

1. Reasons to be cheerful?

This week's lesson features contrasting feelings of optimism and pessimism in the face of current economic, political, social and environmental issues.

Level

Upper intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level B2 and above)

How to use the lesson

1. Would your students generally describe themselves as optimistic, pessimistic or something in between? Ask them how optimistic/pessimistic they are with regard to national/global economic, political, social and environmental issues in their countries, and why.
2. Tell students they are going to read the opinions of three people about how optimistic/pessimistic they are. Give your students five to ten minutes to read through Worksheet A, encouraging them to look up new vocabulary. You could ask them to check if any of their ideas are mentioned. Tell them they are going to answer a series of questions on the text, but that they shouldn't write anything down at this stage.
3. Divide the students into pairs and hand out Worksheet B. Ask them to work together to complete the different types of comprehension questions in Exercises 1, 2 and 3.
4. Check answers in open class.
5. Ask the students if they particularly agree or disagree with any of the opinions expressed on Worksheet A, and if so, why.
6. Hand out Worksheet C and ask the students to work together to complete the crossword.
7. Check answers in open class.

Answers:

Exercise 1

1. Michael 2. Sam, Michael 3. Margaret 4. Sam, Margaret 5. Sam, Michael

Exercise 2

1. T 2. T 3. F 4. D 5. T 6. T 7. F 8. T

Exercise 3

1. He is referring to people complaining or grumbling about things.
2. He is less optimistic about future employment/unemployment, the chances of economic growth continuing, and his future standard of living.
3. Michael thinks people live longer these days because of better healthcare and better food.
4. The economic crisis.
5. Margaret refers to a declining sense of community, with people trusting and helping each other less than they used to, and to people being obsessed with earning as much money as possible.

Exercise 4

1. grumbling 2. growth 3. quality 4. privileged 5. higher 6. wealth
7. anxious 8. oil 9. democracy 10. easier

If the sentences have been completed correctly, *bright side* will read from top to bottom.

2. Related Websites

Send your students to these websites, or just take a look yourself.

<http://optimistworld.com/Default.aspx>

The website *The Optimist*, which specialises in 'daily good news headlines'. Accessible to upper-intermediate level.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/635292.stm>

A BBC article (2000) on medical research in the United States that suggested people with an optimistic outlook live longer. Accessible to upper-intermediate level.

<http://www.france24.com/en/20090505-poll-shows-europeans-pessimistic-about-future>

An article about a recent poll (May 2009) that suggests Europeans are pessimistic about the future. Accessible to upper-intermediate level.