

Pandemics

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. What is a pandemic?
2. Have you been vaccinated against any diseases? Which ones?
3. How do people react when new diseases suddenly begin to spread?
4. How do you avoid becoming sick?



B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| ___ 1. wipe out | a) passed easily from person to person |
| ___ 2. immunity | b) a person who buys and sells things |
| ___ 3. merchant | c) to kill, destroy |
| ___ 4. respiratory | d) to inject with medicine that protects against a disease |
| ___ 5. contagious | e) a person who is harmed, injured, or killed |
| ___ 6. seasonal | f) to become uncontrollably afraid or anxious |
| ___ 7. elderly | g) the state of being unaffected by a disease |
| ___ 8. vaccinate | h) older people |
| ___ 9. victim | i) happening only during certain times of the year |
| ___ 10. panic | j) related to breathing; involving the nose, throat, and lungs |

Reading

PANDEMICS

Nothing to sneeze at

1. During the mid-1300s, between 75 and 200 million people across Europe and Asia were **wiped out** by the same terrible disease. This disease was called the Black Death, and it was one of the biggest pandemics in human history.
2. A pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease to which most people do not have **immunity**. Viruses that become pandemics can originate in animals. The Black Death, for example, was caused by fleas that were living on rats. These rats were found on **merchant** ships traveling to Europe.
3. Many pandemics involve different types of influenza, which is caused by a virus that attacks the **respiratory** system. Sometimes, the name is shortened to “the flu.” The flu spreads quickly because it is highly **contagious**. The most common type of flu is the **seasonal** flu, which only lasts for a few months, but can be fatal for the **elderly** or people with weak immune systems. However, the seasonal flu rarely causes a pandemic. One reason is that people can be **vaccinated** against it.
4. In the 20th century, there were only three pandemics. The most serious of these was the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918. One-fifth of the world’s population was infected, and 50 million **victims** died. In December 2019, a new type of coronavirus (COVID-19) was found in China and soon began to spread to countries all over the world. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic.
5. People often **panic** when a new pandemic is declared. Health officials remind the public that the best way to avoid getting sick is to wash your hands regularly and cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough. They also recommend not touching your face.

“Pandemic influenza is by nature an international issue. It requires an international solution.”

—Margaret Chan,
Chinese-Canadian physician

Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs and write the answers in your notebook.

1. What is paragraph 1 mainly about?
2. How did the Black Death come to Europe?
3. What is the most common type of flu?
4. What part of the population has the greatest risk of dying from the flu?
5. What was the most serious pandemic of the 20th century?

Vocabulary Review

A. Complete the Sentences

Complete the sentences using vocabulary from page 1.
You may need to change the word forms.

1. The supermarket doesn't sell peaches at this time of year because they are a _____ fruit.
2. In an emergency, many people feel you should help the _____ and children first.
3. There's a bee on your hand, but don't _____ ! If you move quickly, it might sting you.
4. Our coworker Dolores was sick last week, but now she's back at work. Don't worry, she's not _____ .
5. I stopped smoking 10 years ago because I didn't want to get a _____ disease.

Vocabulary Review cont.

B. Choose the Correct Word

Choose the word or phrase with the closest meaning to the underlined word or phrase in the following sentences.

1. Before he went to Sri Lanka, Danny got vaccinated against malaria.
 - a) cured
 - b) protected
 - c) infected
 - d) informed
2. If you are the victim of a robbery, go to the police station as soon as you can.
 - a) target
 - b) perpetrator
 - c) witness
 - d) attacker
3. We don't know exactly what wiped out all the dinosaurs.
 - a) upset
 - b) confused
 - c) killed
 - d) devoured
4. I'm not afraid of catching the chickenpox because I am immune to this disease.
 - a) unaffected by
 - b) offended by
 - c) interested in
 - d) superior to
5. My ancestors were wine merchants in Italy.
 - a) critics
 - b) makers
 - c) drinkers
 - d) sellers

Grammar Review

SUFFIXES

A. Introduction

When a word ends with the suffix *-ious*, it is usually an adjective. For example, *contagious* is an adjective. Other common adjectives with this ending include *religious*, *studious*, and *tedious*.

Grammar Review cont.

B. Practice

Try to guess the adjective based on the definition. The first letter is given.
All of them will end with the suffix *-ious*.

#	Definition	Adjective
1	Important, not funny	<i>Serious</i>
2	Happening before, prior	P
3	Worried or nervous	A
4	Very tasty	D
5	Not difficult to guess, clear	O
6	Having a lot of questions	C

Discussion

1. Do you think closing international borders would help prevent the spread of pandemics?
2. What kinds of supplies do people buy when a pandemic is announced?
3. Do you know of any recent pandemics or health scares that almost became pandemics?
4. Do you think scientists will find a way to wipe out all diseases one day?
5. What is the bigger threat: a pandemic or nuclear war?
6. Can the government do anything to prevent a pandemic?
7. Should international events (e.g., conferences or sporting competitions) be canceled due to health scares such as the 2019–20 coronavirus?
8. In an article about the coronavirus, journalists wrote about the “thawing relationship” between Japan and China: “Nothing brings together two old foes like a common problem.” How can international problems bring nations closer together?

Ancient Chinese Poem

Even though we live in
different places, we live
under the same sky.

Research

With your partner, research a historic pandemic such as the Black Death. Answer the following questions. Then share your research with the class.

1. Where did it start?
2. How did it start?
3. When did it start?
4. What were the symptoms?
5. How long did it last?
6. How many people were wiped out?

Listening

Fill in the blanks as you listen to the recording.

PANDEMICS

Nothing to sneeze at

1. During the mid-1300s, between 75 and 200 million people across Europe and Asia were _____ by the same terrible disease. This disease was called the Black Death, and it was one of the biggest pandemics in _____ history.
2. A pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease to which most people do not have _____. Viruses that become pandemics can _____ in animals. The Black Death, for example, was caused by fleas that were living on rats. These rats were found on merchant ships traveling to Europe.
3. Many pandemics involve different types of influenza, which is caused by a virus that attacks the _____ system. Sometimes, the name is shortened to “the flu.” The flu spreads quickly because it is highly contagious. The most common type of flu is the seasonal flu, which only lasts for a few months, but can be fatal for the _____ or people with weak immune systems. However, the seasonal flu rarely causes a pandemic. One reason is that people can be vaccinated against it.
4. In the 20th century, there were only three pandemics. The most serious of these was the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918. One-fifth of the world’s _____ was infected, and 50 million _____ died. In December 2019, a new type of coronavirus (COVID-19) was found in China and soon began to spread to countries all over the world. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic.
5. People often _____ when a new pandemic is declared. Health officials remind the public that the best way to _____ getting sick is to wash your hands regularly and cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough. They also recommend not touching your face.

Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

Students read about pandemics and discuss how people and governments can deal with them. This lesson includes grammar practice with suffixes.

LEVEL: Int

TIME: 1.5–2 hours

TAGS: discussion, pandemic, epidemic, the flu, diseases, medicine, history, suffixes, coronavirus

Pre-Reading

A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Have students work in small groups or discuss as a class.

B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. c | 3. b | 5. a | 7. h | 9. e |
| 2. g | 4. j | 6. i | 8. d | 10. f |

Reading (and/or Listening)

Read individually, in small groups, or as a class. Discuss the subtitle and quote. You can also play the listening as your students read along. A gap-fill version of the reading is available on page 7. Help your students with vocabulary and expressions that they are unfamiliar with.

Comprehension

- Paragraph 1 is mainly about the Black Death, one of the biggest pandemics in human history.
- The Black Death came to Europe on fleas that were living on rats. The rats were found on merchant ships.
- The most common type of flu is the seasonal flu.
- The flu can be fatal for the elderly and people with weak immune systems.
- The most serious pandemic of the 20th century was the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918.

Vocabulary Review

A. COMPLETE THE SENTENCES

- | | |
|-------------|----------------|
| 1. seasonal | 4. contagious |
| 2. elderly | 5. respiratory |
| 3. panic | |

B. CHOOSE THE CORRECT WORD

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1. b | 2. a | 3. c | 4. a | 5. d |
|------|------|------|------|------|

Grammar Review

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| 1. serious | 4. delicious |
| 2. previous | 5. obvious |
| 3. anxious | 6. curious |

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Discussion

Answers will vary. Can be done in small groups or as a class. Learn more about the ancient Chinese verse that was written on relief supply boxes from Japan to China during the coronavirus outbreak (for question 8): <https://www.cnn.com/2020/02/25/asia/japan-china-coronavirus-enemies-to-friends-hnk-intl/index.html>

Research

Put students in pairs and have them choose two different topics. If possible, once the research is finished, have students who studied the same topic compare their notes. Pairs can present their research to the class.

Listening

1. wiped out, human
2. immunity, originate
3. respiratory, elderly
4. population, victims
5. panic, avoid

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Canceled* and *Traveling*. Most other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: *Cancelled* and *Travelling*. Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.