Activists fight for water in Mexico

URL: [http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0603/060318-water.html](http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0603/060318-water.html)

18 March, 2006

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Activists fight for water in Mexico

War over water has traditionally been the fare of fantasy writers and Hollywood epics. No more. The bleak reality is that water is becoming so scarce in many parts of the world that people are resorting to violence. The possibility that the poor and waterless might go to war to quench their increasing thirst is in fact quite real. Evidence the street riots in Mexico City following the opening of the fourth World Water Forum yesterday. Activists clashed with police, while nearby, peaceful protestors ominously brandished mock wooden rifles – an apocalyptic vision of what the future might hold in store. Julio Gonzalez, an Indian from Mexico’s south, warned: “We are on the verge of fighting for real. We have no choice, fight or watch communities dehydrate.”

The World Water Forum has brought into stark contrast many divisive issues concerning water and its availability to everyone in the world. Representatives of 130 nations are meeting to discuss water management. The rich countries have been accused of adding to the ensuing crisis. Multinational corporations make more and more money from providing bottled water to the poor and their governments ensure reserves are sufficient to supply the grandiose fountains that beautify their parliament buildings. Mexico, significantly, is the world’s second largest consumer of mineral water. Poor nations consume one-thirtieth of the daily water usage of many developed countries. Wars have been fought for less than this shocking disparity.
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WARM-UPS

1. WATER: Write down five things you most need water for. Share what you wrote down with your partner(s). Did they have the same needs as you?

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.
   
   War / water / fantasy / Hollywood / bleak realities / quenching thirst / activists / apocalypse / dehydration / water management / fountains / mineral water
   
   Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

3. WATER USE: With your partner(s), talk about whether the things in the list below are OK, considering millions of people around the world have no water. Put a grade of 1 (absolutely vital) to 10 (totally unnecessary) next to each water use:

   _____ Washing the car           _____ Swimming pools
   _____ Fountains outside company offices _____ Taking a bath/shower every day
   _____ Water slides in swimming pools _____ Making sodas and soft drinks
   _____ Watering the garden       _____ Other _____________________

4. HEADLINE PREDICTION: With your partner(s), use all of the words in the “Chat” activity above to predict what the news article will be about. Once you have your story, change partners and compare your different versions. Who was closest to the real story?

5. WATER HEADLINES: Do you think these headlines could come true one day? Talk about them as though they were real with your partner(s).

   a. Europe and Africa go to war over water rights
   b. Water reaches ten dollars a liter
   c. Antarctica answers world water problems
   d. Car washing using water to be banned worldwide
   e. Scientists reduce our body’s water consumption needs by 30 percent
   f. Water pipeline from Mars opens tomorrow
   g. Ninety percent of Earth’s water now hazardous to drink
   h. Man receives 20 years in prison for forging water ration vouchers
   i. There is no water shortage – conspiracy theory unveiled

6. MEXICO: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with Mexico. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

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BEFORE READING / LISTENING

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


b. It is becoming increasingly possible people may fight wars over water.  

c. Activists hit policemen with wooden rifles.  

d. A Mexican Indian said the choice would soon be to fight or dehydrate.  

e. The concerns over water has showed how united the world is.  

f. Multinational companies make lots of money selling water to the poor.  

g. Mexico is the world’s second largest consumer of bottled water.  

h. Rich countries use 30 times more water than poor nations.

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

a. fare  
b. bleak  
c. brandished  
d. verge  
e. dehydrate  
f. divisive  
g. ensuing  
h. grandiose  
i. significantly  
j. disparity

edge  
gulf  
developing  
gloomy  
strikingly  
offering  
opulent  
wielded  
dry up  
alienating

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

a. War over water has traditionally  
b. people are resorting  
c. protestors ominously brandished  
d. an apocalyptic vision of what  
e. We have no choice, fight or  
f. brought into stark  
g. accused of adding to the ensuing  
h. money from providing  
i. ensure reserves are sufficient to  
j. Wars have been fought for less  

crisis  
watch communities dehydrate  
supply the grandiose fountains  
than this shocking disparity  
mock wooden rifles  
bottled water to the poor  
been the fare of fantasy writers  
contrast many divisive issues  
to violence  
the future might hold in store

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WHILE READING / LISTENING

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

Activists fight for water in Mexico

War over water has traditionally been the ________ of fantasy writers and Hollywood epics. No more. The ________ reality is that water is becoming so scarce in many parts of the world that people are ________ to violence. The possibility that the poor and ________ might go to war to ________ their increasing thirst is in fact quite real. Evidence the street riots in Mexico City following the opening of the fourth World Water Forum yesterday. Activists clashed with police, while nearby, peaceful protestors ominously brandished ________ wooden rifles – an ________ vision of what the future might hold in store. Julio Gonzalez, an Indian from Mexico’s south, warned: “We are on the verge of fighting for real. We have no choice, fight or watch communities ________.”

The World Water Forum has brought into ________ contrast many divisive issues ________ water and its availability to everyone in the world. Representatives of 130 nations are meeting to discuss water ________. The rich countries have been accused of adding to the ensuing ________. Multinational corporations make more and more money from providing bottled water to the poor and their governments ensure ________ are sufficient to supply the grandiose fountains that ________ their parliament buildings. Mexico, significantly, is the world’s second largest consumer of mineral water. Poor nations ________ one-thirtieth of the daily water usage of many developed countries. Wars have been fought for less than this ________ disparity.
LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Activists fight for water in Mexico

War over water has traditionally been the ______ of fantasy writers and Hollywood epics. No more. The bleak reality is that water is becoming so ______ in many parts of the world that people are resorting to violence. The possibility that the poor and waterless might go to war to ______ their increasing thirst is in fact quite real. ______ the street riots in Mexico City following the opening of the fourth World Water Forum yesterday. Activists clashed with police, while nearby, peaceful protestors ______ mock wooden rifles – an apocalyptic vision of what the future might ______ in store. Julio Gonzalez, an Indian from Mexico’s south, warned: “We are on the ______ of fighting for real. We have no choice, fight or watch communities dehydrate.”

The World Water Forum has brought into ______ contrast many divisive issues concerning water and its availability to everyone in the world. Representatives of 130 ______ are meeting to discuss water management. The rich countries have been accused of adding to the ______ crisis. Multinational corporations make more and more money from providing bottled water to the poor and their governments ______ reserves are sufficient to supply the ______ fountains that ______ their parliament buildings. Mexico, significantly, is the world’s second largest consumer of mineral water. Poor nations consume one-thirtieth of the daily water ______ of many developed countries. Wars have been fought for less than this shocking ______.
AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words ‘fantasy’ and ‘writer’.
   • 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 activity. 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 “WATER” SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about water and water shortages.
   • 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:
   • fare
   • scarce
   • quench
   • mock
   • store
   • choice
   • stark
   • ensuing
   • ensure
   • beautify
   • consume
   • shocking

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DISCUSSION

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

a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
b. What do you think of water wars?
c. Have you seen any movies about water wars?
d. What are your experiences of water shortages?
e. Do you take water for granted?
f. How would life change if your town rationed water?
g. What do you do to conserve water?
h. Could you reduce by half the number of baths you take?
i. Have you ever been without water for a long period of time?
j. What do you think it is like to be on the verge of dehydration?

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. Do you think rich countries at the World Water Forum will help poor countries?
d. What do you think of the Coca Cola Company making millions of dollars from selling water to desperately poor people?
e. Do you think fountains outside government buildings should be turned off?
f. What is the most important thing rich countries should do to help poor countries?
g. What is the most important thing you should do to conserve water?
h. Where do you think the world’s first water war will be fought?
i. What do you think of the fact that rich countries use thirty times more water than poor countries?
j. Did you like this discussion?

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

a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
b. Was there a question you didn’t like?
c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
d. What did you like talking about?
e. Which was the most difficult question?

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**SPEAKING**

**WATER CONSERVATION:** In pairs / groups, discuss whether the following ways of conserving water are acceptable to you or not. Make a mini presentation for the rest of your class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ad</th>
<th>Comments for your presentation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. REDUCED BATHING</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Take only two baths / showers a week instead of seven.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. FAUCET / TAP TIMERS</td>
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<tr>
<td>A timer is put on your faucet / tap that cuts the water supply after three, ten or thirty seconds.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. NATURAL SWIMMING</td>
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<tr>
<td>All swimming pools are closed. Swimming should take place in rivers, lakes or the sea.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. NATURAL CAR WASH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Car wash centers and washing your car at home are banned. Cars to be cleaned using river water.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. ECONOMICAL TOILETS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flush the toilet after every two uses instead of every use.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. GOODBYE GRASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>A ban on watering the garden.</td>
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Change partners and talk about what you wrote with your previous partner(s).

Give your presentations.

Discuss what was said in each presentation and vote on the best ones.
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 information on the water shortages around the world. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s).

3. CONSERVE: Make a poster outlining the many ways we can conserve water in our daily lives. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Which poster(s) did you like most and why?

4. WATER DIARY: Write a diary entry for a day in your life. Note down all of the times you use water. Did you need the water? Could you have conserved it? Discuss this with your partner(s).
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ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

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

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. fare  offering
b. bleak  gloomy
c. brandished  wielded
d. verge  edge
e. dehydrate  dry up
f. divisive  alienating
g. ensuing  developing
h. grandiose  opulent
i. significantly  strikingly
j. disparity  gulf

PHRASE MATCH:

a. War over water has traditionally been the fare of fantasy writers and Hollywood epics. No more. The bleak reality is that water is becoming so scarce in many parts of the world that people are resorting to violence. The possibility that the poor and waterless might go to war to quench their increasing thirst is in fact quite real. Evidence the street riots in Mexico City following the opening of the fourth World Water Forum yesterday. Activists clashed with police, while nearby, peaceful protestors ominously brandished mock wooden rifles – an apocalyptic vision of what the future might hold in store. Julio Gonzalez, an Indian from Mexico’s south, warned: “We are on the verge of fighting for real. We have no choice, fight or watch communities dehydrate.”

b. People are resorting to violence.
c. Protestors ominously brandished mock wooden rifles.
d. An apocalyptic vision of what the future might hold in store.
e. We have no choice: fight or watch communities dehydrate.
f. Brought into stark contrast many divisive issues.
g. Accused of adding to the ensuing crisis.
h. Money from providing bottled water to the poor.
i. Ensure reserves are sufficient to supply the grandiose fountains.
j. Wars have been fought for less than this shocking disparity.

GAP FILL:

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