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World's mightiest rivers on "at risk" list

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21st March, 2007

THE ARTICLE

World's mightiest rivers on "at risk" list

A report released by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) warns that the current rate of climate change is putting many of world's great rivers at risk of drying up. The report, "[WWF's Top 10 Rivers at Risk](#)", was released to coincide with World Water Day (March 22nd). It is a worrying read. Among the endangered rivers are the Rio Grande, which runs along the U.S.-Mexico border; the Yangtze, Mekong and Ganges rivers in Asia; the Danube in Europe; and Africa's mighty River Nile. The WWF says these waterways, which provide fresh water to millions of people, are "facing widespread degradation". Carter Roberts, president of the WWF, issued a dire warning: "The world's freshwater ecosystems are under siege, and the rivers in this report are the front lines," he says.

The Rio Grande makes the list, says the report, "because the river is severely threatened by water diversions," coming from a "widespread alteration of the floodplain". Dams and pollution are also to blame for putting the river in danger. A combination of drought and people taking too much water out of the river is draining it dry. This is endangering a unique desert river ecosystem, which might damage the economic growth of communities along the U.S.-Mexico border. The WWF is working to improve matters to conserve fish stocks. It also hopes farmers can maintain a sustainable supply of water and live in harmony with the rivers. Another WWF initiative is the establishment of more protected areas along stretches of the rivers most important for wildlife.

WARM-UPS

1. I'M A RIVER: You are a river. Decide which one. Walk around the class and talk to the other "rivers" in the classroom. Ask them about their life. What do they think of the humans who use / pollute them? Sit with a new partner and share your life-as-a-river stories.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

reports / World Wildlife Fund / climate change / rivers / fresh water / warnings / dams / pollution / droughts / ecosystems / borders / fish / living in harmony

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

3. WORLD RIVERS: With your partner(s), talk about these rivers. What is your image of them? What do you know of them? Change partners and share your findings.

- Amazon
- Nile
- Thames
- Mississippi
- Rio Grande
- Ganges
- Mekong
- Seine
- Danube
- Yangtze

4. EARTH REPORTS: Imagine the following reports are released in the next few weeks. Talk about each of them. Do you think they could come true?

- deserts to cover half of Europe
- pollution at risk of destroying Australia's Great Barrier Reef
- water war breaks out – 16 countries fighting
- disappearing land – 20% of Earth will be under water by 2050
- human age limits declining due to fertilizers and GM food
- world's last waterfall dries up

5. QUICK DEBATE: Have this fun quick debate with your partner(s). Students A think people worry too much about climate change; students B think people don't take climate change seriously enough. Change partners and topics every two minutes.

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

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

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

- a. A WWF report warns many of the world's great rivers may dry up. T / F
- b. The report was released to coincide with World Fish Day. T / F
- c. The rivers at risk provide fresh water to billions of people. T / F
- d. Many of the endangered rivers are on the front line of war zones. T / F
- e. The diverting of water in rivers by humans is a big problem. T / F
- f. The building of dams has helped protect many rivers. T / F
- g. The WWF is worried about the stock prices of the fishing industry. T / F
- h. A WWF initiative is to stretch rivers to create space for wildlife. T / F

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

- | | |
|----------------|----------------------|
| a. released | threatening |
| b. drying up | deterioration |
| c. coincide | seriously |
| d. degradation | dwindling |
| e. dire | modification |
| f. severely | maintainable |
| g. alteration | issued |
| h. endangering | appalling |
| i. sustainable | areas |
| j. stretches | occur simultaneously |

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

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. the current rate | fish stocks |
| b. released to coincide | degradation |
| c. It is a worrying | of the rivers |
| d. facing widespread | supply of water |
| e. ecosystems are under | read |
| f. The Rio Grande makes | with World Water Day |
| g. A combination of drought | the list |
| h. improve matters to conserve | siege |
| i. maintain a sustainable | and people taking too much water |
| j. protected areas along stretches | of climate change |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

World's mightiest rivers on "at risk" list

A report released by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) warns that the _____ rate of climate change is putting many of world's great rivers at _____ of drying up. The report, "WWF's Top 10 Rivers at Risk", was released to _____ with World Water Day (March 22nd). It is a worrying _____. Among the endangered rivers are the Rio Grande, which _____ along the U.S.-Mexico border; the Yangtze, Mekong and Ganges rivers in Asia; the Danube in Europe; and Africa's _____ River Nile. The WWF says these waterways, which provide fresh water to millions of people, are "_____ widespread degradation". Carter Roberts, president of the WWF, issued a _____ warning: "The world's freshwater ecosystems are under siege, and the rivers in this report are the front lines," he says.

coincide

mighty

dire

current

facing

read

risk

runs

The Rio Grande _____ the list, says the report, "because the river is severely threatened by water diversions," coming from a "widespread _____ of the floodplain". Dams and pollution are also to _____ for putting the river in danger. A combination of drought and people taking too much water out of the river is _____ it dry. This is endangering a unique desert river ecosystem, which might damage the economic growth of communities along the U.S.-Mexico _____. The WWF is working to improve matters to _____ fish stocks. It also hopes farmers can maintain a sustainable supply of water and live in harmony with the rivers. Another WWF _____ is the establishment of more protected areas along _____ of the rivers most important for wildlife.

draining

alteration

stretches

conserve

blame

initiative

makes

border

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

World's mightiest rivers on "at risk" list

A report released by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) warns that the current rate of climate change is putting many of world's great _____ drying up. The report, "WWF's Top 10 Rivers at Risk", was _____ World Water Day (March 22nd). It is _____. Among the endangered rivers are the Rio Grande, _____ U.S.-Mexico border; the Yangtze, Mekong and Ganges rivers in Asia; the Danube in Europe; and Africa's mighty River Nile. The WWF says these waterways, which provide fresh water to millions of people, are "facing _____". Carter Roberts, president of the WWF, issued a dire warning: "The world's freshwater ecosystems _____, and the rivers in this report are the front lines," he says.

The Rio Grande makes the list, says the report, "because _____ threatened by water diversions," coming from a "widespread alteration of the floodplain". Dams and pollution _____ putting the river in danger. A combination of drought and people taking too much water out of the river is _____. This is endangering a unique desert river ecosystem, which might damage the economic growth of communities along the U.S.-Mexico border. The WWF is working _____ conserve fish stocks. It also hopes farmers can maintain a sustainable supply of water and live in harmony with the rivers. Another _____ establishment of more protected areas _____ rivers most important for wildlife.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

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

- 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 "RIVERS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about rivers, drought, dams and climate change.

- 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:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• warns• coincide• runs• mighty• facing• under	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• makes• blame• draining• conserve• harmony• stretches
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DISCUSSION

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

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) Are you interested in climate change?
- c) Do you think these rivers can really dry up?
- d) Do you have a favourite world river?
- e) What should people around the world do on World Water Day?
- f) Do you think climate change is to blame for the rivers being at risk?
- g) What can governments do to protect their rivers?
- h) Do you think governments can act together to save rivers that run through many different countries?
- i) What will happen when the world's freshwater supplies are threatened?
- j) In what way do you think the rivers are "under siege"?



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

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Do you think governments should stop diverting the flow of rivers and building dams?
- c) How polluted are the rivers in your country?
- d) Are there many dams in your country? Are they essential?
- e) Do you think globalization is speeding up the sorry state of the world's rivers?
- f) When will the world start to take notice of reports like this one?
- g) Do you think it's possible for today's world to live in harmony with rivers?
- h) Do you think there'll be water wars in the future?
- i) What would happen if water became as expensive as gasoline?
- 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?

SPEAKING

MOVIE SCRIPT:

With your partner(s), plan the script/story for a major new catastrophe story about the world's rivers drying up. Use the table to help you:

Your ideas	Notes
Movie title	
Location	
Actors	
Opening scene	
Biggest action scene	
Turning point	
Message	
The End	

After you finish, compare stories with other groups. Suggest improvements. Vote on the best story.

LANGUAGE

CORRECT WORD: Put the correct words from a–d below in the article.

World's mightiest rivers on "at risk" list

A report (1) _____ by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) warns that the current rate of climate change is putting many of world's great rivers at risk of drying up. The report, "WWF's Top 10 Rivers at Risk", was released to (2) _____ with World Water Day (March 22nd). It is a worrying (3) _____. Among the endangered rivers are the Rio Grande, which (4) _____ along the U.S.-Mexico border; the Yangtze, Mekong and Ganges rivers in Asia; the Danube in Europe; and Africa's (5) _____ River Nile. The WWF says these waterways, which provide fresh water to millions of people, are "facing widespread degradation". Carter Roberts, president of the WWF, issued a (6) _____ warning: "The world's freshwater ecosystems are under siege, and the rivers in this report are the front lines," he says.

The Rio Grande (7) _____ the list, says the report, "because the river is severely threatened by water diversions," coming from a "widespread alteration of the floodplain". Dams and pollution are also (8) _____ blame for putting the river in danger. A combination of drought and people taking too much water out of the river is draining it (9) _____. This is endangering a (10) _____ desert river ecosystem, which might damage the economic growth of communities along the U.S.-Mexico border. The WWF is working to improve matters to conserve fish stocks. It also hopes farmers can maintain a sustainable supply of water and live (11) _____ harmony with the rivers. Another WWF initiative is the establishment of more protected areas along (12) _____ of the rivers most important for wildlife.

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1. | (a) releasing | (b) release | (c) released | (d) releases |
| 2. | (a) coincide | (b) coincidence | (c) coincidental | (d) coin |
| 3. | (a) reads | (b) read | (c) reed | (d) reading |
| 4. | (a) bows | (b) kneels | (c) walks | (d) runs |
| 5. | (a) mite | (b) mightier | (c) mighty | (d) might |
| 6. | (a) fire | (b) dire | (c) hire | (d) wire |
| 7. | (a) makes | (b) takes | (c) lakes | (d) fakes |
| 8. | (a) of | (b) with | (c) for | (d) to |
| 9. | (a) dry | (b) wet | (c) moist | (d) as |
| 10. | (a) unlikely | (b) uniqueness | (c) unique | (d) uniquely |
| 11. | (a) big | (b) with | (c) on | (d) in |
| 12. | (a) stretched | (b) stitches | (c) stretches | (d) stretchers |

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 about the WWF report. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. RIVERS POSTER: Make a poster about different rivers around the world. How are they different? Show your poster to your class in the next lesson. Vote on the best one(s).

4. MAGAZINE ARTICLE: Write a magazine article about the consequences of the world's rivers drying up. Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Which article was best and why?

5. LETTER: Write a letter to the leader of your country. Tell him/her what he/she has to do to save the rivers in your country. Ask him/her three questions. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

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

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------------|
| a. released | issued |
| b. drying up | dwindling |
| c. coincide | occur simultaneously |
| d. degradation | deterioration |
| e. dire | appalling |
| f. severely | seriously |
| g. alteration | modification |
| h. endangering | threatening |
| i. sustainable | maintainable |
| j. stretches | areas |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. the current rate | of climate change |
| b. released to coincide | with World Water Day |
| c. It is a worrying | read |
| d. facing widespread | degradation |
| e. ecosystems are under | siege |
| f. The Rio Grande makes | the list |
| g. A combination of drought | and people taking too much water |
| h. improve matters to conserve | fish stocks |
| i. maintain a sustainable | supply of water |
| j. protected areas along stretches | of the rivers |

GAP FILL:

World's mightiest rivers on "at risk" list

A report released by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) warns that the **current** rate of climate change is putting many of world's great rivers at **risk** of drying up. The report, "WWF's Top 10 Rivers at Risk", was released to **coincide** with World Water Day (March 22nd). It is a worrying **read**. Among the endangered rivers are the Rio Grande, which **runs** along the U.S.-Mexico border; the Yangtze, Mekong and Ganges rivers in Asia; the Danube in Europe; and Africa's **mighty** River Nile. The WWF says these waterways, which provide fresh water to millions of people, are "**facing** widespread degradation". Carter Roberts, president of the WWF, issued a **dire** warning: "The world's freshwater ecosystems are under siege, and the rivers in this report are the front lines," he says.

The Rio Grande **makes** the list, says the report, "because the river is severely threatened by water diversions," coming from a "widespread **alteration** of the floodplain". Dams and pollution are also to **blame** for putting the river in danger. A combination of drought and people taking too much water out of the river is **draining** it dry. This is endangering a unique desert river ecosystem, which might damage the economic growth of communities along the U.S.-Mexico **border**. The WWF is working to improve matters to **conserve** fish stocks. It also hopes farmers can maintain a sustainable supply of water and live in harmony with the rivers. Another WWF **initiative** is the establishment of more protected areas along **stretches** of the rivers most important for wildlife.

LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - c 2 - a 3 - b 4 - d 5 - c 6 - b 7 - a 8 - d 9 - a 10 - c 11 - d 12 - c