bleak economic outlook; upshot; craze.

*2. Scan the article again and elicit all the arguments which the author presents to explain this trend for adult leisure activities. Do you agree with the author's message?*

*Read an article and find out what the concept of 'parenting marriage' involves.*

#### **FORGET CONSCIOUS UNCOUPLING: THE WAY FORWARD FOR FAMILIES IS PLATONIC PARENTING**

*With divorce's impact on children in mind, more and more couples are changing their relationship into a 'parenting marriage' when romance has died.*

Valerie Tate knew her marriage was over seven years after she'd wed. She and her husband, Clark, tried therapy but they eventually realized that they wanted different things in an intimate relationship. As a therapist, she'd seen the damage divorce could do, especially to kids. The last thing they wanted to do was to drag their son Jonah, now 11,



through an ugly breakup while they all were grieving. So they decided that they'd stop working on their marriage, which wasn't helping anyway, and try something different.

Whatever you think about Gwyneth Paltrow and Chris Martin's "conscious uncoupling", the San Francisco Bay Area couple did one better; they uncoupled but didn't divorce. They stayed married. They just removed the romantic and sexual aspect of their marriage, but remained loving and respectful to each other, and focused on co-parenting.

That was eight years ago. To outsiders, they might look like any other couple – they enjoy meals, holidays and adventures as a family. Except they're not staying together miserably for the sake of their kid, as far too many couples do; they transformed their marriage into a parenting marriage.

While the Tates may have helped bring the concept to the national forefront, it isn't all that unusual. LGBT people have been successfully arranging all sorts of creative multiparenting partnerships for decades, often outside the realm of marriage. As Judith Stacey details in her 2011 book *Unhitched: Love, Marriage, and Family Values from West Hollywood to Western China*, gay men who have children together create the most stable families of all the alternative families she's encountered. It's hard for men to become parents without women, she notes. But the gay men who "willingly unhitch their sexual and romantic desires from their domestic ones in order to become parents" show a commitment and determination that may be essential to give children the stability they need. If gay men can do it, why can't heterosexual people?

They already are – slowly. In recent years, there's been a rise in websites like Modamily.com, Coparenting.com and FamilyByDesign.com, which connect men who are interested in being dads with women who are interested in being moms – but that's it; they may not become spouses, lovers or even housemates.

In many ways, the couples who come together to create these parenting partnerships are proving to be much more prepared for the responsibilities of raising a child than couples that do it the old-fashioned way – meet, fall in love, marry and have vague discussions about how many kids they want and when. They are modeling the true definition of planned parenthood.

But then there are two issues left: love and sex. How will kids fare if their parents aren't in love with each other? How will they learn about love if there's no one to model it for them? And how do parents get their sexual needs met? These are valid questions. However, there aren't any studies that indicate children need their parents to love each other – whereas there are plenty of studies indicating children do need parental warmth and

love, consistency, stability and a relatively conflict-free environment. Being kind to each other is what matters. “Children are love radars; they can feel when there’s love and kindness and they can feel when there’s hurt and cutoff between parents,” says Valerie Tate, who works with couples to bring loving feelings back into their relationship and has helped a handful of couples transform their marriages into similar arrangements. “The way people treat each other makes a huge difference.”

While each couple is free to create the terms of their new arrangement – who sleeps where, how financial obligations should be split, whether new romantic partners can be introduced into the family, when and if they eventually plan to divorce – they first must agree that their romantic and sexual relationship is over, and that the new purpose of their marriage is to be the best co-parents they can be. Then they have to tell the kids as openly and honestly as they can in age-appropriate language. So why not structure the relationship from the beginning so it works best for the kids?

*1. Explain in your own words how you understand the following words and collocations from the text:*

breakup, co-parenting, outside the realm of marriage, show commitment, housemates, to raise a child, a valid question, love radars, terms of a new arrangement, age-appropriate language.

*2. What is your attitude to the whole concept of co-parenting or parental marriage? Do we have some similar trends in this country?*

*You are going to read an article which summarizes an international study on young people's well-being and life satisfaction.*

#### **PARENTS MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE JUST BY TALKING**

The OECD has produced an international study of well-being and how young people feel about their lives. The think tank's education director Andreas Schleicher explains how much positive impact can come from simple changes such as parents taking time to talk to their children and eating a meal together.

Perhaps the most distressing threat to student well-being is bullying, and it can have serious consequences for the victim, the bully and bystanders. This international study

shows how widespread this can be, across borders and cultures, in schools of many different kinds. On average, across OECD countries, about 11% of teenagers reported they were frequently mocked, 7% were "left out of things", 8% were the subject of hurtful rumours and about 4% – that is still roughly one per class – were being hit or pushed around. A substantial number of young people feel isolated, humiliated, feel like an outsider at school or are physically assaulted. This matters, because schools are not just places where students learn about academic subjects. It's one of the first places where children experience society and the behaviour of other people. It should be where young people learn about resilience and ambition. And whether positive or negative, this time in school will have a profound influence on these young people.

The evidence of countries such as Finland, the Netherlands and Switzerland shows that it is not a case of choosing between high academic standards and high levels of satisfaction with life – it is possible to have both. It also shows there is no link between long hours of study and students' sense of satisfaction. The frequency of tests, perhaps counter to expectations, also seems to be unrelated to anxiety about school.

But what does seem to make a difference to well-being are the relationships between students, teachers and parents. A negative relationship with teachers is a major threat to students' sense of belonging in school. And conversely, "happy" schools are likely to report much more positive relations between staff and students. This is important. Teenagers look for strong social ties and they value acceptance, care and support from others. Adolescents who feel they are part of a school community are more likely to perform better academically and be more motivated in school.

While the frequency of tests might not affect student well-being, there does seem to be a more negative influence if tests are seen as "threatening". This anxiety, even among well-prepared students, can also be linked to the relationships with teachers. If teachers are seen as supportive there is likely to be less stress. Where students feel that teachers do not rate their chances of success fairly, there is even more worry, with 62% of students reporting high levels of exam tension. And in all countries, girls reported greater schoolwork-related anxiety than boys. The fear of making mistakes on a test often disrupts the performance of top-performing girls who "choke under pressure".

Another major factor in young people's lives is the time spent online. Across OECD countries, 26% of students on average spend six hours per day online at weekends and 16%

spend a similar time online on weekdays. Extreme internet use, more than six hours per day, has a negative impact on students' well-being.

Last but not least, parents make a big difference. Students with high levels of life satisfaction were significantly more likely to have parents who regularly spent time talking to them. Parents who sat around the table to eat their main meal with their children and talked about how they were getting on at school also made a difference. It seems to matter for academic performance too. Students whose parents regularly talked to them were two-thirds of a school-year ahead in science.

Even though this shows the powerful positive effect of parental interest, for many parents, spending time just talking to their child is a rare occurrence. Some parents find it difficult to participate in their children's school life, maybe because of inflexible work schedules, lack of childcare or language barriers. But schools could do more to help parents overcome these barriers. If parents cannot leave work to attend school meetings, then perhaps parents could talk by phone or video. There could also be support from government, such as incentives for employers to improve the work-life balance. Parents can also help children manage test anxiety by encouraging them to trust in their ability.

The challenges to the well-being students are many and there are no simple solutions. But the findings from this study show how teachers, schools and parents can make a real difference.

*1. Match **A** to **B**, then render the situations from the text with the following word combinations.*

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>
1. International	A ties
2. Substantial	B performance
3. Social	C study
4. Schoolwork-related	D work schedule
5. Academic	E anxiety
6. Inflexible	F number
7. Hurtful	G rumours

*2. Render the article, speak about the aspects that may have a negative impact on students' well-being. What recommendations does the author of the article give to parents and teachers?*

*3. The article is based on an international study. What do you think the findings of a similar survey would be in your country? Discuss in groups.*

*Read an article and find out how they have implemented a regeneration plan in a Colombian city, Medellin.*

### **MEDELLÍN: THE FAST TRACK FROM THE SLUMS**

Once, Medellín was known for one thing only: barely two decades ago, when cocaine king Pablo Escobar had a bounty on the heads of police officers and was doing his level best to bring Colombia's second city to its knees, it was the murder capital of the world. In 1991, Medellín witnessed 6,349 killings, a murder rate of 380 per 100,000 people. But now Medellín's murder rate has fallen by more than 80% since its peak and the city has become something of a global model for successful transformation. Earlier this year, it won an international award sponsored by The Wall Street Journal, Citibank and the Washington-based Urban Land Institute as the world's most innovative city.

"This displaced population didn't feel like they were part of the city," Laura Isaza, a Medellín city hall consultant. They used to say: 'I live in this neighborhood and I don't live in Medellín.' And that was one of our first steps: to gain their confidence and to make them feel that they are part of our city."

Problems, including petty crime and gang violence, remain, but generally the strategy seems to be working. New schools and libraries, parks and public squares have been built around the city. There is an immaculate new metro system. And in the Comunas, often built on hillsides too steep for buses or cars, a network of lifts and cable cars now carry tens of thousands of people a day from Medellín's mountaintop slums to the metro, cutting the journey time downtown – and particularly back home afterwards – to 45 minutes from as much as two-and-a-half hours. The most visually striking example of this policy is the giant, 385-metre long escalator installed in Comuna Trece. Opened in 2011, six-section moving staircase has just been given a stylish orange roof, allowing people to ride up and down the hill, listening to piped music, in six minutes, rather than climb the equivalent of a 28-storey building, which took half an hour.

Slicing boldly if incongruously through a shantytown that was once known as the most violent neighbourhood in the world's most violent city, the escalator, which is free to use, has become the symbol of a rebirth that has encouraged employers such as Hewlett Packard, Kimberly Clark and Unisys to open new facilities in Medellín – and attracted politicians, planners and police officials from cities such as Rio de Janeiro, Johannesburg and Washington to see how it was done.

1. Answer the questions:

- 1) What problem did the city suffer from?
- 2) How did it affect the city?
- 3) What is the city like now?
- 4) What brought about its recovery?
- 5) Has the recovery had significance beyond the city?

You are going to read an article about a woman's career. For questions **1–6** choose the answer (**A, B, C or D**) which you think fits best according to the text.

#### **A VARIED CAREER**

*Chloe Kelling, a successful model and singer-songwriter, now has a new venture*

I arrive for my interview with Chloe Kelling and I'm asked to wait in the garden. I hardly have time to start looking round at the carefully tended flowerbeds when Chloe appears. Every bit as tall and striking as I'd expected, Chloe emerges from the house wearing an oversized man's jacket, a delicately patterned top and jeans. Chloe is known for her slightly quirky sense of fashion and, of course, she looks great as she makes her way towards me through the flowerbeds.

'Let's talk in my office,' she says, leading the way not back to the house, but instead to an ancient caravan parked up next to it. As we climb inside the compact little van, the smell of fresh baking greets us. A tiny table is piled high with cupcakes, each iced in a different colour. Chloe's been busy, and there's a real sense of playing tea parties in a secret den! But what else should I have expected from a woman with such a varied and interesting career?

Chloe originally trained as a make-up artist, having left her home in the country at nineteen to try and make her name as a model in London, and soon got work in adverts and the fashion business. 'I went to Japan to work for a short period, but felt very homesick at first,' she recalls. 'It was very demanding work and, though I met loads of nice people, it was too much to take in at nineteen. If I'd stayed longer, I might have settled in better.'

Alongside the modelling, Chloe was also beginning to make contacts in the music business. 'I'd been the typical kid, singing with a hairbrush in front of the mirror, dreaming of being a star one day,' she laughs. She joined a girl band which 'broke up before we got anywhere', before becoming the lead singer with the band Whoosh, which features on a

best-selling clubbing album. Unusually though, Chloe also sings with two other bands, one based in Sweden and another in London, and each of these has a distinct style.

It was her work with Whoosh that originally led to Chloe's link with Sweden. She was offered a song-writing job there with a team that was responsible for songs for some major stars, but gradually became more involved in writing music for her own band.

Although she now divides her time between London and Sweden, her first stay there turned out to be much longer than she'd bargained for. 'The rooms are very tall over there and so people have these rather high beds that you climb up to,' she explains. 'I fell as I climbed up the ladder and cracked three ribs. Although the people at the hospital were very kind, I was stuck there for a while, which was very frustrating. Sneezing and laughing were so painful at first, let alone singing!'

It was while recovering from her injuries that Chloe hit upon the idea of staging what she calls vintage fairs. 'It was snowing in Sweden and I wanted something nice to look forward to.' Chloe had always loved vintage clothes, particularly from the 1950s, and decided to stage an event for others who shared her passion. The first fair was held in her home village and featured stalls selling all sorts of clothes and crafts dating back to the 1950s. It was a huge hit, with 300 people turning up.

'When I had the idea of the first fair, it was only meant to be a one-off, but we had so many compliments, I decided to go ahead with more,' says Chloe. 'There's something for all ages and people find old things have more character than stuff you buy in modern shops. It also fits perfectly with the idea of recycling.' Looking round Chloe's caravan, I can see what she means.

*1. In the first paragraph, the writer suggests that Chloe*

- A** usually keeps people waiting.
- B** is much taller than he expected.
- C** lives up to her stylish reputation.
- D** is surprisingly interested in flowers.

*2. What do we learn about Chloe in the second paragraph?*

- A** She's cooked something for her guest.
- B** She's expecting some other visitors today.
- C** She has no room in her house for an office.
- D** She invites very few people into her caravan.

3. *What does Chloe say about her trip to Japan?*

- A She soon got used to her life there.
- B She felt lonely most of the time there.
- C She wishes she'd done the work better.
- D She wasn't old enough to appreciate it fully.

4. *In the fourth paragraph, we find out that Chloe*

- A gave up modelling to become a singer.
- B had always had ambitions to be a singer.
- C has now left the first successful band she joined.
- D sings in three bands that have a very similar sound.

5. *Chloe ended up in hospital in Sweden after*

- A breaking a rib whilst trying to move her bed.
- B hurting her leg in a fall from her bed.
- C falling off a ladder in her bedroom.
- D tripping over in her room at night.

6. *What does Chloe say about her 'vintage fairs'?*

- A Her main aim is to raise awareness of environmental issues.
- B She has responded to positive feedback from customers.
- C Certain shops are now showing interest in the idea.
- D They are mostly popular with older people.

*Read an article and find out how modern technologies influence and shape the perception of national identity.*

#### **BEING BRITISH: HOW HAS THE INTERNET AFFECTED OUR NATIONAL IDENTITY?**

There is no one page where web denizens can go to experience the definitive online British experience. I've tried to find one, but I get lost down the rabbit hole of the satirical TVGoHome.com, or obsessed with the icons on the BBC's weather forecast page. I wanted to make sure I wasn't overlooking something obvious, such as ilovebritain.com or wearethebritish.co.uk, and so I conducted a straw poll of my Twitter followers, looking specifically for websites that would give an alien from outer space the definitive experience of "Britishness". The problem is that the very notion of national identity is complex. Being



British is a late addition to our panoply of identities; our personal sense of who we are as individuals evolves early through experience – boy/girl, child/parent, et cetera – but our national identity is the bit that's learned later and is often thrust upon us. As Raphael Samuel describes in his book *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*: "It is an occasional rather than a constant presence." In other words, the sense of being British isn't always there – it's ignited in our consciousness only in particular circumstances. A recent wedding springs to mind. The World Cup. Threats to our borders and security.

The web offers a platform for multiplicity rather than unity. Before it gave us all a global voice, we were united by the narrowcast media of television, newspapers and radio; these mass communication platforms transmitted a Britishness that was determined by gatekeepers – the editors, commissioners and money people. Now, however, we all have access to what Hugh Mackay of the Open University describes as a stage where anyone can perform nuanced aspects of "the nation", and its core cultural attributes. The web now offers a place where people who have left a physical location can gather to experience a sense of national belonging. They can access the same cultural touchpoints as people in residence, from local news to comedy, and can engage in the same debates. We express what it means to each of us to be who we are, and if we don't agree with another person's interpretation, we can find people who do think like us and perform our version of Britishness with them instead.

Yet there is some common ground across the online understanding of what Britishness is. Our empirical understanding of this has evolved through reverse logic: researchers have studied British identity in forums, social networks and other virtual gathering spots by looking at how we decide what we are not. And despite the very prominent multiculturalism in the UK, the unfortunate thread that runs through the results of research studies published as recently as 2008 is that Britishness is "white" – seen as the most common marker of what is perceived to be British and what is not.

But it isn't the end of the story. There are countless examples of sites that celebrate our obsession with the weather, our penchant for satire, our co-dependent relationship with the pub and other elements of national heritage. The web allows for the expression of the diversity of the UK and the nuanced representation of the people united under the union flag does still inform how we negotiate and define who we are online.

Historian Peter Furtado argues that the 17th century inspired the evolution of a national identity because Britain had to negotiate who she was within the global scene; we are experiencing a similar self-awareness now, via the conversations we are having across

the web. Now, however, the conversation is global, rather than within the physical boundaries of the UK.

Citizenship is a political demarcation; the sense of identifying with one's nation is a profoundly personal thing. We're not becoming more or less British because of the web, just as Americans aren't becoming more or less American or Iranians aren't becoming more or less Iranian. Technology allows each of us the opportunity to publish our versions of what it means to be whatever we are.

1. Replace the highlighted words in the text with their synonyms below. In which collocations are the highlighted words used in the article?

border, indication, array, characteristic, variety, inhabitant, outstanding, to develop.

2. Which of the following statements below best summarise the points of the article?

- Our national identities are not fixed, they change over time.
- The Internet has an influence on the kind of people we become.
- Different surveys show that the British share some common cultural characteristics.
- People living in Britain may have different notions of definitive attributes of "Britishness".
- The Internet provides a platform to debate the issue of cultural identity and to find like-minded people with a sense of national belonging.

*Read an article and find out what has changed in the way the British ridicule their politicians.*

### **IS SATIRE DEAD?**

There used to be a place called satire where you could go when politics got really bad. Say you woke up in 1991 and John Major was still prime minister, there was *Spitting Image*. Or it was 1994, and you had a headachey, breathless, high-altitude feeling that the government of pompous sociopaths would never end: there was *The Day Today*. Or it was 2005, in a post-Iraq and post-hope landscape of rule by press release, endless meaningless gestures to assuage the forces of moral outrage that only became bolder: and there was *The Thick of It*. None of these shows was reactive in the classic sense: they were nothing like the US's Daily Show.

It's not that we never try to do headline-humour (10 O'Clock Live, The 11 O'Clock Show, Tonightly). And it's not that we always fail – *Have I Got News for You* worked, and continues to work on and off. But our defining satirical tradition has always been rather different: tangential, playful, surreal, creating amplified hyper-realities that excel politics rather than reflect it.

You didn't watch Malcolm Tucker in *The Thick of It* in order to think about Alastair Campbell. You watched him to live in a world where you weren't alienated by polish and spin, where people were monstrously human, complicated, foul and furious in a way you understood. You watched him, ultimately, to forget Alastair Campbell. Armando Iannucci (a Scottish satirist, television director and radio producer) agrees that something has changed. "I've found this very worrying, the idea that if anyone says anything that might offend anyone, they mustn't be given a platform. It's like when a complaint is made about a satire show, the reply goes out immediately: 'The intention was never to offend.' The intention *was* to offend. If it hadn't offended, it wouldn't be funny. If we have beliefs, religious or political, and they're not strong enough to stand up to a joke, then they can't be that good."

Contempt for mainstream politics is possibly a global trend nowadays, and makes the work of challenging the establishment difficult everywhere. But I think there is something about politics at its extremes that neuters British satire in a specific way. The Americans lampoon their politicians with direct mimicry – Tina Fey as Sarah Palin, Alec Baldwin as Donald Trump – and it works, it's funny. Whereas, here, anything so direct falls flat: "If we did a joke, now, about Theresa May the individual," O'Farrell says, "that she hadn't told the truth or whatever, people would just say, 'We knew that.' If we did those sketches from the 80s – Margaret Thatcher is bossy – it just wouldn't work."

But underneath, everyone hopes that it's out there, we just have to look in the right place. Satire is a young person's game, which means a digital platform, which means it probably won't be in a Soho cabaret or on BBC2. "We're due a satire boom," O'Farrell says optimistically. "We've got a rightwing government doing these appalling things; it's time for satirists to gather under the flag." Go on, then. "Oh, I'm too old now. I leave that to the younger satirists." Comedy is not good for anything, really. Apart from being one of the only things that makes life worth living."

*1. Discuss the effect of satire on politics. What has changed in the way the British ridicule their politicians?*

2. The article above runs about several satirical shows. Read how Peter Fluck, a co-creator of *Spitting Image*, reminisces the old days of this show. Are there any similar satirical shows on our TV at the moment? Do you ever watch them? Why?/ Why not?

### **How we made Spitting Image**

#### **Peter Fluck, co-creator**

Roger Law and I used to make a living drawing caricatures for the press. But when Murdoch started buying up Fleet Street, the illustrators and caricaturists were booted out for well-written pieces by intelligent journalists. Fortunately, someone had the bright idea that the 2D work we'd been doing on the page could be made into puppets. Sure, we thought, not realising we'd have to make the bloody things.

We'd start with photographs, then create a caricature that would get modelled in clay. You couldn't have a 16ft-long nose: it's impractical in a TV studio. A mould of the head was then made, and from that came a foam rubber skin the puppeteer could put on their hand. The puppets were all life-size – clothes are far cheaper from Oxfam than a wardrobe department.

The studios were in Birmingham, but the puppets were made on the East India Docks in London. Every Saturday, a lorry would be filled with puppets and driven up the M1. I used to have dreams about the back door opening, and all these heads falling into the fast lane.

People say *Spitting Image* was a cult thing, we had 18 million viewers at our highest point. Those audience figures at 10 pm on a Sunday night were unusual even then. A wonderful thing was the small amount of really vicious hate mail that would come in on Monday morning. We also had a lot of abuse from the red tops, saying how dare we criticise the royal family. It would have been rather regrettable if we hadn't.

Little things made me laugh, like hearing that Westminster always had a video of the programme for the MPs to look at, and a special room for them to watch it in. Mainly, I suppose, to see if they were in it or not. I think they thought there was something wrong with their political career if there wasn't a puppet of them on TV.

*Read an article about Brexit and its connection with the problems of globalisation. (точка)*

### **BREXIT IS A REJECTION OF GLOBALISATION**

The age of globalisation began on the day the Berlin Wall came down. From that moment in 1989, the trends evident in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s accelerated:

the free movement of capital, people and goods; trickle-down economics; a much diminished role for nation states; and a belief that market forces, now unleashed, were unstoppable.

There has been push back against globalisation over the years. The violent protests seen in Seattle during the World Trade Organisation meeting in December 1999 were the first sign that not everyone saw the move towards untrammelled freedom in a positive light. One conclusion from the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington in September 2001 was that it was not only trade and financial markets that had gone global.

To be sure, not all Britain's problems are the result of its EU membership. It is not the European commission's fault that productivity is so weak or that the trains don't run on time. In the final three months of 2015, the UK was running a record peacetime deficit of 7% of GDP. In another sense, however, the EU is culpable. In the shiny new world created when former communist countries were integrated into the global model, Europe was supposed to be big and powerful enough to protect its citizens against the worst excesses of the market. Nation states had previously been the guarantor of full employment and welfare. The controls they imposed on the free movement of capital and people ensured that trade unions could bargain for higher pay without the threat of work being off-shored, or cheaper labour being brought into the country.

In the age of globalisation, the idea was that a more integrated Europe would collectively serve as the bulwark that nation states could no longer provide. Britain, France, Germany or Italy could not individually resist the power of trans-national capital, but the EU potentially could. The way forward was clear. Move on from a single market to a single currency, a single banking system, a single budget and eventually a single political entity.

That dream is now over. The reason is obvious. Europe has failed to fulfil the historic role allocated to it. Jobs, living standards and welfare states were all better protected in the heyday of nation states in the 1950s and 1960s than they have been in the age of globalisation. Unemployment across the eurozone is more than 10%. Italy's economy is barely any bigger now than it was when the euro was created. Greece's economy has shrunk by almost a third. Austerity has eroded welfare provision. Labour market protections have been stripped away.

Inevitably, there has been a backlash, manifested in the rise of populist parties on the left and right. An increasing number of voters believe there is not much on offer from the

current system. They think globalisation has benefited a small privileged elite, but not them. They think it is unfair that they should pay the price for bankers' failings. They hanker after a return to the security that the nation state provided, even if that means curbs on the core freedoms that underpin globalisation, including the free movement of people.

There are those who argue that globalisation is now like the weather, something we can moan about but not alter. This is a false comparison. The global market economy was created by a set of political decisions in the past and it can be shaped by political decisions taken in the future. One response to the Brexit vote from the rest of Europe has been that a tough line should be taken with Britain to show other countries that dissent has consequences. This would only make matters worse. Voters have legitimate grievances about an economic system that has failed them. Punishing Britain will not safeguard the EU. It will hasten its dissolution.

*1. What do you know about the following:*

The Berlin Wall; anti-globalisation protests in Seattle; World Trade Organization; 9/11 attacks; Eurozone; Brexit.

*2. Explain in your own words how you understand the following collocations and parts of sentences from the article:*

Untrammelled freedom; a record peacetime deficit of 7% of GDP; serve as the bulwark; single political entity; in the heyday of nation states; inevitably, there has been a backlash; they hanker after a return to the security; curbs on the core freedoms; a tough line should be taken with Britain; voters have legitimate grievances about an economic system.

*3. Would the author of the article agree with the statement: "Globalisation has led to an increase in nationalism"? Express your point of view, prove it with some facts from the article.*

## PART II. THE ENGLISH WE SPEAK

*\*In this part you have a chance to catch up on the very latest English words and phrases. These short articles will help you stay ahead of the pack by giving you 'must have' phrases that you can use in your everyday conversation. Amaze your friends, impress your teachers and delight your parents with these fantastic words and phrases. The authors of the articles are Hugh Dellar and Andrew Walkley, they are teachers of English, trainers and materials writers.*

*When was the last time you had a bit of R&R? Where is a good place to go?*

### R&R

R and R stands for rest and relaxation, rather than rock and roll, (though this rock star uses this as a nice play on words). So if you are having a bit of R&R, you are having a break or a holiday where you are doing very little other than lying around by the pool or hanging out on the beach or maybe wandering round a city and stopping off at a café for a coffee or beer or just watch the world go by. You're just taking it easy after a period of hard work. Some of our students have managed to have a bit of R&R here in London as well as studying, enjoying, for instance, a Saturday lunch with some paella round at my place.

I think that R&R is an interesting phrase for learners of English for two reasons. Firstly, it's an example of the way we like to use rhyme and rhythm in English sometimes, even though this means using two words which essentially mean the same thing! So you might look for some peace and quiet, or a bar might be dark and dingy, the weather nice and sunny or a day dull and boring (hence this story about town twinning!). R&R is also an example of how we like to create acronyms (words made from the first letter of each word in a phrase). This is particularly common in work and military settings, which according to Wikipedia is

where R&R originates. So you might need to speak to HR asap about your CPD (talk to human resources as soon as possible about your continuing professional development)!

*Did you manage to recharge your batteries this summer? How? What do you usually do when you feel a bit run-down? What do you think the best way to jump-start your day is?*

### **RECHARGE YOUR BATTERIES**

It seems like only yesterday that we announced we would be taking a two-week break from writing our words of the day – and here we are again! The last fortnight has flown by! I spent a week camping in a field in West Wales, a few miles from some incredible beaches, and – best of all – completely off-grid, so I had no Internet connection for week. This meant a week of not worrying about whether I needed to get back to someone now or later, a week of not looking at Facebook and a week of not having to keep our Instagram page updated. Instead, I was free to go for long walks in the countryside, sit in little country cafés and cook on open fires under the stars. It was heavenly!

I then spent a week in Yaroslavl, in Russia, with a wonderful group of local teachers and even though I was working, it was a change of scene – and as the old saying says, sometimes a change is as good as a rest! It was also really rewarding exchanging ideas and experiences with such motivated, focused teachers. I'm now back home in London, where – predictably – it's pouring with rain, but that doesn't matter. My batteries are now fully charged and I'm ready to face the coming weeks. If you recharge your batteries, you have a rest after you've been working a lot, in order to get yourself for more work later on! Batteries provide us with some other expressions for describing how we feel, and are a good metaphor. It seems that in English at least energy levels are like a battery! In the same way as using the Internet a lot can drain your battery, so we sometimes get to the end of the week with absolutely no energy left, feeling completely drained! We need the weekend to recharge. If you leave a light on in your car overnight, it can run the battery down and you might have to jump-start the car in the morning by connecting its engine to another car's engine (using jump leads). If you're feeling a bit run-down yourself, you might have a double espresso for breakfast – to jump-start your day! Anyway, we hope that you've managed to



recharge your batteries over the summer and are raring to go as the new term approaches and we head into autumn.

*Think of two places / experiences you've really enjoyed and explain why.*

*End by asking What's not to like?*

### **WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE?**

One of the best things about having a job that involves lots of travelling is that I get to go to lots of places that I might otherwise not visit – places that most people I know back home have basically no idea about. Friends and (older) family members are usually just confused when I tell them how amazing Aleppo in Syria was (I was last there a few months before the war broke out ... just in case you were wondering), how much I enjoyed being in Kazakhstan or how much I love going to Russia.

When I phoned my dad yesterday, we chatted about my recent trip to Yaroslavl. In his mind, Russia is still called the Soviet Union and is associated with spies, Lada cars, bad jumpers and the legendary goalkeeper Lev Yashin. He's surprised that I've even been there – and utterly amazed at how highly I speak of it. But as I always tell him: the food's great, the scenery is spectacular, it's an incredibly diverse country, it's got a rich and remarkable history, and the people are wonderful – funny, well educated, expressive, eccentric and incredibly hospitable. Oh, and they like a drink as well. What's not to like?

Just in case you weren't sure, 'What's not to like?' isn't a real question. It's a rhetorical question – a question you ask without expecting (or wanting) an answer. It's basically something we say once we've finished explaining why we like something. It shows we think something is great and that no-one could possibly disagree with us. For example, some of my better-paid friends sometimes ask me if I'm still teaching English to students here in London – as though I'm one day going to grow up and get a proper job! I honestly can't imagine ever doing anything except teaching. I mean, I get to meet loads of really interesting people, I learn about their lives and experiences and countries and languages, I get to show them parts of London they'd never otherwise see, and I end up with friends all over the world. What's not to like?

Of course, the question is sometimes asked ironically too. For instance, imagine you stayed in the hotel from hell and decided to write a review on TripAdvisor, it might read something like this: "*Tiny beds that were barely big enough for a child, filthy rooms crawling with cockroaches, food that your dog would struggle with and staff who redefined the word rude. I know, right. What's not to like?*"

*What's your device? Have you ever dropped it or broken it? How?*

#### **YOUR DEVICE**

So I was coming home from London Language Lab the other day and on the tube I saw a sign which said "Take care of your device. Dropped items cause delays". What struck me first about this, being a bit of a language nerd, was the subtle changes of meaning and usage that words take on over time. If you look in the Macmillan Dictionary, the word device is defined like this:

– a machine or piece of equipment that does a particular thing and the examples of usage are these: a device for measuring humidity in the air or labour-saving devices like the dishwasher and the microwave.

These are quite specialised and mechanical kinds of devices, whereas when we say your device, we mean it as a general name for things like a mobile phone, tablets, smart watches, etc. which we all carry round with us and use – not for a particular thing, but pretty much anything.

So passing on from my nerdish thoughts on words and grammar, I then thought "Wow! A lot of people must be dropping their devices on the tracks if they have to put a notice up" and then I saw the notice next to it (in fact it was part of the same sign) telling people to keep off the track because there's a risk of life-changing injuries. In other words, people are not only careless enough to drop their devices and delay trains, but stupid enough to then try and pick them up off the tracks! This seems to be one more example of accidents that have become associated with mobile phones, from texting while driving to being robbed when playing Pokemon Go. Maybe we shall get a new word combination in dictionaries such as 'device accident'!

*Does your language have a fixed phrase that's usually said before meals?*

*What was said before meals in your house when you were growing up – by both parents and children? What do you know about English food? What have you tried? Where? What did you think of it? Do you eat much foreign food? What's your favourite? What would you like to try, but haven't yet?*

### **BON APPETITE!**

You probably don't need me to tell you that food culture in England is (and yes, I am using the classic English art of understatement here!) slightly different to much of the rest of the world. We seem to have developed a reputation for being a bit backwards when it comes to cuisine. As Londoners, we'd naturally dispute this view of things and – as we like to show our students who study English with us – we believe that one of the joys of the city is that you can easily eat your way round the world here. However, one obvious example of how eccentric we are here when it comes to eating connects to a question we're often asked: what do you say before eating with English people? Or, in other words, what's the English for bon appétit?

Now, most languages that I have any experience of have fixed expressions that are used in this particular situation. And you could argue that the English for bon appétit is ... well, bon appétit. As so many of our food-related words (like cuisine itself, of course) come from French, the term does exist and it is used in English. However, as with many words derived from French, it also has a whiff of social climbing about it and can seem pretentious.

In reality, the phrases people use both to announce the fact that food is on the table and ready to eat AND the phrases that people use before eating vary wildly – and, as with so much native-speaker usage – depend on age, region and class. I decided to ask Facebook friends what was said in their households before meals and here's a selection of what they told me:

*To announce to the family food was ready:*

Wash your hands.

Grub up! (= the food is ready ... grub is an informal word for food)

Dig in everyone! (= start eating now!)

Don't wait. Tuck in. (= start eating)

Enjoy!

*And when someone else has prepared the meal for you:*

This looks great / delicious / wonderful / nice/ very good. Thank you!

In my experience, most students expect there to be some kind of formal phrase like they have in their own countries, but if you're eating at someone's house, the most important thing is to compliment the cook at some point during the meal (even if the food is awful!). In restaurants here, it really is OK just to say nothing. Honestly!

*Have you ever felt all conferenced out? Or Harry Pottered out? Or transfer windowed out? When? Why?*

*Can you think of any other things you got really fed up with and felt that you'd had enough of? Why?*

### **HARRY POTTERED OUT**

I spent last Friday and Saturday in Bologna, Italy, where I was talking at an excellent conference for English-language teachers. In one of the talks that I saw, a teacher was describing a one-week summer school course for kids that she'd helped organise. The week had been based around the Harry Potter books, so kids had made their own costumes, acted out various scenes and so on. "By the end of the five days", she said, "I was totally Harry Pottered out!" In other words, she'd had enough of Harry Potter. She was sick and tired of the books, totally fed up with the story lines and ready for a change!

Now, obviously, Harry Pottered out isn't really our word of the day' rather, it's actually an example of a common way in which we can change almost any noun into an adjective in order to show we're bored of something and have reached our limit with it. I did Google the word and found there are actually already 373 examples on the Web, so it wasn't a completely new creation – but it might as well have been. Other recent examples I've heard of this construction include a sentence I heard during the coffee break before the final session in Bologna, by which point energy levels were dropping and most people were ready to go home. "I don't know about you," one teacher asked me, "but I'm well and truly conferenced out!"

The transfer window – the time during which football clubs can buy and sell new players – closed at the end of August, and I was delighted that my own team, Arsenal, managed to buy a few reinforcements to help with the coming season. However, given the way that newspapers use this time to boost their circulation by spreading endless gossip and

rumours around, I was also, like many other football fans, completely transfer windowed out and desperate for it to end!

Other recent examples I've come across include:

*I'm totally yoga-ed out. I think I need to take a bit of a break from it for a while.*

*I'm all Soprano-ed out. I must've watched two whole series back to back this weekend.*

*All we seem to do in my Spanish class is verb endings. I'm starting to get a bit grammar-ed out.*

You get the idea. Now, there's no reason why this kind of creativity should be left only to native speakers. Non-natives are free to come up with new and inventive examples using their own ideas and experiences. Indeed, during a recent trip to Russia, I was told over breakfast one day that one of the other guests "was all kasha-ed out". Kasha is a kind of Russian porridge – and it had been on offer every single day we were in the hotel, so I knew the feeling!

#### **DRAW A BLANK**

So this evening, I was trying to think of what to write for our Word of the day feature. Anyone who has ever done any writing under any kind of pressure – whether it was at school or whether it's something you do quite regularly – will know that a blank page can fill you with dread. There's a deadline to meet. You know you have to hand in the work. What do you write? It could be anything. Literally anything. "Look at that blank page! I'm not writing anything!" you find yourself thinking. "I must write something. But what do I write? I should do something to get some inspiration, but what?" And on and on it goes. This clip from a film called *Adaptation* sums up the feeling pretty well.

Well, I reached that moment of writer's block this evening. I sat there staring at my blank computer screen for what seemed like hours and then I went looking for inspiration – first in the kitchen (a cup of tea and some biscuits) and then in newspapers and on the Internet. But nothing I found seemed to take my fancy: there were endless articles on Brexit and whether it should be hard or soft. We could talk about that, but I think you've had a fair bit about that already and it'll no doubt come up again in the future. Then there was plenty of sport and local politics, but it all seemed ... I don't know ... somehow not the kind of thing that I imagine you'd like. "Oh man! I need to get this done, there must be something", I kept

on telling myself, but I couldn't think of a single thing and all my searches had drawn a blank. And then I suddenly I thought that maybe I hadn't after all – drawn a blank, that is!

*Have you ever had writer's block? What's a good way to get over it?*

*Have you ever tried to find a solution, but drawn a blank?*

*Have you ever been in a situation where your mind went blank?*

#### **IF YOU'RE MAKING ONE**

A: Do you want a cup of tea?

B: If you're making one.

Now you see, I don't see anything strange in this exchange. To me, it's completely normal, but apparently some students of English seem to find it really rather odd. My Spanish sister-in-law pointed this out to me when she first came to London and was learning English:

S: Why do you say that?

Me: Say what?

S: If you're making one.

Me: Because ... because ... well, you know ... I'm not that bothered and I don't want you to make a cup of team just for me ...

S: But I'm obviously making one. I'm not going to offer you some tea and then ask you to make it, am I?

Me: I guess... it's just ... erm ... maybe more polite or something? (By this point, I've started to feel as if I'm losing this argument!)

S: Well, for me, it doesn't make any sense.

And I guess it doesn't, but having had this pointed out to me hasn't stopped me saying it. It's just one of those things we say. And as a learner, you just have to accept this sometimes and choose to learn these phrases – or not, as you wish. In the end, 'if you're making one' basically just means 'Yes, please'. There's the literal meaning of the words that my sister-in-law was hearing and then there's the overall intention and (culturally) contextual meaning. I'm sure there must be equivalent scenarios in your language. We're not completely mad here in England, are we?

Anyway, you may be wondering why we're looking at this phrase today. Well, my sister-in-law is staying at our place again at the moment and this morning as I was cutting bread, I asked her 'Would you like some toast?' And without thinking she replied "If you're making some!" Ha! Our strange English ways have won out.

*Do you know any other phrases in English that seem strange or illogical to you?  
What about in other languages?*

#### **THE LESSER OF TWO EVILS**

As I'm sure you're well aware, today is the day that America goes to the polls and votes to choose a new president. Well, technically, voting has been going on for some time already and over 40 million people have already cast their vote, but today sees the other 120 million people finally voice their choice. Over recent days, you've probably seen both Donald Trump and Hilary Clinton hitting the campaign trail one last time in a bid to win over any floating voters who haven't decided which way to vote yet. Their main focus has been on the major swing states of Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania, where the final result could go either way.

You don't need me to tell you that it's been an incredibly toxic election campaign perhaps most notable for the bitter personal attacks the two candidates have launched against each other. It's also been notable for the hatred that both candidates have attracted not only from their political opponents, but also from many within their own parties! For many Americans, the 2016 election is less about voting for their favourite candidate and more about choosing the lesser of two evils.

The idea behind the lesser of two evils principle is that when you're faced with selecting from two unpleasant options, the one which is least harmful should be chosen. During the Cold War era, a pragmatic "lesser evil" foreign policy strategy was used by the United States and, to a lesser extent, several other countries. It explains the support that the US gave to dictators in developing nations if they were regarded as anti-Communist!

It's also at the heart of tactical voting – where people end up voting for a candidate other than your favoured option in order to prevent what is seen as an undesirable outcome. This is why many of those who supported the Socialist candidate Bernie Sanders are now going to bite the bullet and put a cross next to Hilary Clinton's name, no matter how much they may dislike her. Better the devil you know, as the old saying puts it.

As with many fixed phrases in English, there's a Greek myth that perfectly captures the idea behind the phrase. Odysseus had to choose between sailing close to the multi-headed monster Scylla or the terrible whirlpool Charybdis, which sucked ships down to the bottom of the sea. He chose Scylla as the lesser of two evils, and lost six of his companions, but if he'd gone near Charybdis, all would've been lost!

*Have you ever had to choose between the lesser of two evils? When? Why?*

*Can you think of any other foreign policy decisions that can explained by this idea?*

*Can you think of any other contexts in which the idea might apply?*

### CRACKING

Yesterday morning one of my students came into class looking slightly confused. "I've got a question about something my English housemate said", he told me. "OK. Let's hear it, then". "Well, I know she went to see this new sci-fi film, Arrival. Do you know it?" "Well, I've heard of it", I replied, "but it doesn't really look like my kind of thing, to be honest. But anyway, what was the problem?" "Well, this morning, I asked her if she'd enjoyed it and she just said it was cracking." "Right." "Well, does that mean it was good or bad, because she looked happy when she said this, but I know that if you crack a plate or a cup, it's bad, right, because you damage it."

I laughed, but also realised that I couldn't remember ever teaching the word cracking, despite the fact that I know it's a word I use all the time to describe things I've greatly enjoyed. In fact the list of things I frequently describe using this adjective is as long as your arm: "What a cracking goal", I tell my son as we watch a video Mesut Ozil's moment of magic against Ludogorets for the hundredth time; "That's a cracking idea", I'll tell my business partner Andrew, as he comes up with yet another scheme; "How was Dublin / Russia / Spain / Indonesia?" friends ask me after I've been away on a trip somewhere. "Cracking", I reply! On finishing off a plate of roast beef in the pub last Sunday, I pushed the plate away and announced "That was cracking!" "That was a cracking film", "I had a cracking time", "I had a cracking couple of days", "It's a cracking story" . . . the list goes on and on!

Cracking is one of those words that rarely appears in coursebooks as it's seen as too informal, or – perhaps – as too British (though I've actually no idea if it's said on the other side of the pond – in America – or not!). Also, we're often told that most conversations these



days are between non-natives rather than with native speakers . . . and yet it's the kind of word that learners who do encounter Brits will very probably hear. It certainly helped my student yesterday – and I hope it helps you too!

*When was the last time you saw a cracking film? What made it so good?*

*What was the last cracking place you visited?*

*Do you like the idea of learning informal native speaker expressions like this? Why? / Why not?*

### **SURGERY**

Before class on Monday, I was chatting about my weekend with a few students who'd turned up early. I was explaining a bit about the recent problems I'd had trying to make a doctor's appointment for my son and said 'I had to spend an hour on the phone to the surgery', which created some discussion because surgery is just one of those words that are a bit confusing in terms of the way we use them – and, of course, thus rather annoying to students learning English! Surgery can be used to talk about having an operation, the place where you have an operation (sometimes also known as the operating theatre), the place where you go to see a doctor (sometimes also simply called the doctor's – or the dentist's – and in American English the doctor's office) and the time you get advice from the doctor (sometimes also consultation)! So, for example:

*I injured my knee recently and the doctor says it'll need surgery to fix it.*

*The surgery was very complicated and lasted 12 hours. (an operation)*

*You should be taken up to surgery before 1.*

*He's in surgery now, but we'll call you when he's back. (the operating theatre)*

*I was on the phone to the surgery for an hour to try and make an appointment.*

*Our doctor's surgery has a satisfaction rating of one star on Google! (doctor's office)*

By the way, these last two sentences are true for me and in Britain such situations are pretty common. Getting an appointment at a surgery can be very difficult. After my hour on the phone to get an appointment for my son, I was told I couldn't have one for ten days! Local GP surgeries (a GP is your local doctor that you usually see first) are rated by NHS surveys and also by Google, and my local practice (surgery) does indeed have a very low rating.

The last meaning of surgery, as in Surgery hours start at 8 in the morning and finish at 6 in the evening is interesting because it's also used increasingly widely outside the field of medicine. It's been used for a long time by Members of Parliament, who hold a weekly (or monthly) surgery, where the local people in the area they represent (their constituency) can go and ask for help and advice to solve problems. The MP often does actually sort out the problems too, partly because it will be these people who will elect them next time.

Bike shops offer cycle surgeries for people to help them do small repairs, universities sometimes offer writing surgeries, where students can ask for advice and get help with their essays, and you might also have a local government or a charity offering surgeries on law.

*Do you know anyone who has had surgery recently? What for?*

*What's your local surgery like? Do you think they offer a good service? Why? / Why not?*

*Do MPs in your country hold surgeries? Do you think they are / would be effective?*

*Can you think of any other kinds of surgeries it would be good to have access to?*

#### **YOU'RE BEST ..... - ING**

I overheard an awkward conversation between a native speaker and some tourists this morning in the centre of London. It was one of those exchanges that, as an English language teacher, I often feel compelled to intervene in, although this time at least I managed to resist the temptation! "Excuse me. You can tell me where is Leicester Square?" the most confident – and youngest – of the tourists asked a man in front of me. "Yeah. Course," he started. "You're best nipping down the back here and then popping out down opposite where Les Mis is on, alright?" The tourists looked totally confused and managed only to reply by asking "Best?" Realising he may have been slightly optimistic in his use of everyday English, the local managed to grade his language second time around and explained – whilst also waving and pointing more – that they needed to walk down the small street in front of them, then come out onto the main road when they could see the theatre where Les Miserables is playing. They looked grateful, as well as slightly scared, and went off in the right direction.

I walked in to work thinking about how bad many native speakers are at speaking to non-natives, a point made in a recent BBC article, but also thinking about the fact that the only part of the initial message the tourist had grasped was the word BEST. To me, this is symbolic of a problem lots of language learners face – and it's to do with the way grammar is

often presented. Most learners will learn BEST as a superlative form of GOOD. They may see sentences like It was the best pizza I've ever had or That's the best film I've seen this year. They probably also do a lesson on giving advice, where they learn YOU SHOULD. They may do a slightly strange practice that involves a conversation a bit like this:

*I have a headache. What should I do?*

*> You shouldn't panic. You should stay calm and you should take some aspirin.*

*How many should I take?*

*> You should do take two. You shouldn't take more than that.*

But because too few classes treat spoken language seriously or try to teach things that are often actually said, what they WON'T learn is that we often give advice by saying YOU'RE BEST .... - ING! It's also common to say YOU'RE BEST OFF instead, which means exactly the same thing. Here are a few examples that came up from a quick Google:

*You're best taking an umbrella. It's going to chuck it down later.*

*It's a long enough flight across at least five time zones — surely you're best paying for quality*

*You're best off treating folk the way you'd want to be treated and leaving their choices to them.*

*If you want to grind up whole spices on your own, you're best off using a coffee grinder.*

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying we shouldn't teach best as a superlative or that it's not useful to learn You should. What we are saying is that if you want to really develop your fluency, you need to see patterns beyond the traditional canon and you need the chance to practise using them in meaningful contexts.

## OWN

Learning a language is not only about getting to grips with new items you encounter. It's also about learning how to use words you've already encountered in new and different combinations, as well as paying attention to the way in which items you think you know are slowly changing. Language change is one of life's constants, and advertising is one of the main mediums through which change becomes apparent and moves into more mainstream use.

Recently, I've noticed a few new meanings of the word OWN starting to become more widely used, a fact I was reminded of this morning when I cycled past the advert above

on my way into work. It's an advert for the new LIVE function that Facebook is currently promoting, a feature that allows you to 'broadcast' live to your friends and followers. Buskers are people who perform music in the streets – or other public places – for money and in this context, owning it means performing or playing incredibly well, playing a song so brilliantly that you somehow 'own' it even if it's a cover version of someone else's track. The busker has made the song their own. This use of the word is common on talent shows such as The X-Factor. After watching a great performance, judges may well comment that a singer "totally owned it"!

There's a second use of OWN has crept in from computer gaming, where OWN means something like beat easily, so teenagers may well boast of totally owning a friend on Wii or owning their kid brother on FIFA 16. This use is also used in discussions about sports events, so if a defender manages to prevent, say, Ronaldo from scoring or from creating any chances, fans might say that the defender totally owned Ronaldo!

Finally, there's a use that I've noticed in posts by American friends in the wake of Donald Trump's election victory. Perhaps the best example comes from a gay friend's post on social media, where he wrote "if you voted for Trump for whatever reason, accept that you voted against me. I don't hate you for it, but I do want you to own it and realize the impact it will have on me and people like me." Here, OWN seems to basically be a command, meaning something like face it and accept the reality of the situation. This use seems widespread in American political discourse too, where I've seen headlines like "Hey, GOP (Grand Old Party – the nickname for the Republican Party that Trump represents). You created the Trump monster. Own it!" or 'Dear neo-liberal Democrats: This is YOUR mess, own it!"

*Do you get buskers where you live? Do you have a favourite?*

*Do you like talent shows like The X-Factor?*

*Have you ever come across any new uses of words you already knew – in English or in your own language?*

#### **A BIT NIPPY**

After an Indian summer – a period of warm weather in autumn, when it's usually pretty cold – that seemed to last for months, London has suddenly turned really cold. Over

the last few days, temperatures have plummeted and at night it's regularly dropping below zero out there. It's so cold that there's a dusting (a thin layer) of frost on the garden grass when I come down in the morning to make coffee. When I pop out to get the milk from my front doorstep, it's so cold I can see my breath and I have to rub my hands together to keep them warm. When I kids are getting ready to go to school, I remind them: Wrap up warm or you'll freeze to death out there. It's proper hat and scarf weather!

And, of course, like lots of English people, I live in quite an old house. Our place dates back to the middle of the 19th century, so is over 150 years old. This gives the house character, but it also means that it's both difficult and expensive to heat properly. Gas prices have gone through the roof recently – they've gone up a lot; and the whole place is quite draughty (/ˈdra:fti/) – it's a bit uncomfortable because of all the cold wind that blows into it. Still, at least we've got a lovely open fire in the front room, which warms the place up a bit and makes it nice and cosy.

Anyway, all of this got me thinking about the many different ways we talk about cold weather in English. When we pass neighbours in the street or when we walk off the street into a shop, one of the most common things we say at times like this is Cor! It's a bit nippy out there, isn't it! We don't really expect much of a reply to this – perhaps an I know! or a Tell me about it! but that's about it.

Other common things you might hear, all of which basically mean the same thing, are:

**It's freezing out there.**

**It's a bit parky out there today.**

**It's bitter out today, isn't it!**

**Wrap up! It's raw out there today!**

**It's Baltic out there!** (Presumably because the Baltic countries – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – are believed to be very cold!)

and perhaps my favourite, which requires some explaining:

**It's brass monkeys out there!**

Brass is a kind of metal, and apparently during the 19th century, it was common for tourists returning from the Far East to bring as a souvenir three brass monkeys – representing the idea of hearing no evil, seeing no evil, and speaking no evil! The phrase above is a shortened version of the rather rude It's cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey, which you still sometimes hear in its entirety, although I've also heard more polite versions such as cold enough to freeze the nose / tail off . . . as well! You're safe just saying BRASS MONKEYS instead of FREEZING though and none of the dictionary definitions suggest it's in any way offensive!

*What's the coldest it usually gets where you live?*

*Do you prefer cold or hot weather? Why?*

*What's the most extreme weather you've ever experienced?*

*Do you like the idea of living in an old house? Why? / Why not?*

### **Bah humbug!**

The phrase Bah, humbug! comes from the Charles Dickens' story *A Christmas Carol* and is said by the main character Scrooge, who doesn't like anything about Christmas. People can be called **a scrooge** when they don't like spending money. You might say 'Don't be such a scrooge' or 'He's a right scrooge' (and let's face it, they usually are men!). These days, **Bah humbug!** is used more as a joke when you know you are basically complaining about things other people enjoy or you are refusing to join in the fun. You might call someone like this **a party pooper** (if you are talking about parties) or more generally, you can say they're a **whinger** or (my personal favourite, though some may think it's bit rude) a **miserable git**.

Of course, there is a lot about Christmas that does bring out the miserable git in me and makes me proclaim Bah humbug! Here are just a few of my pet hates at this time of year:

Christmas shopping! Hordes of people in the streets desperately searching for that perfect present, which recent research suggests most recipients won't actually want anyway! Bah humbug!

People decorating their houses with thousands of lights and tacky Christmas tat. Think about the electricity bills! Think about global warming! Bah humbug!

Wearing paper hats and other forced fun at Christmas parties. Bah, humbug!

Endless terrible Christmas music played 24-7. Everywhere. Bah, humbug!

Turkey. An over-sized, tasteless chicken that you have to eat till New Year in order to finish it! Bah, humbug!

Mulled wine. There is a reason no-one drinks this stuff at any other time of the year. Personally, I think one glass is enough for a lifetime. Bah humbug!

I don't think that the message of *A Christmas Carol* was that at Christmas we should all have to embrace rampant consumerism and stuffing ourselves stupid all holiday, so I wouldn't say I am a complete scrooge here. I do actually like some things about Christmas, but I shall leave that to our next post: Christmas Cheer.

## CHRISTMAS CHEER

Despite my mutterings of Bah humbug! in the last post, I do actually like a bit of Christmas cheer. Over the last couple of weeks, I've been out quite a bit catching up with friends who I haven't seen for a while, which is always nice. Yes, we should meet up more often, but sometimes you need an excuse like a birthday or Christmas to force the issue and make sure you get together. Of course, this may mean having to put up with some crowded bars and Christmas music, but then among the dreadful songs and carols, there is a good chance you'll hear Slade's Merry Christmas Everybody which is proper Christmas cheer.

When my kids were younger, I did enjoy leaving them presents as Santa. They would leave a pillowcase out at the end of their bed (stockings are bit too small, aren't they?), a glass of something – "Yes, son, Santa definitely prefers beer to Coca Cola" – and a mince pie (a small cake made of pastry filled with dried fruits). I know that when you encourage your kids to believe in Father Christmas you're basically telling them lies, but hearing the excitement of kids waking up to find that Santa has been and then unwrapping their presents ... well, it can't help but bring a smile to your face.

I know for some making Christmas lunch is a bit of a burden involving hours in the kitchen, but personally I like cooking so making Christmas lunch with all the trimmings is pretty enjoyable. I prefer goose to turkey, served with something like red cabbage and apple, crispy roast potatoes and maybe some mashed carrots and swede (something my mother always did, though I mix in a bit of coriander).

After lunch, because you are usually stuffed and basically unable to move, you then slump on the sofa to watch the big film or the Christmas day episode of the soap, EastEnders. EastEnders is notoriously miserable, and pretty much every Christmas day episode ends up with a screaming match over lunch. Here's a classic example. It's not exactly Christmas cheer, but it certainly makes you happy to know that your family are nowhere near as bad as them.

For us in the UK, the day after Christmas (Boxing Day) is also a holiday here. For some, that means the Boxing Day Sales and more shopping, which is my idea of hell. For those of us who prefer a different kind of Christmas cheer, it means going out for a walk with friends – maybe on Hampstead Heath or in one of the other great parks in London. What could be nicer?

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