

Topics: Politics by Adrian Tennant

LEVEL: Intermediate +
AGE: Teenagers / Adults
TIME NEEDED: 90 minutes + project
LANGUAGE FOCUS: Word formation;
 understanding vocabulary in context

LEAD-IN

Ask students to look at the picture. Then, put students in pairs and ask them to answer the questions. Monitor and help where necessary, and check the answers as a class.

Key

1. the White House; 2. Washington DC;
3. the US president

READING 1: HEADLINES

Ask students to read the headlines and circle all the words connected to politics. Next, ask the pairs to discuss what they think happened in each of the stories. Elicit ideas from students as a whole class discussion.

Key

leaders; democracy; politician

READING 2: NEWS IN BRIEF

Ask students to read through the stories and match the headlines, from the Reading 1: Headlines exercise, to the correct one. Tell them they don't need to understand every word (you could give a short time limit, e.g. two minutes). Get students to check their answers in pairs before checking as a class.

Key a

1. 70% stay at home; 2. Down, under and out;
3. World leaders talk trade; 4. More embrace democracy;
5. Will politician deliver promises?

Next, ask students to read the five comprehension questions and answer each one. Again, get pairs to check their answers together before checking as a class.

Key b

1. the Australian prime minister; 2. the Japanese prime minister; 3. the mayor of London; 4 in the UK;
5. Germany

WORKING WITH THE LANGUAGE

Focus 1: Understanding meaning

Do the first question as a whole class. Get students to read the question and try to find the answer. Elicit a few ideas, writing them up on the board, and then tell them the correct answer. Check they understand why it is correct and explain if necessary.

Put students in pairs and ask them to help each other answering the remaining four questions. Monitor and help where necessary before checking as a class.

Key

1. no; *In recent years ...*
2. no; *... after a series ...*
3. no, *they are discussing more; ... topics ranging from ... to ...*
4. *the politician whose quote is used at the start of the story*
5. *that he will serve the people of London*

Focus 2: Language use

Ask students to complete the sentences using the correct form of the word in brackets. Tell them they can look back at the newspaper stories for help. Get students to check their answers in pairs before checking as a class.

Key b

1. resignation; 2. vote; 3. election; 4. government;
5. opposition; 6. political

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WORKING WITH VOCABULARY

Focus 1: Meaning

Ask students to look back at the newspaper stories and find words that match the definitions. Encourage them to work in pairs and discuss their ideas as they look at the stories.

Key _____
a. coalition; b. turnout; c. scandals; d. polls; e. counterpart; f. slim; g. eligible; h. topple; i. campaign; j. abolish

Focus 2: Topic-related words

Ask students to work together and complete the sentences with the correct words. Again, encourage them to look back at the newspaper stories, from the Reading 2: News in brief exercise, as these might help them. Monitor and help where necessary, then check the answers as a class.

Key _____
 1. (political) parties; 2. elections; 3. vote; 4. prime minister; 5. polling; 6. majority; 7. commentators; 8. resign

LISTENING

Ask students to listen to a short radio news report. Play the report and ask students which of the newspaper stories, from the Reading 2: News in brief exercise, it is about (the third one). Now, ask students to read the third newspaper story and circle any differences they can remember between it and the radio report. Put students in pairs and ask them to discuss their answers together. Play the recording again, if necessary, and check the answers as a class.

Transcript:

Newsreader: ... and now, over to David for today's news in politics.

Politics reporter: Tomorrow, the US president will meet his Chinese counterpart for the third time this year. The meeting is being held to discuss trade between the two countries. With the American economy in recession, these talks are particularly significant for the US. However, with a sizeable majority in both houses, the American president has little to worry about politically.

Key _____
tomorrow / earlier today; Chinese president / Japanese prime minister; only discussing trade / discussing trade and other things; US economy in recession / Japanese leader facing a vote of no-confidence; the US president has a sizeable majority / the Japanese prime minister has a slim majority

Extra information in the radio report which is not in the newspaper story: there are elections next year in the US

SPEAKING

Put students in small groups and ask them to discuss the questions together. Afterwards, ask a few groups to report back on their discussion. You might want to open this out to the whole class.

PROJECT

Ask students to carry out the project for homework and follow it up in the next lesson.

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LEAD-IN

Look at this picture and answer these questions.

1. What's this building called?
2. Which city is it in?
3. Who lives there?



Image: Digital Stock

READING 1: HEADLINES

Read the headlines and circle all the words connected to politics.

WORLD LEADERS TALK TRADE

More embrace democracy

WILL POLITICIAN DELIVER PROMISES?

70% STAY AT HOME

DOWN, UNDER AND OUT

What do you think happened in each story?

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READING 1: NEWS IN BRIEF

a. Read the newspaper stories below and match the headlines from the previous page to the correct story.

1.

May is an important month in the UK as it's a time when elections are often held. Not just national elections, but also local ones and for European MPs (or MEPs, as they are known). It was thought that May was a good month to get voters to the polling stations. However, in recent years turnout has been declining and it's not unusual for only 30% of those eligible to vote actually turning up to mark their cards.

2.

The Australian prime minister has resigned after a series of scandals have rocked her government. "After three defeats in parliament, and unable to effectively pass any new laws, it was almost inevitable," said one political commentator. The resignation means that the country will be going to the polls for the third time in just four years.

3.

Earlier today, the US president met his Japanese counterpart. They are holding talks which will cover topics ranging from trade to environmental issues. The talks are particularly important for the Japanese prime minister who recently faced a vote of no-confidence and has a slim majority in his parliament.

4.

"It's great to see the seeds of democracy taking root," said one politician. Of course, they were referring to recent events in a number of Middle East countries where the governments that had been in power for many years have been toppled. But it's very difficult to know exactly what democracy is. Germany is ruled by a coalition as there are so many parties, while the USA is effectively a two-party state.

5.

The new mayor of London has promised voters that he will carry out all his campaign promises despite opposition from the current UK government. "I was elected by the people of London to serve them, and that's what I shall do," he said. The first thing he plans to do is abolish the congestion charge which was introduced in February 2003.

b. Read the texts again and answer these questions.

1. Who has already lost their job?
2. Who is likely to lose their job?
3. Who has just got their job?
4. Where does it appear that people don't care about voting?
5. Which country has more than one party in power?

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WORKING WITH THE LANGUAGE

Focus 1: Understanding meaning

Answer these questions.

1. In story 1, has the number of voters been decreasing for a long time? What word tells us this?
2. In story 2, did all the scandals happen at the same time? How do you know?
3. In story 3, are the two leaders only discussing two issues? How do you know?
4. In story 4, who does *they* in the second sentence refer to?
5. In story 5, what do the words *and that's what I shall do* refer to?

Focus 2: Language use

Complete the sentences with the correct form of the word in brackets.

1. Her _____ (resign) came as a bit of a shock, really.
2. In the UK, people become eligible to _____ (vote) at 18.
3. The result of the _____ (elect) should be in fairly soon.
4. The new _____ (govern) will take over in a few weeks.
5. There's been quite a lot of _____ (oppose) to the proposed new law.
6. He's one of the best-known _____ (politics) commentators around.

WORKING WITH VOCABULARY

Focus 1: Meaning

Find words in the newspaper stories, from Reading 2: News in brief, to match these definitions.

- a. a temporary union of different political parties that agree to form a government together
- b. the number of voters in an election

- c. talk or reports in the news about shocking events involving important people
- d. the place where people vote in an election
- e. someone who has the same job or purpose but in a different country or organization
- f. very small
- g. allowed by rules or laws to do something
- h. to make someone in authority lose their power
- i. a series of things that a politician or political party does to try to win an election
- j. to officially get rid of a law, system, etc.

Focus 2: Topic-related words

Complete these sentences using words from the newspaper stories.

1. There are two _____ in the US: the Democrats and the Republicans.
2. In the UK, _____ are usually held every four or five years to choose a new government.
3. "I'm definitely going to _____, but I still haven't decided who for!"
4. In the US, the leader is the president, while in Australia and the UK, the leader is called the _____.
5. Most _____ stations open at six-thirty in the morning and close at ten at night.
6. They won 300 out of 420 seats, so they have quite a big _____.
7. "I hate listening to political _____. Why don't they become politicians rather than going on TV and criticizing the ones we've got?"
8. There's more speculation that the prime minister will _____ and the government will collapse.

**Topics: Politics
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Listen to the radio news report and answer the questions below.

1. How many differences between the newspaper and radio reports did you hear?
2. What were they?

**SPEAKING**

Discuss these questions in groups.

1. Are you interested in politics? Why? Why not?
2. Do you vote? Why? Why not?
3. What do you think of politicians? Why?
4. Do the decisions politicians make effect you? How?
5. Would you ever want to be a politician? Why? Why not?

PROJECT

Find a newspaper report in English about politics. Circle all the words in the report connected to politics. Then write a short summary of the report.