

Lesson: Is the world about to end?

This is a quick, easy, English lesson plan that will inspire your students. It'll also give them opportunities to improve their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. This lesson comes with Teacher's Notes, a Resource Sheet, a PDF of the lesson, and an audio file. Simply follow the lesson ideas for a fantastic class that'll really motivate your students.

1 Warm-up

Discussion: natural disasters

Students have a discussion about natural disasters. Either print off the questions for students to ask in pairs, or ask them to students in general as part of a class activity. Remind students that they can answer any questions they like (and in any order), and that the objective of these questions is to get them talking. See the **RESOURCE SHEET** at the end of this pack.

2 Lesson activities

Go through the activities for the lesson on the sheet **at the end of this document**: the Pre-reading, Reading I and Reading II activities.

Remember, as part of the Learn Hot English method, we recommend three rounds of reading:

1. Read the text once without stopping for a general understanding (reading for gist).
2. Then, read the text again to answer comprehension questions.
3. Finally, read the text again but this time look up the meanings of any words you couldn't guess.

3 Follow-up activities

Retell it!

Assign a story (or two, etc.) to each student. Students have a minute or two to try to remember the text. When they're ready, students try to recount the information, using as much of the language as possible.

Dialogue

In pairs, students write notes for an interview between a reporter and someone involved in a natural disaster. The reporter should ask questions using *who*, *what*, *where*, *why*, *when*, *how* to get as much information as possible. Tell your students to make the interview as funny, silly or serious as they like. When they're ready, ask for volunteers to act out their interviews (using notes, not reading it out word-for-word). Other students listen and vote on the best ones.

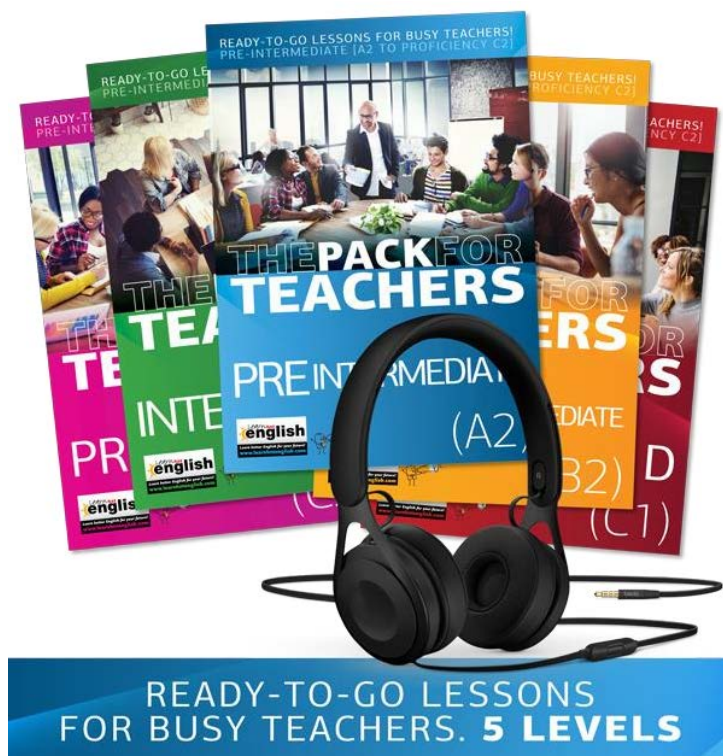


News report

Students write a news report based on an end of the world prediction. The news report should include information that answers the following questions: *who, what, when, where, why, how*. When they're ready, ask for volunteers to present their news stories. They should do this by using notes, not reading it word-for-word. They should also present it as if they were two reporters in a news studio, sitting at a desk looking into the camera. Other students listen then ask questions, or the person presenting the news could ask them questions.

Presentation

Students write notes for a one- or two-minute presentation (or a public information video) on how to survive a natural disaster, or an end of the world prediction. Students should give detailed instructions on what to do, what to take, where to wait, how to get in touch with, how to protect yourself, etc. When they're ready, ask for volunteers to give their presentations (using notes, not reading it out word-for-word). Other students vote on the most interesting ones. Or, students could film the presentation (or public information video) on a smartphone and then show it to the class.



Resource Sheet

Discussion: natural disasters

Have a discussion about natural disasters. Answer any questions you like (and in any order). The objective of these questions is to get you talking.

- How would you rank the following natural disasters in terms of deadliness? Why?

earthquake, famine, wildfire / bushfire, avalanche, landslide, blizzard, flood, pandemic, heat wave, epidemic, tornado, tsunami, volcanic eruption

- How many types of natural disaster can you name?
- What natural disasters are common in your country?
- Have you ever experienced a natural disaster? What happened?
- Which natural disaster films you have seen? Which ones were the best or worst? What happened in them?
- What advice would you give to someone caught in a natural disaster (choose one to focus on)?
- What top tips have you heard about surviving a natural disaster?
- Which countries seem to have a lot of natural disasters?
- How should a country suffering from a natural disaster be helped?
- Would you ever volunteer to help in a natural disaster? Why? Why not?
- How can technology lessen the damage caused by natural disasters?
- What can be done to prevent natural disasters?
- Have you ever prepared for a natural disaster? Which one? When? Why?
- What's the worst natural disaster in your opinion? Why?



YOU'RE ALL
GOING TO
DIE!



Objective To improve your reading and listening skills.

Think about it Have you read about any predictions for the end of the world? What were they? Have you heard of any other unusual predictions? What are your predictions for the next ten years for the world, the economy, technology, etc.?

Exams This reading and listening activity will help prepare you for English exams such as PET and TOEFL.

IS THE WORLD ABOUT TO END?

Asteroid attacks. Famine. Nuclear disaster. People have been making **predictions** about the end of the world for centuries. Here are a few of the most famous ones.

One of the earliest **prophecies** came from Christopher Columbus. He declared that the world would end in 1658. His calculations were based on the fact that the planet was going to **last** just 7,000 years and that it had been created in 5342 **BC**. Of course, that wouldn't be his only major mistake. In 1642, he thought he'd landed in India when it was actually America!

Herbert W. Armstrong, the founder of the Worldwide Church of God, told his **congregation** that the world was going to end in 1936, and that only *they* would be saved. After the prophecy failed, he changed the date three more times before finally **giving up**.

Jim Jones, the founder of the Peoples [sic] Temple Agricultural Project, claimed he had visions that a nuclear holocaust was going to take place in 1967. Later, on 18th November 1978, he convinced his followers to commit mass suicide in north-western Guyana. Known as the Jonestown Massacre, more than 900 people died from cyanide poisoning. After **overseeing** the deaths, Jones shot himself in the head.

In 1966, Jehovah's Witnesses declared that 1975 marked 6000 years since man's creation, and that this would be "the end

of our existence on earth". Later, they said it was only a "possibility", though some continued to **affirm** that 1975 would "probably" be the end.

Hon-Ming Chen, the leader of the Taiwanese cult God's Salvation Church, claimed that God would appear on Channel 18 on every TV set in the US on 25th March 1998. Then, at 10:00am on 31st March, God would come to Earth in a **flying saucer**. On top of that, God would have the same physical appearance as Chen himself. Chen chose to base his cult in Garland, Texas, because he thought "Garland" sounded like "God's Land".

Philip Berg, dean of the worldwide Kabbalah Centre, said that a ball of fire would **descend** on earth on 11th September 1999, destroying almost all forms of life.

The world-renowned linguist Charles Berlitz predicted that the world would end in 1999. He didn't specify how, but he said that it could involve nuclear devastation, asteroid impact, **pole shift** or other earth changes.

One of the most recent predictions came from the Mayans, an ancient civilization that ruled over areas of what is now southern Mexico, Guatemala and Belize between 1000 BC and 1519 AD. According to several interpretations of their calendar, the world was going to end on 21st December 2012. Many people around the world took the **warnings** seriously, and one man even built his

very own "Noah's Ark".

Beware of false **prophets!** ✦

NOSTRADAMUS

One of the most famous seers (someone who predicts the future) of all time was Michel de Nostredame, **aka** Nostradamus (1503-1566). A French author, translator and astrological consultant from the 16th century, Nostradamus is best known for his book *Les Propheties* (*The Prophecies*), the first edition of which appeared in 1555. This consisted of almost 1,000 four-line verses called quatrains. In one, he seems to have predicted the Great Fire of London, which took place in 1666 – about 100 years after Nostradamus died. He wrote:

The blood of the just will be demanded of London, burnt by the fire in the year '66.

There are also apparent references to Napoleon, Hitler and the September 11th (2001) attack on the Twin Towers in New York. Impressive? Not really, as the experts say that these predictions are largely the result of misinterpretations, mistranslations and the twisting of words.

GLOSSARY

a prediction *n*
if you make a "prediction", you say what you think will happen in the future
a prophecy *n*
a prediction (see previous entry)
to last *v*
the time that something "lasts" is the time that it exists or is alive
BC *n*
Before Christ – the time before the birth of Jesus Christ – about 2,000 years ago
a congregation *n*
the people who regularly go to a church service
to give up *phr v*
if you "give up" trying to do something, you stop trying to do it
to oversee *v*
if someone in authority "oversees" a job or an activity, they make sure that others do it properly
to affirm *v*
if you "affirm" that something is true, you say firmly and publicly that it's true
a flying saucer *n*
an alien spaceship. From a distance, it looks like a flying plate
to descend *v*
if something "descends" to earth, it comes to earth
pole shift *n*
a theory that the poles (the South Pole / North Pole) could change position
a warning *n*
a written or spoken message that tells people about a possible danger
a prophet *n*
someone who predicts that something will happen in the future; also, a person who is believed to be chosen by God to say the things that God wants to tell people
aka *abbr*
also known as – often used to say that someone has another name

Answers on page 44

1 Pre-reading

Which predictions for the end of the world have you heard about before?

- Ball of fire
- Asteroid attack
- Alien attack
- Famine (no food)
- Floods (heavy rain)
- War
- Nuclear destruction

2 Reading I

Read the article once. Which prediction is the most ridiculous? Why?

3 Reading II

Read the article again. Then, answer the questions. Who...

1. ...said that the world would end in 1658?
2. ...told his followers that the world would end in 1936?
3. ...said there would be a nuclear holocaust in 1967?
4. ...thought the world would probably end in 1975?
5. ...said that God would come to Earth in a flying saucer?
6. ...predicted the world was going to end in 2012?