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## **The Breaking News English.com Resource Book**

“1,000 Ideas & Activities For Language Teachers”

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/book.html>

## **Activists fight for water in Mexico**

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## **Contents**

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

**18 March, 2006**

## **THE ARTICLE**

### **Activists fight for water in Mexico**

Fighting wars over water is usually just for fantasy writers and Hollywood epics. No more. The scary reality is that water is becoming so scarce in many parts of the world that people may be close to conflict. The possibility that the poor and waterless might go to war to quench their thirst is, in fact, quite real. At the opening of the fourth World Water Forum in Mexico City yesterday, people fought with police. They were angry at rich countries taking their water. Peaceful protestors carried fake wooden rifles – a warning sign of what the future might hold.

The World Water Forum has highlighted many issues concerning water that divide the world into haves and have-nots. Representatives of 130 nations are meeting to discuss water management. Poor countries have accused rich countries of adding to the water crisis. Multinational corporations make more and more money from selling water to the poor. Mexico is the world's second largest consumer of bottled water. Poor nations use just one-thirtieth of the water of many developed countries. Wars have been fought for less than this terrible statistic.

## WARM-UPS

**1. WATER:** Write down five things you most need water for. Share what you wrote down with your partner(s). Did they have the same needs as you?

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

*War / water / fantasy / Hollywood / scary realities / conflicts / poor people / thirst / rich countries / water management / multinational corporations / mineral water*

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

**3. WATER USE:** With your partner(s), talk about whether the things in the list below are OK. Remember that millions of people around the world have no water. Put a grade of 1 (totally necessary) to 10 (totally unnecessary) next to each water use:

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| _____ Washing the car                   | _____ Swimming pools                 |
| _____ Fountains outside company offices | _____ Taking a bath/shower every day |
| _____ Water slides in swimming pools    | _____ Making sodas and soft drinks   |
| _____ Watering the garden               | _____ Other _____                    |

**4. HEADLINE PREDICTION:** With your partner(s), use all of the words in the "Chat" activity above to predict what the news article will be about. Once you have your story, change partners and compare your different versions. Who was closest to the real story?

**5. WATER HEADLINES:** Do you think these headlines could come true one day? Talk about them as though they were real with your partner(s).

- Europe and Africa go to war over water
- Water reaches ten dollars a liter
- Antarctica answers world water problems
- Car washing with water to be banned
- Scientists reduce our body's water needs by 30 percent
- Water pipeline from Mars opens tomorrow
- Ninety percent of Earth's water now dangerous to drink
- Man receives 20 years in prison for stealing water ration tickets
- There is no water shortage

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

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

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

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| a. A new Hollywood movie shows water wars in Mexico City.                 | T / F |
| b. It is becoming increasingly possible people may fight wars over water. | T / F |
| c. People fought with police because they were angry at rich nations.     | T / F |
| d. Protestors hit police with wooden rifles.                              | T / F |
| e. The worries over water showed how united the world is.                 | T / F |
| f. Multinational companies make lots of money selling water to the poor.  | T / F |
| g. Mexico is the world's second largest consumer of bottled water.        | T / F |
| h. Rich countries use 30 times more water than poor nations.              | T / F |

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

- |                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| a. epics       | reduce       |
| b. scarce      | figure       |
| c. conflict    | have         |
| d. quench      | the poor     |
| e. hold        | blockbusters |
| f. highlighted | blamed       |
| g. have-nots   | war          |
| h. accused     | buyer        |
| i. consumer    | hard to find |
| j. statistic   | underlined   |

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

- |                                      |                                   |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. ...for fantasy writers            | might hold                        |
| b. water is becoming so              | management                        |
| c. quench their                      | scarce in many parts of the world |
| d. the opening of the fourth         | and have-nots                     |
| e. a warning sign of what the future | fought for less                   |
| f. divide the world into haves       | and Hollywood epics               |
| g. are meeting to discuss water      | from selling water to the poor    |
| h. accused rich countries of adding  | World Water Forum                 |
| i. make more and more money          | thirst                            |
| j. Wars have been                    | to the water crisis               |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

### Activists fight for water in Mexico

Fighting wars \_\_\_\_\_ water is usually just for fantasy writers and Hollywood epics. No more. The scary \_\_\_\_\_ is that water is becoming so \_\_\_\_\_ in many parts of the world that people may be close to conflict. The possibility that the poor and \_\_\_\_\_ might go to war to quench their thirst is, in fact, quite \_\_\_\_\_. At the opening of the fourth World Water Forum in Mexico City yesterday, people \_\_\_\_\_ with police. They were angry at rich countries taking their water. Peaceful protestors carried \_\_\_\_\_ wooden rifles – a warning sign of what the future might \_\_\_\_\_.

*waterless*

*hold*

*scarce*

*fought*

*over*

*real*

*fake*

*reality*

The World Water Forum has highlighted many \_\_\_\_\_ concerning water that divide the world into \_\_\_\_\_ and have-nots. Representatives of 130 nations are meeting to \_\_\_\_\_ water management. Poor countries have accused rich countries of adding to the water \_\_\_\_\_. Multinational corporations \_\_\_\_\_ more and more money from selling water to the poor. Mexico is the world's second largest \_\_\_\_\_ of bottled water. Poor nations use just one-\_\_\_\_\_ of the water of many developed countries. Wars have been fought for less than this terrible \_\_\_\_\_.

*thirtieth*

*haves*

*make*

*crisis*

*statistic*

*issues*

*consumer*

*discuss*

## **LISTENING**

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### **Activists fight for water in Mexico**

Fighting wars over water is usually \_\_\_\_\_ for fantasy writers and Hollywood epics. No more. The scary reality is that water is becoming so \_\_\_\_\_ in many parts of the world that people may be close to conflict. The possibility that the poor and waterless might go to war to \_\_\_\_\_ their thirst is, in fact, quite real. At the \_\_\_\_\_ of the fourth World Water Forum in Mexico City yesterday, people fought with police. They were angry at rich countries taking their water. Peaceful protestors carried \_\_\_\_\_ wooden rifles – a warning sign of what the future might \_\_\_\_\_.

The World Water Forum has highlighted many \_\_\_\_\_ concerning water that divide the world into haves and \_\_\_\_\_. Representatives of 130 nations are meeting to discuss water management. Poor countries have \_\_\_\_\_ rich countries of adding to the water \_\_\_\_\_. Multinational corporations make more and more money from selling water to the poor. Mexico is the world's second largest \_\_\_\_\_ of bottled water. Poor nations use just one-\_\_\_\_\_ of the water of many developed countries. Wars have been fought for less than this terrible \_\_\_\_\_.

## AFTER READING / LISTENING

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

- 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 activity. 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 "WATER" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about water and the world's water crisis.

- 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:

- |           |                 |
|-----------|-----------------|
| • epics   | • highlighted   |
| • scarce  | • discuss       |
| • quench  | • crisis        |
| • opening | • consumer      |
| • angry   | • one-thirtieth |
| • hold    | • less          |

## DISCUSSION

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

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What do you think of the idea of water wars?
- c. Have you seen any movies about water wars?
- d. What are your experiences of water shortages?
- e. Do you ever think about how important water is?
- f. How would life change if your town rationed water?
- g. What do you do to save water?
- h. Could you reduce by half the number of baths you take?
- i. Have you ever been without water for a long period of time?
- j. What do you think it is like to be so thirsty?

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

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think rich countries at the World Water Forum will help poor countries?
- d. What do you think of the Coca Cola Company making millions of dollars from selling water to very poor people?
- e. Do you think fountains outside government buildings should be turned off?
- f. What is the most important thing rich countries should do to help poor countries?
- g. What is the most important thing you should do to save water?
- h. Where do you think the world's first water war will be fought?
- i. What do you think of the fact that rich countries use thirty times more water than poor countries?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

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

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?



## SPEAKING

**SAVING WATER:** In pairs / groups, discuss whether the following ways of saving water are OK with you or not. Make a mini presentation for the rest of your class.

Ad	Comments for your presentation
1. REDUCED BATHING Take only two baths / showers a week instead of seven.	
2. FAUCET / TAP TIMERS A timer is put on your faucet / tap that cuts the water supply after three, ten or thirty seconds.	
3. NATURAL SWIMMING All swimming pools are closed. Swimming should take place in rivers, lakes or the sea.	
4. NATURAL CAR WASH Car wash centers and washing your car at home are banned. Cars to be cleaned using river water.	
5. ECONOMICAL TOILETS Flush the toilet after every two uses instead of every use.	
6. GOODBYE GRASS A ban on watering the garden.	

Change partners and talk about what you wrote with your previous partner(s).

Give your presentations.

Discuss what was said in each presentation and vote on the best ones.

## **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 information on the water shortages around the world. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s).

**3. CONSERVE:** Make a poster showing the many ways we can save water in our daily lives. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Which poster(s) did you like most and why?

**4. WATER DIARY:** Write a diary entry for a day in your life. Note down all of the times you use water. Did you need the water? Could you have saved it? Discuss this with your partner(s).

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

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

### SYNONYM MATCH:

a. epics	blockbusters
b. scarce	hard to find
c. conflict	war
d. quench	reduce
e. hold	have
f. highlighted	underlined
g. have-nots	the poor
h. accused	blamed
i. consumer	buyer
j. statistic	figure

### PHRASE MATCH:

a. ...for fantasy writers	and Hollywood epics
b. water is becoming so	scarce in many parts of the world
c. quench their	thirst
d. the opening of the fourth	World Water Forum
e. a warning sign of what the future	might hold
f. divide the world into halves	and have-nots
g. are meeting to discuss water	management
h. accused rich countries of adding	to the water crisis
i. make more and more money	from selling water to the poor
j. Wars have been	fought for less

### GAP FILL:

#### Activists fight for water in Mexico

Fighting wars **over** water is usually just for fantasy writers and Hollywood epics. No more. The scary **reality** is that water is becoming so **scarce** in many parts of the world that people may be close to conflict. The possibility that the poor and **waterless** might go to war to quench their thirst is, in fact, quite **real**. At the opening of the fourth World Water Forum in Mexico City yesterday, people **fought** with police. They were angry at rich countries taking their water. Peaceful protestors carried **fake** wooden rifles – a warning sign of what the future might **hold**.

The World Water Forum has highlighted many **issues** concerning water that divide the world into **haves** and have-nots. Representatives of 130 nations are meeting to **discuss** water management. Poor countries have accused rich countries of adding to the water **crisis**. Multinational corporations **make** more and more money from selling water to the poor. Mexico is the world's second largest **consumer** of bottled water. Poor nations use just one-**thirtieth** of the water of many developed countries. Wars have been fought for less than this terrible **statistic**.