

Loescher



English

A compilation of newsTicker  
articles and exercises

*December, 2009*

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01/12/2009



## LEARNING TO COPE

*With the horrors of daily life*

There are many things you can be afraid of. Spiders, for instance. A lot of people are afraid of heights. Or getting stuck in a lift. But can you imagine what it would be like, to be afraid of - vegetables?

The fear is called lachanophobia. And people who suffer from this phobia literally cannot stand to see any veg at all. Let alone think of eating them.

"Even as a child, I used to properly freak out, if some carrots or a few peas were on my plate," explains one sufferer. "I would get feelings of panic, start sweating and my heart rate would shoot up."

"I have a genuine fear of greens." "The actual sight of them fills me with dread."

According to the charity Anxiety UK, around 13% of Brits suffer some form of phobia. To learn to cope with such fears, it is important to get help, from self-help groups or your GP.

## EXERCISE

A.1. How many expressions relating to fear can you find in this article? Do you know other expressions?

A.2. Which is stronger? Try to place the expressions in order of strength on the whiteboard. Are there other differences in meaning? Discuss!

A.3. Modify the expressions using adverbs: either weakening or intensifying the meaning. Which intensifiers do you know?

B. Why can self-help groups help you deal with fears? Do you know other therapies? What are the advantages? Discuss in small groups!

C. The article talks about an individual kind of fear. Are there also collective kinds of fear? How do people cope?

D. Write a short text about confronting a real or imagined fear. Try to give a detailed and vivid description of your feelings and sensations!

02/12/2009



## ALADDIN'S CAVE

*Treasures unveiled*

The Mitchell Library will be celebrating its 100th birthday, on March 8 next year. Leading up to the centenary, the New South Wales State Library has started a hundred day countdown.

The original core of the Library was a donation by David Scott Mitchell, who died in 1907. Mitchell was one of the very first students at the University of Sydney, in the 1850s, and had been a passionate book collector all his life.

The Mitchell Library now holds one of the finest collections of materials relating to Australia and the South Pacific.

Young people today are bombarded with images from the media, and saturated with information. Making the library's treasures more accessible is not an easy job.

To celebrate the centenary, a special alphabet has therefore been created by a marketing firm. Each letter combines different elements, selected from the library's huge collection of weird and wonderful objects.

## EXERCISE

A.1. What was the role of books in the 1850s, when 16-year-old David Mitchell started university? What is the role of books today? Do libraries have other functions? Discuss!

A.2. Write a short text about some of the changes these past 150 years. Are books still important? Why / why not?

B. What kinds of documents, pictures and objects are hidden in the Mitchell Library's collections? Imagine that you are one of the team who were allowed into the closed vaults below the Library. You are looking for objects to use in the alphabet.

What do you think it felt like? What could you learn about Australia's history? Write a short text.

C.1. Brainstorm in small groups for ideas how to launch a campaign for a local library, where you live.

C.2. Share ideas with the class. Make posters!

D. Make interviews with librarians and library users. How do they see the future of libraries?

03/12/2009

## TO HANG

*Or not to hang*



"They said it made the place look like trailer trash."  
"They said they didn't want to look at my unmentionables." The otherwise placid lady is irate. And for the record: she dries her underwear indoors.

Who would have thought something so ordinary could raise so many emotions? We are talking about laundry. And the time-honoured custom of hanging it up to dry. With pegs on a clothesline, stretched across your back garden.

Clearly, for the fashionable suburbanites on the other side of the fence, it is all about appearances. Like turnips and cabbage, in Perkasio, Pennsylvania, drying laundry is not quite *comme-il-faut*. They want to enforce 'non-hanging' rules.

But for clothesline hardliners, it is not just a matter of enjoying the genuine feel of old-fashioned sun-dried linen. According to Project Laundry List, clothes driers account for a massive 6 percent of US residential electricity consumption.

To conserve energy, six states have now guaranteed citizens' 'right to hang'.

## EXERCISE

A. What are typical signs of high status / low status in the suburbs? Work in small groups to make a list, then discuss in class!

B. Why are people who live in the suburbs so concerned about appearances? Discuss!

C.1. Clothes driers use huge amounts of electricity. What other household appliances use the most electricity do you think? Make a list.

C.2. Rank the appliances in your list, then check against local statistics to see how good you were at guessing!

D.1. The Pennsylvania lady feels she should be free to hang her clothes up as she pleases. Her neighbours don't agree. In pairs, imagine the heated argument over the garden fence. Perform it for your class!

D.2. How could you solve such conflicts between neighbours? Write a short text with your ideas.



04/12/2009

## EASTENDERS

*The plot thickens*



Phil is having problems paying back his debts and Isaacs the debt collector is after him. Ian offers Phil a loan, to get out of the mess. Then Archie wants to buy it from him.

Bobby has been bullying Tiffany, but the next time it happens, she hits back. Next week, Jean will visit Stacey in hospital, and hopes to bring her home for Christmas.

EastEnder stars have been spotted recently, filming night-time scenes in a cemetery. It definitely looks like murder some time soon!

Most likely, Archie Mitchell is the victim, and we suspect he will be murdered over Christmas. Potential murderers include daughter Ronnie, ex-wife Peggy, or even Archie's new fiancée, Janine.

Dr Al Jenkins will soon be leaving the show, and Adam Croasdell would like to thank his viewers for all the support that they have shown. Finally, Stacey will discover that she is pregnant in one of the coming episodes, but we do not yet know who the prospective father is.

## EXERCISE

A.1. Work in small groups. Find out which soaps your classmates enjoy following.

A.2. Pick one of your favourite soaps. What has just happened? What do you think will happen in the next episode?

A.3 Write a short scene from this imaginary episode. Perform in class!

B. Pick a character from one of your favourite soaps. Write a short text describing this person.

C. Why do soaps appeal to us? Discuss, first in small groups, then in class.

D.1. What do you know about the TV show EastEnders?

D.2. What is London's East End? Find out more!

07/12/2009



## PINKIFICATION

*What's in a colour*

Pink. You love it or you hate it.

For many, pink is associated with the princess obsession cultivated among little girls. In the toy shops, pink occupies a privileged position. Pink dolls, pink dresses, pink horses, pink bunnies. And all of that decorated with masses of spangles, false diamonds and little bows.

Mother of two Emma Moore has launched the campaign Pink stinks, together with her twin sister. They feel this kind of colour coding causes too much polarisation between boys and girls, at an early age.

Girls are encouraged to believe that "beauty is valued over brains". In the long run, this leads to worse paid jobs, and lower social status.

Ed Mayo, Secretary General of Co-operatives UK, is inclined to agree. He feels that "colour apartheid" is one of the things that sets children on two separate tracks. "One leads to higher pay and higher status, and one doesn't."

## EXERCISE

The mothers who started the campaign feel that toys affect the self-image of their children.

A.1. Are there differences between girls and boys toys?

A.2. If the parents don't buy toys they disapprove of, can the toys available on the market affect the children anyway? How can you deal with peer pressure? Discuss!

B.1. What do you associate with pink? Think about it on your own, list five things, and then compare with the others in your group!

B.2. What would pink taste like? How does it smell? What is a pink mood? Discuss in your group!

C. Write short texts or poems inspired by a colour, without mentioning it directly. Then see if your classmates can guess which colour you were thinking of.

D. In small groups, make collages using different colours as a theme. Combine pictures, words, expressions or poems. Make an exhibition of your collages!

08/12/2009



## PECULIAR

*But nice*

A Welsh dairy has invented a new cheese that tastes like Christmas cake. The extraordinary concoction has been launched by farmer-owned dairy co-operative, South Caernarfon Creameries.

The Christmas cheese is a mix of brandy, fruit, spices and cheese. The unusual creation has already attracted thousands of curious customers, and will probably be sold out well before Christmas.

The inventor, Ms Sian Davies, explains that she was "just playing about" with recipes in the kitchen. And since Christmas was coming, she thought about using festive ingredients. "It was a strange combination, but I thought it might work, so I gave it a go," she says.

"Surprisingly, it works really well." "It tastes of Christmas cake, but it also tastes of cheese. It's peculiar, but really nice," adds Ms Davies.

South Caernarfon Creameries is based in North Wales, close to Snowdon. The co-operative was established in 1938, and now counts some 200 members.

## EXERCISE

A.1. What different cheeses are produced in the British Isles? Have you tasted any of these? What are they like?

A.2. Make a map showing where these cheeses are produced!

B. What are the principal types of cheese that exist? How are they produced?

C. Which expressions can describe the taste and texture of different cheeses? Find descriptions in English of popular cheeses, and see if your classmates can guess what they are!

D. Are there any dairy co-operatives where you live? What is the situation of milk farmers in your region? Discuss!

E. Let each person write the name of five different ingredients (food or spice) on slips of paper. Collect all the ingredients in a hat.

Then work in small groups. Pick three ingredients at random, and see what you can make of them. Either decide on a traditional dish, or invent something new!

09/12/2009



## PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

*Moral vision and political will*

Representatives from 220 faith traditions have been meeting in Melbourne, December 3-9. The gathering has given indigenous concerns a central position. The Parliament's proceedings were formally opened by Wurundjeri elder, Aunty Joy Murphy-Wandin, and participants were invited to share a leaf from the "branches of learning".

The plight of the planet has been in special focus this year. "We are the first generation that produces enough food to feed every human being on earth. Our failure to do so now is a failure of moral vision and political will," said Rabbi David Saperstein.

A Hindu Declaration on Climate Change has been drafted, affirming that "We cannot continue to destroy nature, without also destroying ourselves."

An interfaith group called for the abolition of all nuclear arms. While the Parliament's director, Rev Dirk Ficca, insists that religious leaders should "draw on their wisdom and persuasiveness", to ensure that "courageous" decisions are made to stop further environmental degradation and climate change.

## EXERCISE

- A. Why are people hungry if enough food is produced? Discuss!
- B. What role can religious leaders play in solving the major challenges of our times?
- C. What exactly does the word 'wisdom' mean for you? Work in small groups to formulate some definitions, then discuss in class!
- D. What do you think is the symbolism in sharing leaves from the "branches of learning"?
- E. Imagine that you are one of the delegates in Melbourne, among the hundreds of representatives coming from 80 countries and 220 traditions. Write a letter home about your impressions!
- F. The first meeting of the world's religions took place in Chicago, a little more than a century ago. How do you think people will look at the 2009 PWR in a hundred years' time?



10/12/2009

## HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

*Celebrated worldwide*



The International Human Rights Day is celebrated yearly, to commemorate the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, on 10 December 1948.

At the UN headquarters in New York, special events and exhibitions mark this day. It is also celebrated by human rights groups across the globe.

One of the best known nongovernmental organisations is Amnesty International. The different local sections take this opportunity, to draw attention to human rights violations, and mobilise support for campaigns.

In Edmonton, Canada, AI is inviting the public to Write for Rights. People write postcards, and send them to decision-makers. Last year, more than 36,000 letters were written for this write-a-thon.

In London, the Mayfair and Soho group presents an Act of Witness. 200 individuals who suffered human rights' abuses will be remembered. While in New Zealand, Amnesty would like to draw particular attention to the tragic situation in Sri Lanka.

## EXERCISE

A.1. What human rights are there? How many do you know?

A.2. Find out more about fundamental rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

B. What are the names of the rights in English and how are they expressed in your own language? Write the names on the whiteboard. Are there any differences in how the rights are formulated?

C. In pairs, question each other. How many of the rights can your partner remember without looking?

D. What can students at your school do to support human rights? Discuss!

E. Work in small groups to make posters, one for each right. You can make drawings to illustrate the rights, or use newspaper clippings. Pictures and headlines can show violations, but also human rights work and improvements.

11/12/2009

## HAPPY HOLIDAYS

*Hanukkah starts today*



The Jewish Festival of Lights starts this evening, at sunset.

The festival starts at the darkest time of the year, close to the winter solstice. It begins four days before the new moon, so it is also the darkest time of the month, when light is needed the most.

To celebrate Hanukkah, the candles of the Hanukkah are lighted. This candlestick has eight arms. An additional holder is for the Shamash candle, which is used to light the rest.

The festival commemorates the victory of the Maccabees, and the rededication of the Jerusalem Temple. When the Maccabees wanted to relight the eternal lamp to rededicate the Temple, there was only enough oil for one night. But miraculously, it lasted for eight nights. This is why Hanukkah is celebrated for eight days.

It is traditional to eat 'oily' foods for the holiday. Deep-fried donuts are popular, and also 'latkes', a kind of fried potato pancakes.

## EXERCISE

A.1. The word 'commemorate' has two main parts. What are they?

A.2. When do you use com- and when do you use co-? What is the origin of the prefix?

A.3. Does the prefix have any other variants? Give examples of words with the prefix!

B. What other words can you find, derived from the same root as 'memorate'?

C.1. Into which parts can you divide the word 'rededicate'?

C.2. What is the meaning of the prefix re-? Can you give examples of other words with this prefix?

C.3. Find different words based on the other parts of 'rededicate'!

D. Imagine that you were at the Temple at the time of the Maccabees, and that you witnessed how the oil used to rekindle the eternal light lasted for eight days. Write a short text with your impressions and feelings! (To add realistic details, you may want to find out more about the historical context).

14/12/2009

## CHILD LABOURERS RESCUED

*In the LNJP colony*



The shanty towns in New Delhi are commonly referred to as 'colonies'. LNJP is one of these, located in central Delhi. An estimated 500-1,000 children work as forced labourers in handicraft workshops in this area.

Last week, 50 of these children were rescued. The little boys were between eight and eleven. Some of them had already been working there for two years.

All the children had been trafficked from Bihar. They were working with shellac in rooms without ventilation, manufacturing bangles, necklaces, and other decorative objects for export.

The place is a maze, so it is difficult to conduct a raid. The children tend to disappear before the police arrive, explained Umesh Gupta, of the Bachpan Bachao Andolan.

The BBA (Save Childhood Campaign) was founded in 1980, and is an NGO working to combat child labour. The rescued children have been given release certificates under the Bonded Labour System Act.

## EXERCISE

A.1. In the expressions 'had already been working', 'had been trafficked', and 'were working', the verbs are seen in relationship to a certain point in time. What moment is that?

A.2. If you were a TV journalist, reporting directly from the workshop at the time of the raid, how would you express these facts instead?

B. Write a short text, from the perspective of this journalist reporting live! Follow the police as they move into the shanty town, and describe what you see!

C. What are the reasons for child labour? Discuss in small groups!

D.1. When you buy something in a shop, do you know anything about how it is produced? Why / why not?

D.2. Is there any way you can make sure that items you buy are not produced using child labour? Discuss!

E.1. Which NGOs do you know that work to combat child labour, or who help with the rehabilitation of victims? In small groups, interview an NGO, over the phone or directly.

E.2. Present the information you found to your class in some way. You can make an oral presentation, an exhibition, or a sketch if you like.

15/12/2009

## BEAUTY FROM GIBRALTAR

*Dazzles the world*



Ms Kaiane Aldorino won the Miss World beauty pageant in South Africa this weekend. The swimsuit competition tipped the scales in her favour. Miss South Africa, Tatum Keshwar, clearly had the support of the audience, however, and was loudly cheered.

Ms Aldorino is 23 years old, and normally works as a clerk. She was surprised, but now hopes to make the most of her success. "Thank you South Africa, this is the most wonderful moment of my life!" she exclaimed.

The 2009 Miss World was handed the glittering crown by last year's winner, Ms Sukhinova, from Russia.

The breathtaking pageant took place at the Gallagher Convention Centre in Johannesburg. Lovely ladies from more than a hundred countries participated in the contest. Traditional Zulu dancers and drummers contributed to the sensational atmosphere.

The first Miss World ever was Swedish Kicki Håkansson, back in 1951. India and Venezuela hold the most titles.

## EXERCISE

A. Work in teams - how many adjectives can you find in the text?

B.1. Put the adjectives into groups, depending on how they are formed. For instance, what type of word are they based on? Is there a suffix?

B.2. Try to find other adjectives formed in the same way. How many can you think of?

C. Pick three of the adjectives. Look for synonyms (or near synonyms). If you like, use a Thesaurus! Do the synonyms mean exactly the same thing? If not, what is the difference?

D. Choose a group of adjectives. Try to place them in order of strength. You can also use intensifiers to modify the meaning. Then discuss the ranking with your classmates!

E. Find antonyms to the adjectives! Can there be different antonyms? Why is this?



16/12/2009

## ALERT LEVEL RISES

*Residents evacuated*



The most active volcano of the Philippines is becoming increasingly restless. Lava has started trickling down the sides of Mt Mayon, and sporadic outbursts of ashes alarm experts.

Some twenty thousand villagers have been evacuated, and another thirty thousand are in the danger zone. The province of Albay has been placed under a "state of imminent disaster". Provincial Governor Joey Salceda is considering a range of disquieting scenarios.

But many villagers have already started Christmas celebrations, and are reluctant to stop partying. Local people are used to the volcano's occasional bursts of temper. Above all, the prospect of spending the holidays, camping in an emergency shelter, is rather gloomy.

"It's ten days before Christmas. Most likely people will be in evacuation centres," said Mr Jukes Nunez, an emergency management official. "If Mayon's activity won't ease down, we will not allow them to return to their homes," "It's difficult and sad, especially for children."

## EXERCISE

A. The article contains several words with an -ing form. What kinds of words are they, and what is their function? Work in groups, then discuss in class!

B.1. What would you personally do in this situation? Walk round the class and make a survey.

B.2. Present some of your classmates' answers on the whiteboard. How many different strategies did you find in the class?

C.1. Since the future is uncertain, there are different ways to express varying degrees of likelihood. How many such expressions can you find? Brainstorm in class!

C.2. How do you think the situation will develop over the next two weeks? Write a short text with possible scenarios, using expressions of likelihood.

D. Do you think there will be a major eruption, or is this a false alarm?

Imagine that you are one of the families living on the flanks of the volcano. Work in small groups to write a short scene, describing your reactions! Present the scene to the class.

17/12/2009

## PI NE NEEDLES, BONFIRES, CINNAMON



*Apple and blackberry crumble in the oven*

What puts you in good mood?

Although we are not always aware of it, smell plays an important part in our lives. It is strongly connected both to memory and emotions.

In a recent survey, four thousand Brits were asked about the smells they liked best. It appears that for most of the people who participated in the survey, nice smells evoked memories of a happy childhood, a feeling of being 'at home', or comforting food.

Women preferred scents that reminded them of someone they loved, while men enjoyed 'exciting' smells more. But 48 % of men also use scent to relax and create a pleasant mood.

Favourite smells were freshly baked bread, clean sheets and freshly mown grass. Fresh air after rainfall came number six. Vanilla, chocolate and coffee were also in the top ten, together with the comforting smells of fish & chips, and frying bacon.

## EXERCISE

A. What are your classmates' favourite smells? Walk round the classroom to make a survey!

B.1. Write a short poem, using smells and memories to create a special mood and atmosphere.

B.2. Read the poems aloud to the class. Close your eyes when you listen.

B.3. Collect the texts in a booklet that you can illustrate.

C. Ask your grandparents or older people in your neighbourhood about their favourite smells. What memories do they evoke?

D. What kinds of herbs and spices do you know the name of in English? Bring some to class, and see if your classmates can guess what it is, just from the smell.

E. Can you describe a smell? What adjectives do you know that describe smells?

18/12/2009



## BUSY WEEK

*And royal celebrations*

Long-standing environmentalist the Prince of Wales was one of the prominent speakers at the COP15 conference earlier this week. He insists that "Climate change is not an alternative priority to economic development; it is in fact a 'risk multiplier', a factor that will undermine our ability to improve human well-being."

Notable guests at the Bright Green expo also included the Scandinavian royalties, Prince Haakon, Princess Victoria and Prince Frederik.

Next week, the British royal family will be spending Christmas at Sandringham. They will open their presents on Christmas Eve, according to the German tradition. Later that evening, they will dress for dinner and meet for cocktails in the Saloon. A candlelight dinner is served at 8.30 pm.

On Christmas Day, they see what is in their stockings. After a proper English breakfast, they will attend morning service at 11 am. At 1 pm, they will have turkey with trimmings. Finally, at 3 pm, they will sit down to a log fire and watch the Queen's speech on television.

## EXERCISE

A. What will you be doing, when the Queen is opening her presents? Go through the royal schedule in pairs, and find out what your partner will be doing.

B. Work in groups to compose special menus for Christmas dinner or for New Year. Then present your menus to the class!

C. What happened in 2009? What will you remember this year for? Write a short text with some of the important events, in your personal life, or in the world.

D. Which topics would you bring up if you could make a speech to the Commonwealth, like the Queen? Discuss in groups!