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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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**18 March, 2006**

## **THE ARTICLE**

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

War over water has traditionally been the fare of fantasy writers and Hollywood epics. No more. The bleak reality is that water is becoming so scarce in many parts of the world that people are resorting to violence. The possibility that the poor and waterless might go to war to quench their increasing thirst is in fact quite real. Evidence the street riots in Mexico City following the opening of the fourth World Water Forum yesterday. Activists clashed with police, while nearby, peaceful protestors ominously brandished mock wooden rifles – an apocalyptic vision of what the future might hold in store. Julio Gonzalez, an Indian from Mexico's south, warned: "We are on the verge of fighting for real. We have no choice, fight or watch communities dehydrate."

The World Water Forum has brought into stark contrast many divisive issues concerning water and its availability to everyone in the world. Representatives of 130 nations are meeting to discuss water management. The rich countries have been accused of adding to the ensuing crisis. Multinational corporations make more and more money from providing bottled water to the poor and their governments ensure reserves are sufficient to supply the grandiose fountains that beautify their parliament buildings. Mexico, significantly, is the world's second largest consumer of mineral water. Poor nations consume one-thirtieth of the daily water usage of many developed countries. Wars have been fought for less than this shocking disparity.

## 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 / bleak realities / quenching thirst / activists / apocalypse / dehydration / water management / fountains / 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, considering millions of people around the world have no water. Put a grade of 1 (absolutely vital) 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 rights
- Water reaches ten dollars a liter
- Antarctica answers world water problems
- Car washing using water to be banned worldwide
- Scientists reduce our body's water consumption needs by 30 percent
- Water pipeline from Mars opens tomorrow
- Ninety percent of Earth's water now hazardous to drink
- Man receives 20 years in prison for forging water ration vouchers
- There is no water shortage – conspiracy theory unveiled

**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. Activists hit policemen with wooden rifles. T / F
- d. A Mexican Indian said the choice would soon be to fight or dehydrate. T / F
- e. The concerns over water have shown 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. fare          | edge       |
| b. bleak         | gulf       |
| c. brandished    | developing |
| d. verge         | gloomy     |
| e. dehydrate     | strikingly |
| f. divisive      | offering   |
| g. ensuing       | opulent    |
| h. grandiose     | wielded    |
| i. significantly | dry up     |
| j. disparity     | alienating |

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

- |                                      |                                  |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. War over water has traditionally  | crisis                           |
| b. people are resorting              | watch communities dehydrate      |
| c. protestors ominously brandished   | supply the grandiose fountains   |
| d. an apocalyptic vision of what     | than this shocking disparity     |
| e. We have no choice, fight or       | mock wooden rifles               |
| f. brought into stark                | bottled water to the poor        |
| g. accused of adding to the ensuing  | been the fare of fantasy writers |
| h. money from providing              | contrast many divisive issues    |
| i. ensure reserves are sufficient to | to violence                      |
| j. Wars have been fought for less    | the future might hold in store   |

## 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

War over water has traditionally been the \_\_\_\_\_ of fantasy writers and Hollywood epics. No more. The \_\_\_\_\_ reality is that water is becoming so scarce in many parts of the world that people are \_\_\_\_\_ to violence. The possibility that the poor and \_\_\_\_\_ might go to war to \_\_\_\_\_ their increasing thirst is in fact quite real. Evidence the street riots in Mexico City following the opening of the fourth World Water Forum yesterday. Activists clashed with police, while nearby, peaceful protestors ominously brandished \_\_\_\_\_ wooden rifles – an \_\_\_\_\_ vision of what the future might hold in store. Julio Gonzalez, an Indian from Mexico’s south, warned: “We are on the verge of fighting for real. We have no choice, fight or watch communities \_\_\_\_\_.”

The World Water Forum has brought into \_\_\_\_\_ contrast many divisive issues \_\_\_\_\_ water and its availability to everyone in the world. Representatives of 130 nations are meeting to discuss water \_\_\_\_\_. The rich countries have been accused of adding to the ensuing \_\_\_\_\_. Multinational corporations make more and more money from providing bottled water to the poor and their governments ensure \_\_\_\_\_ are sufficient to supply the grandiose fountains that \_\_\_\_\_ their parliament buildings. Mexico, significantly, is the world’s second largest consumer of mineral water. Poor nations \_\_\_\_\_ one-thirtieth of the daily water usage of many developed countries. Wars have been fought for less than this \_\_\_\_\_ disparity.

*waterless*  
*apocalyptic*  
*bleak*  
*quench*  
*dehydrate*  
*fare*  
*mock*  
*resorting*  
*reserves*  
*concerning*  
*shocking*  
*crisis*  
*beautify*  
*stark*  
*consume*  
*management*

## **LISTENING**

Listen and fill in the spaces.

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

War over water has traditionally been the \_\_\_\_\_ of fantasy writers and Hollywood epics. No more. The bleak reality is that water is becoming so \_\_\_\_\_ in many parts of the world that people are resorting to violence. The possibility that the poor and waterless might go to war to \_\_\_\_\_ their increasing thirst is in fact quite real. \_\_\_\_\_ the street riots in Mexico City following the opening of the fourth World Water Forum yesterday. Activists clashed with police, while nearby, peaceful protestors \_\_\_\_\_ mock wooden rifles – an apocalyptic vision of what the future might \_\_\_\_\_ in store. Julio Gonzalez, an Indian from Mexico's south, warned: "We are on the \_\_\_\_\_ of fighting for real. We have no choice, fight or watch communities dehydrate."

The World Water Forum has brought into \_\_\_\_\_ contrast many divisive issues concerning water and its availability to everyone in the world. Representatives of 130 \_\_\_\_\_ are meeting to discuss water management. The rich countries have been accused of adding to the \_\_\_\_\_ crisis. Multinational corporations make more and more money from providing bottled water to the poor and their governments \_\_\_\_\_ reserves are sufficient to supply the \_\_\_\_\_ fountains that \_\_\_\_\_ their parliament buildings. Mexico, significantly, is the world's second largest consumer of mineral water. Poor nations consume one-thirtieth of the daily water \_\_\_\_\_ of many developed countries. Wars have been fought for less than this shocking \_\_\_\_\_.

## 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 water shortages.

- 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:

- |          |            |
|----------|------------|
| • fare   | • stark    |
| • scarce | • ensuing  |
| • quench | • ensure   |
| • mock   | • beautify |
| • store  | • consume  |
| • choice | • shocking |

## **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 water wars?
- c. Have you seen any movies about water wars?
- d. What are your experiences of water shortages?
- e. Do you take water for granted?
- f. How would life change if your town rationed water?
- g. What do you do to conserve 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 on the verge of dehydration?

### 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 desperately 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 conserve 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

**WATER CONSERVATION:** In pairs / groups, discuss whether the following ways of conserving water are acceptable to 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 outlining the many ways we can conserve 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 conserved it? Discuss this with your partner(s).

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

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

### SYNONYM MATCH:

a. fare	offering
b. bleak	gloomy
c. brandished	wielded
d. verge	edge
e. dehydrate	dry up
f. divisive	alienating
g. ensuing	developing
h. grandiose	opulent
i. significantly	strikingly
j. disparity	gulf

### PHRASE MATCH:

a. War over water has traditionally	been the fare of fantasy writers
b. people are resorting	to violence
c. protestors ominously brandished	mock wooden rifles
d. an apocalyptic vision of what	the future might hold in store
e. We have no choice: fight or	watch communities dehydrate
f. brought into stark	contrast many divisive issues
g. accused of adding to the ensuing	crisis
h. money from providing	bottled water to the poor
i. ensure reserves are sufficient to	supply the grandiose fountains
j. Wars have been fought for less	than this shocking disparity

### GAP FILL:

#### Activists fight for water in Mexico

War over water has traditionally been the **fare** of fantasy writers and Hollywood epics. No more. The **bleak** reality is that water is becoming so scarce in many parts of the world that people are **resorting** to violence. The possibility that the poor and **waterless** might go to war to **quench** their increasing thirst is in fact quite real. Evidence the street riots in Mexico City following the opening of the fourth World Water Forum yesterday. Activists clashed with police, while nearby, peaceful protestors ominously brandished **mock** wooden rifles – an **apocalyptic** vision of what the future might hold in store. Julio Gonzalez, an Indian from Mexico's south, warned: "We are on the verge of fighting for real. We have no choice, fight or watch communities **dehydrate**."

The World Water Forum has brought into **stark** contrast many divisive issues **concerning** water and its availability to everyone in the world. Representatives of 130 nations are meeting to discuss water **management**. The rich countries have been accused of adding to the ensuing **crisis**. Multinational corporations make more and more money from providing bottled water to the poor and their governments ensure **reserves** are sufficient to supply the grandiose fountains that **beautify** their parliament buildings. Mexico, significantly, is the world's second largest consumer of mineral water. Poor nations **consume** one-thirtieth of the daily water usage of many developed countries. Wars have been fought for less than this **shocking** disparity.