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Iraq undergoes biggest unrest in two years

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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
Homework	9
Answers	10

25 February, 2006

THE ARTICLE

Iraq undergoes biggest unrest in two years

Iraq is experiencing its bloodiest time since the demise of Saddam Hussein two years ago. A curfew has been imposed in Baghdad and three adjacent provinces in an attempt to curb the outbreak of a possible civil war. Tensions are running explosively high and fears are that recent sectarian violence may tip the country over the brink. Recent tit-for-tat demolitions of mosques by both Sunni and Shi'ite factions have brought tens of thousands of protestors onto the streets, many vowing for revenge against attacks on their populations and places of worship. Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari has called for calm and warned insurgents against trying to whip up hatred that could easily spill over into all out civil war. He called it "the most serious challenge to the county's stability".

The spark which ignited the latest unrest, spiraling many parts of Iraq into a state of near anarchy, was the destruction of the Golden Mosque in the town of Samarra, north of Baghdad. The mosque contains the remains of two imams who were descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. The influential Shi'ite cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr, blamed Sunni Muslims for the outrage and called for revenge. Within hours of the blast, which almost reduced one of Shi'ite Islam's most hallowed shrines to rubble, waves of reprisal attacks began across Iraq. Angered Shi'ites attacked at least 60 Sunni mosques and the ensuing violence left over 100 people dead. Iraq's most revered Shi'ite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, has tried to quell his followers' fury by imploring them not to attack Sunni mosques.

WARM-UPS

1. IRAQ FEELINGS: In pairs / groups, talk about your feelings when you read or watch news of Iraq. Do you keep up with events there as often as you did one or two years ago? What news items are most likely to grab your attention?

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

Demises / Saddam Hussein / curfews / civil war / tit-for-tat / protestors / hatred / revenge / sparks / anarchy / the blame game / shrines / rubble / quelling anger

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

3. WORD ASSOCIATION: In pairs / groups, talk about how the following words might be associated with Iraq:

Roses / resorts / software / tiger economy / tolerance / awards / cosmopolitan / tourism / innovation / leadership / photography / headquarters / pizza / microchips

4. HEADLINES: In pairs / groups, discuss the following “headlines”. How possible do you think it is they will come true?

- a. Civil war breaks out in Iraq.
- b. Iraq now strongest economy in Middle East.
- c. Iraq to host Olympic Games.
- d. US and coalition forces flee from Iraq.
- e. Iraq conflict spreads to neighboring countries.
- f. Sunnis and Shi’ites agree to share power.
- g. Iraqi leaders awarded Nobel Peace Prize

Change partners and share what you talked about.

5. SENTENCE STARTERS: With your partner(s), agree on positive and optimistic endings for the following sentence starters:

- a. Iraq is _____.
- b. Iraq will _____.
- c. Iraq shows _____.
- d. Iraq awarded _____.
- e. Iraq becomes _____.
- f. Iraq signs _____.
- g. Iraq tops _____.

6. CIVIL WAR: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with civil war. 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. Iraq is undergoing its bloodiest time since the fall of Saddam Hussein. T / F
- b. A nationwide curfew has been imposed in Iraq. T / F
- c. Sunni and Shi'ites have been demolishing each other's mosques. T / F
- d. Iraq's Foreign Minister called for insurgents to be whipped. T / F
- e. A spark set off a fire that destroyed an important mosque. T / F
- f. The mosque contained the remains of Iraq War veterans. T / F
- g. Over 60 mosques have been destroyed in the latest violence. T / F
- h. A revered Shi'ite cleric has implored followers to refrain from violence. T / F

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

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| a. demise | sacred |
| b. curb | retaliatory |
| c. brink | lawlessness |
| d. tit-for-tat | descending |
| e. all out | beseeking |
| f. spiraling | bridle |
| g. anarchy | respected |
| h. hallowed | downfall |
| i. revered | total |
| j. imploring | edge |

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

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. its bloodiest time since the | demolitions of mosques |
| b. A curfew has been | spill over into all out civil war |
| c. recent sectarian violence may tip | most hallowed shrines to rubble |
| d. Recent tit-for-tat | the country over the brink |
| e. whip up hatred that could easily | of reprisal attacks |
| f. spiraling many parts of Iraq | demise of Saddam Hussein |
| g. reduced one of Shi'ite Islam's | left over 100 people dead |
| h. waves | his followers' fury |
| i. the ensuing violence | into a state of near anarchy |
| j. tried to quell | imposed in Baghdad |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

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

Iraq undergoes biggest unrest in two years

Iraq is experiencing its bloodiest time since the _____ of Saddam Hussein two years ago. A curfew has been _____ in Baghdad and three adjacent provinces in an attempt to _____ the outbreak of a possible civil war. Tensions are running explosively high and fears are that recent sectarian violence may _____ the country over the brink. Recent _____ demolitions of mosques by both Sunni and Shi'ite factions have brought tens of thousands of protestors onto the streets, many _____ for revenge against attacks on their populations and places of worship. Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari has called for calm and warned insurgents against trying to _____ up hatred that could easily _____ over into all out civil war. He called it "the most serious challenge to the county's stability".

tip

spill

demise

vowing

curb

whip

imposed

tit-for-tat

The spark which ignited the latest unrest, _____ many parts of Iraq into a state of near _____, was the destruction of the Golden Mosque in the town of Samarra, north of Baghdad. The mosque contains the remains of two imams who were _____ of the Prophet Muhammad. The influential Shi'ite cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr, blamed Sunni Muslims for the _____ and called for revenge. Within hours of the blast, which almost reduced one of Shi'ite Islam's most _____ shrines to rubble, waves of reprisal attacks began across Iraq. Angered Shi'ites attacked at least 60 Sunni mosques and the _____ violence left over 100 people dead. Iraq's most _____ Shi'ite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, has tried to quell his followers' fury by _____ them not to attack Sunni mosques.

outrage

imploring

anarchy

hallowed

revered

descendants

spiraling

ensuing

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Iraq undergoes biggest unrest in two years

Iraq is experiencing its _____ time since the demise of Saddam Hussein two years ago. A curfew has been imposed in Baghdad and three _____ provinces in an attempt to curb the outbreak of a possible civil war. Tensions are running explosively high and fears are that recent _____ violence may tip the country over the brink. Recent _____ demolitions of mosques by both Sunni and Shi'ite factions have brought tens of thousands of protestors onto the streets, many _____ for revenge against attacks on their populations and places of worship. Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari has called for calm and warned insurgents against trying to _____ hatred that could easily spill over into all out civil war. He called it "the most serious challenge to the county's stability".

The spark which _____ the latest unrest, spiraling many parts of Iraq into a state of near anarchy, was the destruction of the Golden Mosque in the town of Samarra, north of Baghdad. The mosque contains the remains of two imams who were _____ of the Prophet Muhammad. The influential Shi'ite cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr, blamed Sunni Muslims for the outrage and called for revenge. Within hours of the _____, which almost reduced one of Shi'ite Islam's most hallowed shrines to rubble, waves of _____ attacks began across Iraq. Angered Shi'ites attacked at least 60 Sunni mosques and the _____ violence left over 100 people dead. Iraq's most revered Shi'ite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, has tried to _____ his followers' fury by imploring them not to attack Sunni mosques.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

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

- 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 "IRAQ" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about Iraq.

- 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:

- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| • demise | • spark |
| • curb | • state |
| • tip | • blamed |
| • revenge | • waves |
| • whip | • violence |
| • challenge | • fury |

DISCUSSION

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

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. Do you follow news of Iraq regularly?
- c. Are you surprised by the recent events in Iraq?
- d. What do you think the consequences would be of civil war in Iraq?
- e. What do you think U.S. and coalition forces would do if civil war broke out?
- f. When do you see peace returning to Iraq?
- g. Do you think the conflict in Iraq has the potential to spread to a wider regional strife?
- h. What do you think is necessary to bring all the sides together and live peacefully?
- i. Do you think coalition forces withdrawing from Iraq would help matters or make things worse?
- j. Has your country ever experienced civil war?

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. Where do you think Iraq will be ten years from now?
- d. What do you think would be happening in Iraq if the US-led coalition had never invaded and toppled Saddam Hussein?
- e. Do you think there is a need for greater intervention from U.S. or other international forces to keep the peace?
- f. What do you think would be the consequences of all out civil war in Iraq?
- g. How would you feel if someone destroyed one of your most important cultural or religious assets?
- h. Do you think anyone in Iraq has the power or influence to bring calm to Iraq?
- i. Are you optimistic or pessimistic regarding Iraq's future?
- 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?

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 about the latest events in Iraq. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. PLACE OF WORSHIP: Make a poster about an important place of worship in your religion or culture. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone find out similar things?

4. IRAQ: Write an essay about Iraq. Decide whether you want to focus on the people, culture, political situation or future. Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

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

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| a. demise | downfall |
| b. curb | bridle |
| c. brink | edge |
| d. tit-for-tat | retaliatory |
| e. all out | total |
| f. spiraling | descending |
| g. anarchy | lawlessness |
| h. hallowed | sacred |
| i. revered | respected |
| j. imploring | beseeking |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. its bloodiest time since the | demise of Saddam Hussein |
| b. A curfew has been | imposed in Baghdad |
| c. recent sectarian violence may tip | the country over the brink |
| d. Recent tit-for-tat | demolitions of mosques |
| e. whip up hatred that could easily | spill over into all out civil war |
| f. spiraling many parts of Iraq | into a state of near anarchy |
| g. reduced one of Shi'ite Islam's | most hallowed shrines to rubble |
| h. waves | of reprisal attacks |
| i. the ensuing violence | left over 100 people dead |
| j. tried to quell | his followers' fury |

GAP FILL:

Iraq undergoes biggest unrest in two years

Iraq is experiencing its bloodiest time since the **demise** of Saddam Hussein two years ago. A curfew has been **imposed** in Baghdad and three adjacent provinces in an attempt to **curb** the outbreak of a possible civil war. Tensions are running explosively high and fears are that recent sectarian violence may **tip** the country over the brink. Recent **tit-for-tat** demolitions of mosques by both Sunni and Shi'ite factions have brought tens of thousands of protestors onto the streets, many **vowing** for revenge against attacks on their populations and places of worship. Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari has called for calm and warned insurgents against trying to **whip** up hatred that could easily **spill** over into all out civil war. He called it "the most serious challenge to the county's stability".

The spark which ignited the latest unrest, **spiraling** many parts of Iraq into a state of near **anarchy**, was the destruction of the Golden Mosque in the town of Samarra, north of Baghdad. The mosque contains the remains of two imams who were **descendants** of the Prophet Muhammad. The influential Shi'ite cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr, blamed Sunni Muslims for the **outrage** and called for revenge. Within hours of the blast, which almost reduced one of Shi'ite Islam's most **hallowed** shrines to rubble, waves of reprisal attacks began across Iraq. Angered Shi'ites attacked at least 60 Sunni mosques and the **ensuing** violence left over 100 people dead. Iraq's most **revered** Shi'ite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, has tried to quell his followers' fury by **imploring** them not to attack Sunni mosques.