

Africa's broken heart

Level: Pre-intermediate upwards

Timing: 90 minutes plus

Material needed: One copy of the student worksheets and Vocabulary record per student

Group size: Any (including one-to-one)

Overview

This lesson plan for both pre-experience and in-work business students is based around an article published in *Business Spotlight* Issue 2/2011. It is written by a South African who has visited Zimbabwe. She talks about the effects the political situation in Zimbabwe has had on people's work and lifestyles as well as the extreme contradictions that can be found there: for example, magical landscapes and poverty and ruin.

The tasks in the student worksheets encourage the students to learn and use new business vocabulary and functional language and also to develop and practise skills that could be useful in business situations, especially those in which the students have to deal with extreme differences and understand how a political situation can affect all aspects of people's lives.

The teacher's notes provide suggestions for teaching and learning strategies as well as ideas on how to present the tasks in the classroom, any necessary answer keys and extension tasks (for in class or as homework).

Warmer

Asking the students to decide which set of four countries border Zimbabwe will make them think about and visualize Africa as well as introduce the topic of the lesson.

Key:

c. Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia

Zimbabwe: Positive and negative sides

The students should read through the article and highlight all the positive and negative aspects of Zimbabwe that the author mentions. Encourage them to use two different colours to do this as it will help them to easily see whether there are more negative or positive aspects or whether the author managed to strike a balance in the article.

Key:

Positives:

- indigenous trees, wide rivers, elephants, hippos, crocodiles
- wide open plains and kilometres of untouched bush
- Lake Kariba is an ecological wonderland
- offers the chance for adventures
- spectacularly beautiful

Negatives:

- Mugabe's 23 years of despotic rule has brought the nation to its knees
- bad roads
- Zimbabweans have shot and eaten three quarters of the country's wild animals (game)
- huts and towns from a forgotten time
- buildings have paint peeling off them
- bus shelters are falling down
- shops have empty shelves
- the country is known for its lawlessness
- people are starving while the president goes on overseas shopping trips
- there is poverty and ruin
- people lack basics (aspirin, clothes, pens)

There are many more hugely negative aspects to be found in the country file: hyperinflation, a high HIV rate, low life expectancy, high infant mortality, 95% unemployment, etc.

Discussion questions

Basing their answers on the information they have written into the table in task 2, students should discuss the questions, either as a whole class or in small groups, followed by a class feedback session. Encourage them also to read between the lines by discussing the tone and emotions that the author brings into her writing.

Numbers and figures

The first part of this task asks the students to say the numbers and figures out loud. This provides them with revision and gives the teacher the chance to do some remedial correction. In the second part of the task, the students use the numbers to fill the gaps in the country file. Then they should read the whole country file and ask any questions they have about it.

Key:

1. 2,800,000; 2. 1987; 3. \$395; 4. 95%; 5. 15.3%;
6. 47.55 years; 7. 1.4 million; 8. 3,714 per cent

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Extension task

To consolidate this task the students could compare the figures they wrote into the country file to those of their own country for the same topics:
population of capital city, how long the head of state has been in power, GDP, unemployment, HIV/AIDS rate, life expectancy, number of tourists and inflation rate.
More country files (possibly even a file about the students' own country) can be found at at www.business-spotlight.de/intercultural.

Teaching and learning strategy: Reading numbers and figures out loud

Listen carefully when the students say the numbers and figures out loud as this is an area of language where many errors are likely to have slipped in and become fossilized. It may be many years since the students learned how to say and write numbers and figures and perhaps no one has corrected them since then (maybe because the rest of their English was understandable enough for the task in hand).

Listen carefully for correct usage of the words connected with the numbers, e.g. dot, comma, per cent, and make sure they know when to use plural forms of quantifying words such as dollars, Euros and per cent.

Ask students to tell you in which aspects of their work it is necessary to say numbers and figures accurately and comprehensibly. Possible answers could include: when presenting or discussing sales reports, budgets, measurements and weights, any figures on the phone, etc.

Questions

This task practises question formation. Using the prompts provided, the students can either work alone or in pairs to write questions about the article. To continue the task, the completed questions can be given to another student/pair to answer.

Expressions and translations

Students should use their knowledge, their dictionaries and the internet to decide how they could say or write the expressions from the article in another way. If you teach a monolingual class, they could decide together on the best translations of the expressions and write these into the third column. If your students do not all speak the same L1, they could do the translation part of the task as individual homework.

Vocabulary record

Here, students should be encouraged to record all the new and useful vocabulary they have learned during the lesson, not only in the form presented in the article but also in related forms.

More on related topics

For follow-up lessons on the same or related topics, go to the following lesson plans in the Business Spotlight series on onestopenglish:

Business Spotlight: My home is my castle:
<http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-spotlight/my-home-is-my-castle/550247.article>

Business Spotlight: Moving down under:
<http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-spotlight/moving-down-under/157595.article>

You may also find topical and relevant *Guardian* news lessons here on onestopenglish:
<http://www.onestopenglish.com/skills/news-lessons/>

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1 Warmer

Which four countries border Zimbabwe?

- a. Botswana, South Africa, Kenya, Angola
- b. Tanzania, Uganda, Mozambique, Zambia
- c. Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia

2 Zimbabwe: Positive and negative sides

Scan the article to find the positive and negative things that Sarah Mann writes about Zimbabwe and add them into the table.

positive	negative

3 Discussion questions

Discuss the following questions with a partner.

- How does Sarah Mann feel about Zimbabwe?
- What comparisons does she make between Zimbabwe and South Africa?
- What are her opinions about politics and politicians in Zimbabwe?
- Why did her husband say, "I think we should move to Italy"?

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by Sarah Mann

Zimbabwe, a country of magical landscapes and impressive fauna, is economically ruined. South African Sarah Mann reports on what she and her family have experienced there.

1 Zimbabwe is more the heart of Africa than South Africa will ever be. The indigenous trees are bigger, the rivers wider, the crocodiles and hippos more plentiful. It's the Africa of dreams: wide-open plains and kilometres of untouched bush. But Zimbabwe stopped being a destination for adventurous South Africans long ago. Robert Mugabe's 23 years of despotic rule have brought the nation to its knees. It is only in the past two years, since opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai signed a power-sharing agreement with Mugabe, that the tourism industry has been growing again.

2 A friend recently suggested a trip to Lake Kariba, an ecological wonderland on Zimbabwe's northern border. It was my husband's 60th birthday, and we wanted to do something special. Lake Kariba, where you look around and see nothing but nature, sounded perfect.

3 We didn't want to take our car into the country because of the bad roads, but no hire-car firm in South Africa was prepared to let any of their vehicles across the border! So, in true South African pioneering spirit, we left on our 3,000-kilometre journey with two spare wheels and lots of padkos.

4 Being at Kariba was one of the best adventures of our lives. We hired a houseboat, and the first night, as my daughter Jess and I prepared to sleep on the deck, she said: "We never do this kind of thing!" My son James shone a torch into the eyes of the crocodiles around us, and we fell asleep listening to hippos grunting. Earlier, we had watched the evening sky, mirrored in a perfectly still lake. It was spectacularly beautiful. In the following days, we saw a huge number of elephants, crocodiles and hippos – all the game that can't be eaten, the skipper told us, adding that Zimbabweans have shot and eaten three quarters of the country's game.

5 This was just one of many jarring notes on our African safari. By far the biggest disappointment was the drive north to Kariba. The only signs of life were huts and towns that seemed to be from a forgotten place and time. Buildings had paint peeling off them, bus shelters were falling down, and shops had empty shelves. While even the smallest towns in South Africa are full of activity, there were no signs of people working here.

6 Traffic police were active, however, and we were fined for speeding. It was hard to take this seriously in a land known for its lawlessness, and where the president goes on overseas shopping trips with his wife while his people starve.

7 Zimbabwe is a graphic reminder of how stupid politicians can be. Forcing white farmers off their land – or as it is known there, "into the sea" – has brought poverty and ruin. When we stopped beside the road to buy souvenirs, the sellers didn't want money; they wanted aspirin, clothes and pens. Zimbabwe

is every white African's worst nightmare, and we left it feeling depressed. Crossing the border, my husband, Peter, turned to me and said: "I think we should move to Italy."



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She lives and works in Johannesburg.

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4 Numbers and figures

Say these numbers and figures. Then use them to complete the gaps in the country file.

95%	1987	15.3%	3,714 per cent	1.4 million
	47.55 years		2,800,000	\$395

Country file: Zimbabwe



GENERAL

Official name: Republic of Zimbabwe
Nationality: Zimbabwean
Capital city: Harare _____ [1]
 (metropolitan area, 2006 est.)
Main cities: Bulawayo 1,500,000 (2009 est.);
 Mutare 170,000; Gweru 137,000 (2002)
Main languages: English (official), Shona,
 Sindebele
Country telephone code: +263
Internet domain: .zw
Time zone: Central Africa Time (CAT), which is
 the same as Central European Summer Time. In
 CET winter, it is CET -1 hour.
Currency: In April 2009, the Zimbabwean dollar
 was dropped and the use of foreign currencies for
 local transactions was legalized.

POLITICS

Type of government: parliamentary democracy,
 although Robert Mugabe, head of the
 ZANU-PF party, has ruled the country since
 _____ [2]. In the past ten years, he
 has used fraud to win elections.
Head of state: Executive President
 Robert Mugabe
Head of government: Prime Minister Morgan
 Tsvangirai (since February 2009)

ECONOMY (in US\$)

GDP (at purchasing power parity, PPP): \$4.16
 billion (2009 est.)
GDP (PPP) per head: _____ [3] (2010 est.)
GDP real annual growth: -1.3% (2009 est.)
Unemployment: _____ [4] (2009 est.)
Population below poverty line: 68% (2004)

PEOPLE

Population: 11,651,800 (July 2010 est.)
Population growth per year: 2.95% (2010 est.)
HIV/AIDS in adults: _____ [5] (2010 est.)
Net migration rate: 12.87 migrants/1,000 population
Age structure: 0–14 years: 43.9%; 15–64 years:
 52.2%; 65 years and over: 3.9% (2010 est.)
Life expectancy at birth: _____ [6]
 (2010 est.)
Infant mortality rate: 30.9 deaths /1,000 live births
Population groups: African 98%; mixed and Asian
 1%; white less than 1%
Main religions: part Christian, part indigenous
 beliefs 50%; Christian 25%; indigenous beliefs
 24%; Muslim and other 1%

DID YOU KNOW?

- In 2000, Executive President Robert Mugabe began his "land-reform programme", in which the government used violence to force white farmers off their land. This badly damaged the farming sector, the country's traditional source of jobs and food. Zimbabwe now imports food it used to produce.
- Zimbabwe attracted _____ [7] **tourists** in the 1990s. By the end of 2000, their number had dropped by 75 per cent.
- In 2007, **hyperinflation** reached a record _____ [8], with bread costing up to ten million dollars! Hyperinflation was caused by a collapsing economy, with the government regularly printing new money to pay for its budget deficit. The power-sharing government formed in February 2009 ended hyperinflation by, among other things, legalizing the use of foreign currencies.

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5 Questions

Write questions about the article and the country file using the prompt words provided.

trip *Where did Sarah Mann and her family go to on a recent trip?* _____

signs of life _____

fined _____

white African _____

forgotten place and time _____

adventure _____

hyperinflation _____

unemployment _____

6 Expressions and translations

Discuss the expressions from the article and find other ways to explain them in English. Then find appropriate translations in your own language.

expression from the article	explanation in English	translation into my language
to bring someone to their knees		
pioneering spirit		
jarring note		
signs of life		
graphic reminder		
poverty and ruin		
worst nightmare		

