

1. Seven billion and counting

With the number of humans on the planet recently having reached seven billion, the subject of this week's lesson is global population growth.

Level

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

How to use the lesson

1. Ask your students how many people there are on the planet. Do they know when the seven-billion mark was reached? How many people do they imagine there were ten, forty or one hundred years ago? Do they know how quickly their own country's population has been growing? What causes population growth? Do they know what predictions have been made for global population growth over the rest of the twenty-first century? Do they think the world's population is growing too quickly? Ask them to justify their answers.
2. Give your students as much time as necessary to read through Worksheet A, encouraging them to look up new vocabulary. Note that many of the words that might be new are not in the glossary because they form part of Exercise 1.
3. Give each student a copy of Worksheet B, then divide the class into pairs and ask students to work together to complete Exercise 1, in which they have to find the words to match the definitions. (You might want to mention that the verbs defined on Worksheet B are not necessarily in their infinitive form on Worksheet A.)
4. Check answers in open class.
5. Keeping the students in their pairs, hand out Worksheet C and ask the students to answer the two different kinds of comprehension questions in Exercises 2 and 3.
6. Check answers in open class.

Answers:

Exercise 1

1. astonishing
2. and counting
3. life expectancy
4. accommodate
5. catastrophe
6. consumption
7. overpopulation
8. follow
9. come up with
10. ape
11. rate
12. crisis
13. prediction
14. standard of living
15. malnutrition
16. shrink
17. natural resources
18. finite
19. statistics
20. let alone

Exercise 2

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

Exercise 3

1. In 1969.
2. We can reach this conclusion if we take the fact that the world's population is now seven billion and if we say that the total number of human beings who have ever lived is one hundred billion (the scientists who try to estimate this figure usually come up with a number between one hundred and one hundred ten billion): seven billion out of one hundred billion is seven per cent.
3. The two predictions are that (i) global population will rise more slowly (from about nine billion) after 2050, perhaps reaching ten billion by the end of the century; and (ii) that it will continue to rise quickly, perhaps even reaching fifteen billion by 2100.
4. Because people in rich countries have a 'high-consumption' lifestyle (i.e. they consume a lot of resources) and the world only has a limited amount of natural resources.
5. They believe the world's population can grow by another two or three billion without a social or environmental catastrophe.

2. Related websites

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

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/interactive/2011/oct/24/how-big-worlds-population-born>

An interactive feature on the website of the *Guardian* newspaper that allows you to see what the world's population was on the day you were born, and which countries' populations were growing most quickly at that time. Accessible to all levels.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-15445092>

A video on the subject of population growth from the BBC News website, with links to other articles on the same subject. Challenging for Upper intermediate level.

<http://www.census.gov/main/www/popclock.html>

A live United States and world population 'clock' from the US Census Bureau. Accessible to all levels.