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Ready-to-use ESL / EFL Lessons

## **Shuttle Discovery launches successfully**

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**27 July, 2005**

## **THE ARTICLE**

### **Shuttle Discovery launches successfully**

**BNE:** The 114<sup>th</sup> Space Shuttle flight has blasted off from the Kennedy Space Centre on a mission that gets America's space journey back on track. At stake is the future of space exploration and America's pride in its technological prowess. The shuttle Discovery is 25 years old but carries the hopes of a nation and the lives of seven astronauts. It is America's first manned space mission since the 2003 Columbia catastrophe, which forced NASA back to the drawing board regarding safety. It has overcome many hurdles in getting this far and NASA is confident of a safe return leg. Engineers will conduct a whole string of tests to ensure extensive safety modifications function properly.

Safety has been a primary concern with this launch. A defective fuel gauge sensor thwarted the original lift-off attempt two weeks ago. NASA technicians decided the problem posed no threat to the shuttle, bent the rules a little and gave the go-ahead for today's mission. Hundreds of hi-tech cameras are documenting the launch from every conceivable angle to capture anything that might go awry. There has already been one cause for concern as an "alien object" fell off of the shuttle moments after the huge fuel tanks were jettisoned. NASA refuses to speculate on this, saying they must scrutinize photographic and instrumental data before reaching any conclusions.

## **WARM-UPS**

**1. ASTRONAUTS:** You are astronauts on the Space Shuttle mission. Walk around the classroom and meet the other “astronauts” in your class. Talk about your daily lives, your training, your fears and hopes. Why did you become an astronaut? Is it a good job?

**2. QUICK DEBATE:** Students A think money should be spent on feeding starving African children, not space missions. Students B think spending money on space missions is more important than feeding starving African children. Change partners often.

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

*Space Shuttle / space / Kennedy Space Centre / space exploration / astronauts / safety / NASA / safety / fuel tanks / alien objects*

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

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

**5. BENDING THE RULES:** Write down three rules (governmental, company, school, house...) that you would like to see bent a little. In pairs / groups, talk about these.

**6. ASTRONAUTS:** What would you like to know about astronauts? Discuss what you think the following might entail:

- a. The astronaut interview / selection process
- b. Fitness training
- c. Education regarding the technology of the Space Shuttle
- d. Safety / Emergency procedures
- e. Scientific research
- f. Weightlessness
- g. Living in a tiny space
- h. Reassuring loved ones of your safe return
- i. Other

Change partners and compare 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. America's journey into the unknown is back on track.                  | T / F |
| b. The shuttle Discovery is brand spanking new.                          | T / F |
| c. It is the first manned U.S. space mission since 1999.                 | T / F |
| d. NASA put drawing boards on the shuttle to keep the crew happy.        | T / F |
| e. A defective fuel sensor thwarted the original lift-off two weeks ago. | T / F |
| f. NASA bent the rules and ignored the fuel sensor problem.              | T / F |
| g. An alien object attacked the shuttle's fuel tanks.                    | T / F |
| h. NASA said it is carefully looking at photographs of the alien object. | T / F |

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

- |                      |            |
|----------------------|------------|
| a. blasted           | presented  |
| b. track             | square one |
| c. prowess           | discarded  |
| d. the drawing board | dashed     |
| e. hurdles           | course     |
| f. thwarted          | examine    |
| g. posed             | obstacles  |
| h. awry              | lifted     |
| i. jettisoned        | wrong      |
| j. scrutinize        | mastery    |

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

- |                           |                    |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| a. back on                | any conclusions    |
| b. technological          | of tests           |
| c. back to the            | gauge sensor       |
| d. a safe return          | track              |
| e. conduct a whole string | drawing board      |
| f. defective fuel         | the rules a little |
| g. the problem            | prowess            |
| h. bent                   | conceivable angle  |
| i. from every             | leg                |
| j. before reaching        | posed no threat    |

## **WHILE READING / LISTENING**

**WORD ORDER:** Put the underlined words back into the correct order.

### **Shuttle Discovery launches successfully**

**BNE:** The 114<sup>th</sup> Space Shuttle flight has blasted off from the Kennedy Space Centre on a mission that gets America's track back journey on space. At stake is the future of space exploration and America's prowess in its technological pride. The shuttle Discovery is 25 years old but hopes a nation of carries the and the lives of seven astronauts. It is America's first manned space mission since the 2003 Columbia catastrophe, which forced NASA the board back to drawing regarding safety. It has overcome far hurdles in this many getting and NASA is confident of a safe return leg. Engineers will conduct tests of a string whole to ensure extensive safety modifications function properly.

Safety has been this concern with a primary launch. A defective fuel gauge sensor lift-off the original thwarted attempt two weeks ago. NASA technicians decided the problem posed no threat to the shuttle, gave the little a rules and bent the go-ahead for today's mission. Hundreds of hi-tech cameras are documenting the launch from every conceivable angle to capture awry that go might anything. There has already cause as one for concern been an "alien object" fell off of the shuttle moments after the huge fuel tanks were jettisoned. NASA refuses to speculate on this, saying they must scrutinize photographic and instrumental data conclusions before any reaching.

## **AFTER READING / LISTENING**

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

- 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. WORD ORDER:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers.

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

**5. STUDENT "SPACE EXPLORATION" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about space exploration and the Space Shuttle.

- 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:

- |           |               |
|-----------|---------------|
| • blasted | • defective   |
| • prowess | • posed       |
| • nation  | • documenting |
| • drawing | • awry        |
| • leg     | • jettisoned  |
| • ensure  | • scrutinize  |

## **DISCUSSION**

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

- a. What was your initial reaction to this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. Have you been following news of the Space Shuttle?
- d. Are you interested in the Space Shuttle?
- e. What do you remember about previous launches and missions?
- f. What you consider an offer to go into space on a shuttle?
- g. Do you think money should be spent on space exploration?
- h. What is the benefit of space exploration for ordinary people?
- i. What kind of person is required to become an astronaut?
- j. Do you think people will ever live in space?

### 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 do you think when you see a rocket head into space?
- d. Is space travel humankind's greatest achievement?
- e. Are you interested in astronomy and space?
- f. Where do you think space exploration will be in fifty years?
- g. Do you think there will be wars fought in space one day?
- h. What do you know about the International Space Station?
- i. Have you ever bent the rules?
- 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**

**ASTRONAUT INTERVIEW:** You want to be an astronaut. Look at these interview questions and think about your answers. Take turns in role playing the interviewer and interviewee. Interview two or more people.

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why do you want to become an astronaut?
2. What qualities do you possess that would make you a good astronaut?
3. What contributions would you like to make to science?
4. What will you do to become physically fit enough to go into space?
5. Tell me about a time when you didn't panic under pressure.
6. Give me an example of your ability to work as part of a team.
7. What do you think are the hardships of life as an astronaut?
8. What do you feel about the dangers of the job?
9. What questions would you like to ask me?
10. Other \_\_\_\_\_

Return to the partners you interviewed and tell them whether or not they got the job and why (not).

Find a new partner and talk about who you interviewed and the quality of their answers.



## **LISTENING**

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### **Shuttle Discovery launches successfully**

**BNE:** The 114<sup>th</sup> Space Shuttle flight has \_\_\_\_\_ from the Kennedy Space Centre on a mission that gets America's space journey \_\_\_\_\_. At stake is the future of space exploration and America's pride in its technological \_\_\_\_\_. The shuttle Discovery is 25 years old but carries the hopes of a nation and the lives of seven astronauts. It is America's first \_\_\_\_\_ space mission since the 2003 Columbia catastrophe, which forced NASA back to the \_\_\_\_\_ regarding safety. It has overcome many hurdles in getting this far and NASA is confident of a safe \_\_\_\_\_. Engineers will conduct a whole \_\_\_\_\_ tests to ensure extensive safety modifications function properly.

Safety has been a primary concern with this launch. A \_\_\_\_\_ fuel gauge sensor \_\_\_\_\_ the original lift-off attempt two weeks ago. NASA technicians decided the problem \_\_\_\_\_ no threat to the shuttle, bent the rules a little and gave the go-ahead for today's mission. Hundreds of hi-tech cameras are documenting the launch from every \_\_\_\_\_ angle to capture anything that might go awry. There has already been one cause for concern as an "alien object" fell off of the shuttle moments after the huge fuel tanks were \_\_\_\_\_. NASA refuses to speculate on this, saying they must \_\_\_\_\_ photographic and instrumental data before reaching any conclusions.

## **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 the Space Shuttle Discovery's mission. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

**3. SPACE SHUTTLE:** Make a poster outlining the history of the Space Shuttle. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all find out different things?

**4. LETTER TO THE ASTRONAUTS:** Write a letter to the astronauts of the Discovery. Tell them what you think of them and their work. Read your letter to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

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

### SYNONYM MATCH:

a. blasted	lifted
b. track	course
c. prowess	mastery
d. the drawing board	square one
e. hurdles	obstacles
f. thwarted	dashed
g. posed	presented
h. awry	wrong
i. jettisoned	discarded
j. scrutinize	examine

### PHRASE MATCH:

a. back on	track
b. technological	prowess
c. back to the	drawing board
d. a safe return	leg
e. conduct a whole string	of tests
f. defective fuel	gauge sensor
g. the problem	posed no threat
h. bent	the rules a little
i. from every	conceivable angle
j. before reaching	any conclusions

### WORD ORDER:

#### Shuttle Discovery launches successfully

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