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## Ready-to-use ESL / EFL Lessons

### Paris fire kills 17 immigrants

URL: <http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0508/050827-blaze-e.html>

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**27 August, 2005**

## THE ARTICLE

### Paris fire kills 17 immigrants

**BNE:** Seventeen people died in a fire which destroyed an old apartment building in Paris on Friday. Fourteen children and three adults lost their lives in the inferno. This has shocked and angered the local community. The building was home to West African immigrants, who are generally poor and have to live in sub-standard housing. Interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy visited the scene and met distressed and angry residents. Many blamed him for the dangerous condition of the building.

Officials have promised an inquiry into the fire. They have ordered a review of low-cost housing in Paris to prevent further tragedies. Other overcrowded and run-down buildings in the city are now being checked for safety. An African workers group claimed the building was unfit for humans to live in. Residents say it was a health hazard, it was swarming with rats and the walls were full of cracks. A firefighter told reporters the fire swept through the building after starting in a wooden stairwell.

## WARM-UPS

**1. HOUSING:** In pairs / groups, talk about all of the places in which you have lived. Which was the worst place? Have you lived in a dangerous building or stayed in a dangerous hotel? Is there any unsafe housing in your town?

**2. IMMIGRANTS:** In pairs / groups, talk about the problems and dangers that poor immigrants face when moving to a new country. What should governments do to reduce these problems?

- Housing
- Jobs
- Health
- Food
- Racism
- Being sent back to their original country
- Crime
- Other

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

*Fire / apartments / local communities / West Africa / immigrants / cheap accommodation / anger / tragedies / health hazards / rats / walls full of cracks*

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

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

**5. OPINIONS:** Do you agree or disagree with these opinions? Talk about them with your partner(s).

- a. The Paris government cannot stop fires in every apartment building.
- b. There should be a legal limit to how many people can live in one apartment.
- c. There should be fire escapes in all buildings higher than two floors.
- d. The victims’ families should sue the Paris government.
- e. The building owners should go to prison for renting sub-standard apartments.
- f. Paris should provide better houses for immigrants.
- g. People in Paris should never have to live among rats.
- h. Nothing will change in Paris and there will be another tragic fire.

**6. QUICK DEBATE:** Students A think governments should do much more to make sure immigrants can live safely. Students B think governments are already doing enough to help immigrants. Change partners often.

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

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

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| a. Many children died in a fire in an apartment building in Paris.        | T / F |
| b. The building was full of luxury apartments.                            | T / F |
| c. All of those who died were poor African immigrants.                    | T / F |
| d. Survivors were comforted by the visit of the French Interior Minister. | T / F |
| e. Authorities have promised to demolish low-cost housing in Paris.       | T / F |
| f. The building was not suitable for humans to live in.                   | T / F |
| g. The building was a health hazard and was swarming with rats.           | T / F |
| h. The fire swept through the building after starting in a stairwell.     | T / F |

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

- |                     |               |
|---------------------|---------------|
| a. lost their lives | overflowing   |
| b. inferno          | upset         |
| c. sub              | investigation |
| d. distressed       | old           |
| e. condition        | fire          |
| f. inquiry          | state         |
| g. low-cost         | danger        |
| h. run-down         | died          |
| i. hazard           | cheap         |
| j. swarming         | below         |

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

- |                                      |                                |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. Seventeen people died             | to West African immigrants     |
| b. three adults lost                 | for humans to live in          |
| c. The building was home             | standard housing               |
| d. have to live in sub-              | distressed and angry residents |
| e. Sarkozy visited the scene and met | through the building           |
| f. Officials have promised           | in a fire                      |
| g. a review of low-                  | their lives in the inferno     |
| h. the building was unfit            | cost housing                   |
| i. it was swarming                   | an inquiry into the fire       |
| j. the fire swept                    | with rats                      |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

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

### Paris fire kills 17 immigrants

**BNE:** Seventeen people died in a fire which \_\_\_\_\_ an old apartment building in Paris on Friday. Fourteen children and three adults \_\_\_\_\_ their lives in the \_\_\_\_\_. This has shocked and \_\_\_\_\_ the local community. The building was \_\_\_\_\_ to West African immigrants, who are \_\_\_\_\_ poor and have to live in sub-standard housing. Interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy visited the \_\_\_\_\_ and met distressed and angry residents. Many blamed him for the dangerous \_\_\_\_\_ of the building.

Officials have \_\_\_\_\_ an inquiry into the fire. They have ordered a \_\_\_\_\_ of low-cost housing in Paris to prevent further \_\_\_\_\_. Other overcrowded and \_\_\_\_\_ buildings in the city are now being checked for safety. An African workers group claimed the building was \_\_\_\_\_ for humans to live in. Residents say it was a health \_\_\_\_\_, it was \_\_\_\_\_ with rats and the walls were full of cracks. A firefighter told reporters the fire \_\_\_\_\_ through the building after starting in a wooden stairwell.

*home*  
*scene*  
*destroyed*  
*angered*  
*condition*  
*lost*  
*generally*  
*inferno*  
  
*swarming*  
*review*  
*hazard*  
*run-down*  
*promised*  
*swept*  
*unfit*  
*tragedies*

## **AFTER READING / LISTENING**

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

- 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 "IMMIGRANT HOUSING" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about immigrants and their living conditions.

- 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:

- |                |            |
|----------------|------------|
| • destroyed    | • inquiry  |
| • inferno      | • low-cost |
| • community    | • safety   |
| • sub-standard | • unfit    |
| • distressed   | • rats     |
| • blamed       | • swept    |

## **DISCUSSION**

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

- a. What did you think when you first read this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. Who do you think is responsible for the deaths?
- d. What punishment should be given to those responsible?
- e. Are there any old and dangerous buildings in your town?
- f. What can the government do to stop overcrowding?
- g. Do you think the Paris authorities can prevent other fires?
- h. Have such tragedies happened in your town?
- i. Do you think city governments do enough to help immigrants and keep them safe?

### 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. Describe the worst building you have ever lived or stayed in.
- d. Why do you think a modern city like Paris allows people to live in buildings that are full of rats?
- e. What should France's Interior Minister do about sub-standard accommodation in Paris?
- f. What would you do if there were swarms of rats in your neighborhood?
- g. What do you think of the fact that tragedies always happen to poorer people?
- h. If you were to move to another country, where would you like to go?
- i. 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 make living conditions safer in Paris. 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.

### **Role A – Immigrant leader**

You think the city must build new houses for immigrant families. Paris forces immigrants to live in the dirtiest and most dangerous places. You believe Paris does not care about immigrants. It spent millions of dollars on an Olympic campaign but cannot buy fire escapes.

THINK OF WHAT MORE PARIS SHOULD DO TO HELP IMMIGRANTS.

### **Role B – City leader**

You have ordered an inquiry into low-cost housing. Your government already spends a lot of money on helping immigrants. You think the biggest problem is overcrowding. You believe people should stop living together in such large numbers. You have no budget for fire safety.

THINK OF ALL OF THE THINGS THE CITY DOES TO HELP IMMIGRANTS.

### **Role C – Fire safety officer**

You are shocked at the condition of many of the city’s buildings. Many are wooden and have no fire escapes or fire extinguishers. You think the building owners are responsible for fire safety in their buildings. You believe property owners should go to prison if there are deadly fires.

THINK OF MORE FIRE PRECAUTIONS THE CITY NEEDS TO TAKE.

### **Role D – Property owner**

You rent an old and dangerous apartment block to immigrant families. You are worried about the risks of fire. You want the city to pay for fire escapes. You also want the local government to put a limit on the number of people living in one apartment.

THINK OF MORE WAYS THE CITY CAN HELP PROTECT IMMIGRANTS.

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.

### **Paris fire kills 17 immigrants**

**BNE:** Seventeen people died in a fire which \_\_\_\_\_ an old apartment building in Paris on Friday. Fourteen children and three adults \_\_\_\_\_ their lives in the inferno. This has shocked and \_\_\_\_\_ the local community. The building was home to West African immigrants, who are generally poor and have to live in sub-standard \_\_\_\_\_. Interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy visited the scene and met \_\_\_\_\_ and angry residents. Many blamed him for the dangerous \_\_\_\_\_ of the building.

Officials have promised an \_\_\_\_\_ into the fire. They have ordered a review of low-cost housing in Paris to \_\_\_\_\_ further tragedies. Other overcrowded and \_\_\_\_\_ buildings in the city are now being checked for safety. An African workers group claimed the building was \_\_\_\_\_ for humans to live in. Residents say it was a health hazard, it was \_\_\_\_\_ with rats and the walls were full of cracks. A firefighter told reporters the fire \_\_\_\_\_ through the building after starting in a \_\_\_\_\_ stairwell.

## **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 tragic Paris fire and the inquiry. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

**3. LETTER:** Write a letter to France's Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy. Tell him what he should do to prevent further tragedies. Read your letters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

**4. IMMIGRANTS:** Write a report for your city government recommending what it should do to help poor immigrants. Tell your classmates the main points of your report in your next lesson. Did you all have similar ideas?

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

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

### SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                     |               |
|---------------------|---------------|
| a. lost their lives | died          |
| b. inferno          | fire          |
| c. sub              | below         |
| d. distressed       | upset         |
| e. condition        | state         |
| f. inquiry          | investigation |
| g. low-cost         | cheap         |
| h. run-down         | old           |
| i. hazard           | danger        |
| j. swarming         | overflowing   |

### PHRASE MATCH:

- |                                      |                                |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. Seventeen people died             | in a fire                      |
| b. three adults lost                 | their lives in the inferno     |
| c. The building was home             | to West African immigrants     |
| d. have to live in sub-              | standard housing               |
| e. Sarkozy visited the scene and met | distressed and angry residents |
| f. Officials have promised           | an inquiry into the fire       |
| g. a review of low-                  | cost housing                   |
| h. the building was unfit            | for humans to live in          |
| i. it was swarming                   | with rats                      |
| j. the fire swept                    | through the building           |

### GAP FILL:

#### Paris fire kills 17 immigrants

**BNE:** Seventeen people died in a fire which **destroyed** an old apartment building in Paris on Friday. Fourteen children and three adults **lost** their lives in the **inferno**. This has shocked and **angered** the local community. The building was **home** to West African immigrants, who are **generally** poor and have to live in sub-standard housing. Interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy visited the **scene** and met distressed and angry residents. Many blamed him for the dangerous **condition** of the building.

Officials have **promised** an inquiry into the fire. They have ordered a **review** of low-cost housing in Paris to prevent further **tragedies**. Other overcrowded and **run-down** buildings in the city are now being checked for safety. An African workers group claimed the building was **unfit** for humans to live in. Residents say it was a health **hazard**, it was **swarming** with rats and the walls were full of cracks. A firefighter told reporters the fire **swept** through the building after starting in a wooden stairwell.