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Ready-to-use ESL / EFL Lessons

## **Giant panda born in U.S. zoo**

URL: <http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0507/050710-panda-e.html>

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**10 July, 2005**

## **THE ARTICLE**

### **Giant panda born in U.S. zoo**

**BNE:** Wonderful news has come from America's National Zoo in Washington D.C. A giant panda has been born. It is the first time in 16 years this has happened. Mother Mei Xiang gave birth in the early hours of the morning. Zoo staff waited nervously and jumped for joy when the new arrival appeared. Its sex is not yet known. Zookeepers must leave Mei Xiang and her baby alone to let the cub's immune system develop. The first few days are very dangerous for a baby panda.

The birth of a giant panda in captivity is very rare. Survival of the cub is not guaranteed. Most baby pandas born in zoos do not live beyond a week. Any cubs that are born at the zoo belong to China and are returned when the panda reaches the age of two. For now, the panda team members are keeping their fingers crossed that the cub survives. The public will have to wait three months before the baby panda is shown to the world. However, a sneak preview is provided online at the zoo's website\*.

\*<http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Animals/GiantPandas>.

## WARM-UPS

**1. NEWBORN:** Everyone in the class is now a newborn baby. Introduce yourself to the other newborns in the class and talk about life so far. What do you think about what you have seen? What are your hopes for your life? Do you think the world will be a good place to grow up in?

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

*Pandas / World Wildlife Fund / endangered species / newborn babies and animals / zoos / joy / China / pregnancies / keeping your fingers crossed / survival*

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

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

**4. PANDA STORY:** In pairs / groups, make your own story about a baby panda being born in a zoo. Talk about the details of its birth, its parents, the zookeepers' comments, the condition of the cub and its future.

**5. PANDA OPINIONS:** Students A agree with these opinions; students B disagree with them. Try to persuade each other of these opinions.

- a. The giant panda is the best symbol for the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) logo.
- b. Giant pandas are the cutest animals in the world.
- c. Giant pandas should not be kept in zoos.
- d. The giant panda should be on top of the list of animals to save from extinction.
- e. If the giant panda becomes extinct, it'll be no great problem for the world.
- f. Conservationists will make sure the giant panda survives.
- g. Scientists should clone thousands of pandas and introduce them into the wild.
- h. China's economic growth will eat up the panda's natural habitat.

**6. "JUMPING FOR JOY":** In pairs/ groups, tell each other about a time you jumped for joy (or were just very happy)...

- Earlier today
- Yesterday
- Last week
- Last month
- Last year

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

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

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| a. An amazingly large panda has been born in an American zoo.              | T / F |
| b. It's the first time in 16 years a giant panda has been born at the zoo. | T / F |
| c. The gender of the baby panda is not yet known.                          | T / F |
| d. The panda cub is being fed and cared for by zoo staff.                  | T / F |
| e. Giant pandas often give birth in zoos.                                  | T / F |
| f. Many baby giant pandas born in zoos die within a week.                  | T / F |
| g. The cub will have to return to China when it's two years old.           | T / F |
| h. The baby bear will go on public display from next week.                 | T / F |

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

- |                                  |           |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| a. wonderful                     | critical  |
| b. small                         | happiness |
| c. joy                           | hoping    |
| d. gender                        | uncommon  |
| e. dangerous                     | certain   |
| f. rare                          | fantastic |
| g. guaranteed                    | infant    |
| h. keeping their fingers crossed | early     |
| i. baby                          | revealed  |
| j. shown                         | sex       |

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

- |                                  |                        |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| a. wonderful                     | their fingers crossed  |
| b. in the early hours            | is not yet known       |
| c. jumped                        | system                 |
| d. Its sex                       | a week                 |
| e. immune                        | for joy                |
| f. The birth of a giant panda in | the age of two         |
| g. do not live beyond            | news                   |
| h. when the panda reaches        | preview                |
| i. team members are keeping      | captivity is very rare |
| j. sneak                         | of the morning         |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words in the column on the right into the correct spaces.

### Giant panda born in U.S. zoo

**BNE:** Wonderful \_\_\_\_\_ has come from America's National Zoo in Washington D.C. A giant panda has been \_\_\_\_\_. It is the first time in 16 years this has happened. Mother Mei Xiang gave birth in the \_\_\_\_\_ hours of the morning. Zoo staff \_\_\_\_\_ nervously and jumped for \_\_\_\_\_ when the new arrival appeared. Its \_\_\_\_\_ is not yet known. Zookeepers must leave Mei Xiang and her baby \_\_\_\_\_ to let the cub's immune system develop. The first \_\_\_\_\_ days are very dangerous for a baby panda.

*joy*  
*born*  
*few*  
*news*  
*waited*  
*sex*  
*early*  
*alone*

The birth of a giant panda in \_\_\_\_\_ is very rare. Survival of the cub is not \_\_\_\_\_. Most baby pandas born in zoos do not live \_\_\_\_\_ a week. Any cubs that are born at the zoo \_\_\_\_\_ to China and are returned when the panda \_\_\_\_\_ the age of two. For now, the panda team members are keeping their fingers \_\_\_\_\_ that the cub survives. The \_\_\_\_\_ will have to wait three months before the baby panda is shown to the world. However, a \_\_\_\_\_ preview is provided online at the zoo's website.

*reaches*  
*captivity*  
*sneak*  
*beyond*  
*public*  
*belong*  
*crossed*  
*guaranteed*

## **AFTER READING / LISTENING**

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

- 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 PANDA SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about pandas.

- 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:

- |             |              |
|-------------|--------------|
| • wonderful | • captivity  |
| • first     | • guaranteed |
| • early     | • belong     |
| • sex       | • reaches    |
| • alone     | • crossed    |
| • dangerous | • sneak      |

## **DISCUSSION**

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

- a. What did you think when you saw this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. What adjective would you use to describe this news?
- d. Are you worried about the future of giant pandas?
- e. What other endangered species are you concerned about?
- f. Do you think the giant panda will survive in the wild?
- g. What do you know about giant pandas?
- h. Will you visit the website to have a look at the baby panda?
- i. Do you think the panda's natural habitat can survive China's economic growth?
- j. Are conservationists fighting a losing battle trying to protect endangered species?

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

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What did you think about what you read?
- c. How did the article make you feel?
- d. Would you like to be a zookeeper and look after giant pandas?
- e. Do you think pandas have a good time in zoos?
- f. Do you think scientists should clone pandas?
- g. How terrible would it be if giant pandas were to disappear?
- h. Is the giant panda the cutest animal in the world?
- i. Why do you think it's so difficult to breed giant pandas in zoos?
- 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**

### **JUMPING FOR JOY:**

Look at the list below. Talk about how you react to the news of each event. Tell each other about your experiences of these things. Rank them in order of the greatest happiness. Which would make you jump for joy?

- a. The birth of a child.
- b. Your country winning an international sporting event.
- c. Winning a lot of money on the lottery.
- d. Passing your driving test or an examination.
- e. Your best friend announcing he/she is getting married.
- f. Promotion at work.
- g. Someone you particularly dislike is moving to another country.
- h. US President George W. Bush winning / losing a presidential election.
- i. Other \_\_\_\_\_
- j. Other \_\_\_\_\_

After you have finished, change partners and tell each other about what your previous partner said.



## **LISTENING**

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### **Giant panda born in U.S. zoo**

**BNE:** Wonderful news \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ America's National Zoo in Washington D.C. A giant panda has been born. It is the \_\_\_\_ time in 16 years this has happened. Mother Mei Xiang \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ in the early hours of the morning. Zoo staff waited nervously and \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ joy when the new arrival appeared. Its sex is not yet known. Zookeepers must leave Mei Xiang and her baby \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ let the cub's immune system develop. The \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ days are very dangerous for a baby panda.

The birth of a giant panda \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ is very rare. Survival of the cub is not guaranteed. Most baby pandas born in zoos do not live \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ week. Any cubs that are born at the zoo \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ China and are returned when the panda reaches \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ two. For now, the panda team members are keeping their fingers crossed that the cub survives. The public will \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ wait three months before the baby panda is shown to the world. However, a \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ preview is provided online at the zoo's website.

## **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 the giant pandas. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

**3. ENDANGERED SPECIES:** Create a fact sheet about one of the world's endangered species. Show and explain your fact sheets to your classmates in your next lesson.

**4. JUMPING FOR JOY:** Write an essay about a time you jumped for joy. Read your essay to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

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

### SYNONYM MATCH:

a. wonderful	fantastic
b. small	early
c. joy	happiness
d. gender	sex
e. dangerous	critical
f. rare	uncommon
g. guaranteed	certain
h. keeping their fingers crossed	hoping
i. baby	infant
j. shown	revealed

### PHRASE MATCH:

a. wonderful	news
b. in the early hours	of the morning
c. jumped	for joy
d. Its sex	is not yet known
e. immune	system
f. The birth of a giant panda in	captivity is very rare
g. do not live beyond	a week
h. when the panda reaches	the age of two
i. team members are keeping	their fingers crossed
j. sneak	preview

### GAP FILL:

#### Giant panda born in U.S. zoo

**BNE:** Wonderful **news** has come from America's National Zoo in Washington D.C. A giant panda has been **born**. It is the first time in 16 years this has happened. Mother Mei Xiang gave birth in the **early** hours of the morning. Zoo staff **waited** nervously and jumped for **joy** when the new arrival appeared. Its **sex** is not yet known. Zookeepers must leave Mei Xiang and her baby **alone** to let the cub's immune system develop. The first **few** days are very dangerous for a baby panda.

The birth of a giant panda in **captivity** is very rare. Survival of the cub is not **guaranteed**. Most baby pandas born in zoos do not live **beyond** a week. Any cubs that are born at the zoo **belong** to China and are returned when the panda **reaches** the age of two. For now, the panda team members are keeping their fingers **crossed** that the cub survives. The **public** will have to wait three months before the baby panda is shown to the world. However, a **sneak** preview is provided online at the zoo's website.