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## Ready-to-use ESL / EFL Lessons

### Bush under pressure over New Orleans

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### Today's contents

The Article	2
Warm-ups	3
Before Reading / Listening	4
While Reading / Listening	5
After Reading	6
Discussion	7
Speaking	8
Listening Gap Fill	9
Homework	10
Answers	11

**3 September, 2005**

## THE ARTICLE

### **Bush under pressure over New Orleans**

**BNE:** President Bush is facing severe flack for his inability to deal with the most basic and critical issues in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. His popularity ratings were at an all time low before the storm hit. His virtually non-existent leadership in responding to one of America's greatest ever catastrophes has caused a further dip. He spluttered and faltered in front of TV cameras yesterday. He nonchalantly said he was "satisfied" with the national response to the turmoil in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. He is under a ferocious attack from political commentators and leaders on the ground in the affected areas as to why it took him five days to visit the area. He did not even visit New Orleans, perhaps to avoid the tumult of anger and rage the city's refugees feel.

In New Orleans, a state of anarchy reigns, as armed gangs control the streets. Soldiers have shoot-to-kill orders to prevent looting, even for starving and desperate people scavenging for food amid the squalor. Many are accusing the authorities of caring more about merchandise than saving lives. Tens of thousands of people are still stranded without food, water and medical supplies. Old people are quietly dying in the Superdome, in which they were advised to sit out the hurricane. The world's only superpower is seemingly powerless to cope with the mounting crisis. Even though authorities predicted the full magnitude and scale of destruction, the response has been slower than that for the average Third World disaster.

## **WARM-UPS**

**1. NEW ORLEANS:** You are a citizen of New Orleans. You have no food, water or electricity. You are a refugee in your own city. Talk to the other “refugees” in the class about life in the city. What do you think of the government’s response?

**2. KATRINA:** Have you been following the news of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina? What are your thoughts on what you see? Are you surprised? What do you think of President Bush’s leadership? In pairs / groups, decide what should be done about the following:

- President Bush
- Anarchy in New Orleans
- Relief efforts
- Looting
- The future of New Orleans
- Poor people dying
- The shoot to kill policy
- Floods in New Orleans

**3. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

*President Bush / popularity ratings / leadership / catastrophes / TV cameras / New Orleans / rage / refugees / anarchy / looting / destruction / Third World*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

**4. ANARCHY:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word “anarchy”. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

**5. COMMENTS:** Here are some comments about what’s happening in New Orleans at the moment. What do you think about them?

- a. “President Bush has shown he has little leadership.”
- b. “People are dying while police are shooting looters. Priorities are wrong.”
- c. “America cannot cope because too many troops are in Iraq.”
- d. “Help is slow in arriving because most refugees are poor and black.”
- e. “Relief efforts are almost non-existent. Tsunami victims received aid within 48 hours.”
- f. “The Government cut budgets to protect New Orleans from the sea. The money went to the war in Iraq.”
- g. “I never expected to see the Third World in America.”
- h. “Bush should resign.”

**6. QUICK DEBATE:** Students A think the US Government is doing enough to help the hurricane victims. Students B think the US Government is doing too little to help the hurricane victims. Change partners often.

## **BEFORE READING / LISTENING**

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| a. President Bush is facing flack over his handling of Katrina's aftermath. | T / F |
| b. President Bush's popularity is set to rise because of his efforts.       | T / F |
| c. President Bush said he was satisfied with relief efforts.                | T / F |
| d. It took President Bush five days to visit affected areas.                | T / F |
| e. Soldiers have shoot-to-kill orders to prevent looting.                   | T / F |
| f. Stranded people have enough food and water.                              | T / F |
| g. The world's only superpower is seemingly powerless to cope.              | T / F |
| h. The Third World receives disaster relief quicker than New Orleans.       | T / F |

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                 |           |
|-----------------|-----------|
| a. flack        | marooned  |
| b. aftermath    | vehement  |
| c. nonchalantly | growing   |
| d. ferocious    | wake      |
| e. tumult       | rules     |
| f. reigns       | filth     |
| g. squalor      | criticism |
| h. stranded     | enormity  |
| i. mounting     | casually  |
| j. magnitude    | uproar    |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |                                   |                                    |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a. President Bush is facing       | from political commentators        |
| b. His popularity ratings         | and rage the city's refugees feel  |
| c. He spluttered and faltered     | magnitude and scale of destruction |
| d. He is under a ferocious attack | were at an all time low            |
| e. to avoid the tumult of anger   | are still stranded without food    |
| f. a state of                     | with the mounting crisis           |
| g. desperate people scavenging    | severe flack                       |
| h. Tens of thousands of people    | for food amid the squalor          |
| i. seemingly powerless to cope    | in front of TV cameras yesterday   |
| j. authorities predicted the full | anarchy reigns                     |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

### Bush under pressure over New Orleans

**BNE:** President Bush is \_\_\_\_\_ severe flack for his inability to deal with the most basic and \_\_\_\_\_ issues in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. His popularity ratings were at an all \_\_\_\_\_ low before the storm hit. His virtually non-existent leadership in responding to one of America's greatest ever catastrophes has caused a further \_\_\_\_\_. He spluttered and \_\_\_\_\_ in front of TV cameras yesterday. He nonchalantly said he was "satisfied" with the national response to the \_\_\_\_\_ in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. He is under a \_\_\_\_\_ attack from political commentators and leaders on the ground in the affected areas as to why it took him five days to visit the area. He did not even visit New Orleans, perhaps to avoid the \_\_\_\_\_ of anger and rage the city's refugees feel.

*faltered*  
*ferocious*  
*critical*  
*dip*  
*facing*  
*tumult*  
*turmoil*  
*time*

In New Orleans, a state of anarchy \_\_\_\_\_, as armed gangs control the streets. Soldiers have shoot-to-kill orders to prevent looting, even for starving and desperate people \_\_\_\_\_ for food amid the squalor. Many are accusing the authorities of caring more about \_\_\_\_\_ than saving lives. Tens of thousands of people are still \_\_\_\_\_ without food, water and medical supplies. Old people are \_\_\_\_\_ dying in the Superdome, in which they were advised to \_\_\_\_\_ the hurricane. The world's only superpower is seemingly powerless to \_\_\_\_\_ with the mounting crisis. Even though authorities predicted the full magnitude and \_\_\_\_\_ of destruction, the response has been slower than that for the average Third World disaster.

*sit out*  
*stranded*  
*scale*  
*scavenging*  
*cope*  
*merchandise*  
*reigns*  
*quietly*

## **AFTER READING / LISTENING**

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'third'** and **'world'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. STUDENT "NEW ORLEANS" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about New Orleans and President Bush's response.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

**6. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- |                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| • flack        | • reigns      |
| • ratings      | • squalor     |
| • dip          | • merchandise |
| • nonchalantly | • quietly     |
| • ferocious    | • powerless   |
| • tumult       | • average     |

## **DISCUSSION**

### STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What were your initial thoughts on this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. What were your feelings after you read the article?
- d. Do you think President Bush is doing enough?
- e. Is President Bush a capable leader in times of crisis?
- f. Are you surprised by America's response to the catastrophe?
- g. Do you think the Iraq War has contributed to the slow relief efforts?
- h. Do you think race is an issue in the government's slow response?
- i. There are more police trying to stop looters than trying to help dying people. What do you think about this?
- j. Do you think President Bush will survive the political fallout of Hurricane Katrina?

### STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. What should President Bush be doing now?
- d. Will you be donating money to help the people in the affected areas?
- e. What are the most shocking images you have seen on television?
- f. Why do you think refugees in Niger received aid quicker than the people of New Orleans?
- g. What do you think life is like in New Orleans?
- h. Do you think authorities should have prepared better for the disaster?
- i. What message would you give to New Orleans residents?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

**AFTER DISCUSSION:** Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

## **SPEAKING**

**CITIZEN INTERVIEW:** In pairs / groups, write down questions you would like to ask an average New Orleans citizen about his/her experience of Katrina. The following ideas may be useful:

- The hurricane
- Water
- Electricity
- Food and water
- Destruction
- President George W. Bush
- Anarchy and looting
- Day five
- Evacuation
- The future

Take turns in role playing the interviewer and the New Orleans citizen. Change partners and discuss what you heard from previous partners.



## **LISTENING**

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### **Bush under pressure over New Orleans**

**BNE:** President Bush is facing severe \_\_\_\_\_ for his inability to deal with the most basic and critical issues in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. His popularity ratings were at \_\_\_\_\_ before the storm hit. His virtually non-existent leadership in responding to one of America's greatest ever catastrophes has caused a further \_\_\_\_\_. He spluttered and \_\_\_\_\_ in front of TV cameras yesterday. He nonchalantly said he was "satisfied" with the national response to the \_\_\_\_\_ in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. He is under a ferocious attack from political commentators and leaders on the ground in the \_\_\_\_\_ areas as to why it took him five days to visit the area. He did not even visit New Orleans, perhaps to avoid the \_\_\_\_\_ of anger and rage the city's refugees feel.

In New Orleans, a state of \_\_\_\_\_ reigns, as armed gangs control the streets. Soldiers have shoot-to-kill orders to prevent looting, even for starving and desperate people scavenging for food amid the \_\_\_\_\_. Many are \_\_\_\_\_ the authorities of caring more about merchandise than saving lives. Tens of thousands of people are still \_\_\_\_\_ without food, water and medical supplies. Old people are quietly dying in the Superdome, in which they were advised \_\_\_\_\_ the hurricane. The world's only superpower is seemingly powerless to cope with the \_\_\_\_\_ crisis. Even though authorities predicted the full magnitude and scale of destruction, the response has been slower \_\_\_\_\_ the average Third World disaster.

## **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find more information on conditions in New Orleans. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

**3. LETTER:** Write a letter to U.S. President George W. Bush. Tell him what you think of his response to the catastrophe in the Gulf States. Read your letters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

**4. DIARY / JOURNAL:** You are a resident of New Orleans. Write the diary / journal entry for one day in your life since Hurricane Katrina hit. Read what you wrote to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T      b. F      c. T      d. T      e. T      f. F      g. T      h. T

### SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                 |           |
|-----------------|-----------|
| a. flack        | criticism |
| b. aftermath    | wake      |
| c. nonchalantly | casually  |
| d. ferocious    | vehement  |
| e. tumult       | uproar    |
| f. reigns       | rules     |
| g. squalor      | filth     |
| h. stranded     | marooned  |
| i. mounting     | growing   |
| j. magnitude    | enormity  |

### PHRASE MATCH:

- |                                   |                                    |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a. President Bush is facing       | severe flack                       |
| b. His popularity ratings         | were at an all time low            |
| c. He spluttered and faltered     | in front of TV cameras yesterday   |
| d. He is under a ferocious attack | from political commentators        |
| e. to avoid the tumult of anger   | and rage the city's refugees feel  |
| f. a state of                     | anarchy reigns                     |
| g. desperate people scavenging    | for food amid the squalor          |
| h. Tens of thousands of people    | are still stranded without food    |
| i. seemingly powerless to cope    | with the mounting crisis           |
| j. authorities predicted the full | magnitude and scale of destruction |

### GAP FILL:

#### Bush under pressure over New Orleans

**BNE:** President Bush is **facing** severe flack for his inability to deal with the most basic and **critical** issues in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. His popularity ratings were at an all **time** low before the storm hit. His virtually non-existent leadership in responding to one of America's greatest ever catastrophes has caused a further **dip**. He spluttered and **faltered** in front of TV cameras yesterday. He nonchalantly said he was "satisfied" with the national response to the **turmoil** in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. He is under a **ferocious** attack from political commentators and leaders on the ground in the affected areas as to why it took him five days to visit the area. He did not even visit New Orleans, perhaps to avoid the **tumult** of anger and rage the city's refugees feel.

In New Orleans, a state of anarchy **reigns**, as armed gangs control the streets. Soldiers have shoot-to-kill orders to prevent looting, even for starving and desperate people **scavenging** for food amid the squalor. Many are accusing the authorities of caring more about **merchandise** than saving lives. Tens of thousands of people are still **stranded** without food, water and medical supplies. Old people are **quietly** dying in the superdome, in which they were advised to **sit out** the hurricane. The world's only superpower is seemingly powerless to **cope** with the mounting crisis. Even though authorities predicted the full magnitude and **scale** of destruction, the response has been slower than that for the average Third World disaster.