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Darjeeling tea pickers continue strike

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Today's contents

The Article	2
Warm-ups	3
Before Reading / Listening	4
While Reading / Listening	5
After Reading	6
Discussion	7
Speaking	8
Listening Gap Fill	9
Homework	10
Answers	11

17 July, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Darjeeling tea pickers continue strike

BNE: Talks between striking tea workers and their bosses in India's West Bengal state have broken down. Tea pickers and leaf sorters from 346 plantations have been on strike for the past six days. They are demanding increased wages and improved working conditions. Their union leaders are pushing to increase the daily minimum wage from one dollar a day to two dollars. Plantation bosses have stated the doubling of the daily wage to two dollars is economically impossible.

Tea workers have promised to continue their strike until plantation owners meet their demands. Mino Aprabash, a veteran 58-year-old tea picker, warned her bosses she had little to lose. She said: "We work for almost nothing. We work our fingers to the bone while the owners become richer and richer. It's time we got a fair deal." She rejected the 46 Rupees (one U.S. dollar) a day offered by her bosses. The local government may have to enter the talks to resolve the issue and put an end to the strike.

WARM-UPS

1. A DOLLAR A DAY: Tea plantation workers who pick the world famous Darjeeling tea get paid a dollar a day. In pairs / groups, talk about whether it is wrong to pay someone just one dollar for up to 12 hours of work a day. What is the minimum hourly rate you would work for? Have you ever done "slave labor"? What can you buy with one dollar in your country?

2. QUICK ROLE PLAY: Students A are the bosses of a tea company. You think tea is the greatest drink on Earth. Students B are bosses of a coffee company. You think coffee is the greatest drink on Earth. In pairs, role play a discussion between the tea company bosses and the coffee company bosses. Which drink is best?

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Pay talks / strikes / tea workers / plantations / increased wages / working conditions / slave labor / working your fingers to the bone / a dollar a day

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. TEA: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "tea". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. TEA ROLES: In pairs / groups, discuss the following topics related to tea:

- a. The importance of tea to me.
- b. The part tea plays in my life.
- c. The history of tea in my country.
- d. Tea and health.
- e. Teas around the world.
- f. Tea drinking habits.
- g. Tea or coffee?
- h. English tea, milk tea, iced tea....

Change partners and share what you talked about.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Tea plantation workers across India are on strike. | T / F |
| b. The strike is now in its 346 th day. | T / F |
| c. Workers want their wages doubled to \$2 a day. | T / F |
| d. Plantation owners are considering doubling workers' wages. | T / F |
| e. Workers say they will continue their strike for as long as necessary. | T / F |
| f. One worker said she has no bones left on her fingers. | T / F |
| g. Plantation owners are becoming poorer and poorer. | T / F |
| h. The national government may enter the talks. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| a. talks | financially |
| b. broken down | peanuts |
| c. past | trying |
| d. pushing | stopped |
| e. economically | vowed |
| f. promised | long-serving |
| g. veteran | negotiations |
| h. almost nothing | settle |
| i. deal | last |
| j. resolve | agreement |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. Talks between striking | got a fair deal |
| b. on strike | tea workers and their bosses |
| c. improved working | minimum wage |
| d. daily | to the bone |
| e. economically | to the strike |
| f. Tea workers have promised to | conditions |
| g. We work our fingers | the issue |
| h. It's time we | impossible |
| i. resolve | for the past six days |
| j. put an end | continue their strike |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the correct spaces.

Darjeeling tea pickers continue strike

BNE: Talks between _____ tea workers and their bosses in India's West Bengal state have _____ down. Tea pickers and leaf _____ from 346 plantations have been on strike for the past six days. They are demanding increased _____ and improved working _____. Their union leaders are _____ to increase the daily minimum wage from one dollar a day to two dollars. Plantation bosses have stated the _____ of the daily wage to two dollars is _____ impossible.

Tea workers have _____ to continue their strike until plantation owners meet their _____. Minoo Aprabash, a _____ 58-year-old tea picker, warned her bosses she had _____ to lose. She said: "We work for almost nothing. We work our fingers to the _____ while the owners become richer and richer. It's time we got a fair _____." She _____ the 46 Rupees (one U.S. dollar) a day offered by her bosses. The local government may have to enter the talks to _____ the issue and put an end to the strike.

conditions
sorters
striking
economically
wages
doubling
broken
pushing

demands
rejected
little
resolve
promised
deal
veteran
bone

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'tea'** and **'strike'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT TEA SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about tea.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|---------------|------------|
| • talks | • continue |
| • 346 | • veteran |
| • demanding | • bone |
| • pushing | • richer |
| • two dollars | • deal |
| • impossible | • resolve |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What did you think when you first saw this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. Do you like Darjeeling tea?
- d. What is your favorite kind of tea?
- e. Are you mainly a tea or coffee drinker?
- f. Is tea an important part of the culture in your country?
- g. What do you think of tea plantation bosses paying their workers a dollar a day?
- h. Do you think there should be a world boycott of goods from companies that pay such low wages?
- i. Have you ever gone or would you ever go on strike?
- j. What do you think a fair deal would be?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What did you think about what you read?
- c. What is your image of Indian tea plantations?
- d. Have you ever worked for "almost nothing"?
- e. Have you ever felt you worked your fingers to the bone?
- f. What do you think life is like in India on a dollar a day?
- g. What do you think of the tea plantation bosses?
- h. For how long do you think the tea plantation workers should strike?
- i. What kind of "slave labor" is there in your country?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

ROLE PLAY: This role play is to discuss how to settle the strike in West Bengal. Team up with classmates who have the same role as you. Develop your roles and discuss ideas and “strategies” before the role play begins.

Introduce yourself to the other role players before the role play begins.

Role A – Tea plantation worker

A dollar a day is totally ridiculous. You work 12 hours a day. You are treated like a slave. You have a family. The boss drives a Mercedes. Company profits were the highest ever last year. You will strike forever if you have to.

Think of other reasons with your “team” why your wages should be doubled.

Role B – Tea plantation boss

No industry ever doubles its workers’ wages. If these workers don’t want to work, there are other people who will work. The workers should protect the international name of Darjeeling tea. Money from profits is spent on research and international marketing. Workers are ungrateful.

Think of other reasons with your “team” why wages cannot be doubled.

Role C – Local government strike expert

You have a lot of tea plantation shares. A long strike will mean you lose money. Your sisters work 12 hours a day in the plantations. You want them to have more money. A long strike would damage the reputation of Darjeeling tea. You hate the tea plantation boss, who is very rich.

With your “team”, decide what you should do.

Role D – Tea drinker

You are angry that plantation workers receive just one dollar a day. You hate greedy company owners. You will organize an international boycott of Darjeeling tea if wages are not doubled. You think management should receive a pay cut to allow workers a pay raise.

Think of other reasons with your “team” why wages should be doubled.

Change roles and repeat the role play. Comment in groups about the differences between the two role plays.

In pairs / groups, discuss whether you really believe in what you said while you were in your roles.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Darjeeling tea pickers continue strike

BNE: Talks between _____ tea workers and their bosses in India's West Bengal state have broken down. Tea _____ and leaf _____ from 346 plantations have been on strike for the past six days. They are demanding increased wages and _____ working conditions. Their union leaders are pushing to increase the daily _____ wage from one dollar a day to two dollars. Plantation bosses have stated the _____ of the daily wage to two dollars is economically impossible.

Tea workers have _____ to continue their strike until plantation owners meet their demands. Minoo Aprabash, a veteran 58-year-old tea picker, _____ her bosses she had little to lose. She said: "We work for _____ . We work our fingers to the bone while the owners become richer and richer. It's time we got a _____ ." She rejected the 46 Rupees (one U.S. dollar) a day offered by her bosses. The local government may have to enter the talks to _____ the issue and _____ to the strike.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on Darjeeling tea. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. TEA: Make a poster on teas from around the world. Include cultural traditions from different countries. Show your poster to your classmates in your next lesson and explain what you found out.

4. LETTER: Write a letter to the head of the Darjeeling tea plantation management. Explain what you think of the strike. Give advice on what you think should be done to end the strike. Read your letter to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. F c. T d. F e. T f. F g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. talks	negotiations
b. broken down	stopped
c. past	last
d. pushing	trying
e. economically	financially
f. promised	vowed
g. veteran	long-serving
h. almost nothing	peanuts
i. deal	agreement
j. resolve	settle

PHRASE MATCH:

a. Talks between striking	tea workers and their bosses
b. on strike	for the past six days
c. improved working	conditions
d. daily	minimum wage
e. economically	impossible
f. Tea workers have promised to	continue their strike
g. We work our fingers	to the bone
h. It's time we	got a fair deal
i. resolve	the issue
j. put an end	to the strike

GAP FILL:

Darjeeling tea pickers continue strike

BNE: Talks between **striking** tea workers and their bosses in India's West Bengal state have **broken** down. Tea pickers and leaf **sorters** from 346 plantations have been on strike for the past six days. They are demanding increased **wages** and improved working **conditions**. Their union leaders are **pushing** to increase the daily minimum wage from one dollar a day to two dollars. Plantation bosses have stated the **doubling** of the daily wage to two dollars is **economically** impossible.

Tea workers have **promised** to continue their strike until plantation owners meet their **demands**. Minoo Aprabash, a **veteran** 58-year-old tea picker, warned her bosses she had **little** to lose. She said: "We work for almost nothing. We work our fingers to the **bone** while the owners become richer and richer. It's time we got a fair **deal**." She **rejected** the 46 Rupees (one U.S. dollar) a day offered by her bosses. The local government may have to enter the talks to **resolve** the issue and put an end to the strike.