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Giant panda born in U.S. zoo

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

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10 July, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Giant panda born in U.S. zoo

BNE: A giant panda has been born at America's National Zoo for the first time in 16 years. Mother Mei Xiang gave birth in the early hours of the morning to the delight of zoo veterinarians who had been anxiously awaiting the new arrival. They had been on tenterhooks for days in anticipation of the precious and rare birth. The delivery was greeted with whoops of joy by elated zoo staff. The gender of the newborn will be unknown for a few days as it is still too fragile to be taken from its mother. Zoo officials will refrain from intervening between mother and cub to allow the baby bear's immune system to sufficiently develop in the critical first few days.

The birth of a giant panda in captivity is an extremely nerve-racking experience for all concerned. Mei Xiang was artificially inseminated in early March. She had previously had two phantom pregnancies and had shown no signs that she was pregnant this time round until a week ago. 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 until then. The public will have to wait three months before mother and cub are revealed to the world. However, the zoo has installed webcams for panda addicts to get a sneak preview 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 expectations of your first few years / your life? What do you hope to do in the world? 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 / immune systems / China / pregnancies / 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. Provide details about the birth, the parents, 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 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, the world won't change at all.
- f. Conservationists will ensure 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. "WHOOOPS OF JOY": In pairs/ groups, tell each other about a time you whooped 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. It is believed the mother conceived when introduced to her mate. | T / F |
| f. The mother has been pregnant twice before. | 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. early | in suspense |
| b. delight | praying |
| c. on tenterhooks | crucial |
| d. whoops | ghost |
| e. critical | aficionados |
| f. nerve-racking | small |
| g. phantom | set up |
| h. keeping their fingers crossed | screams |
| i. installed | traumatic |
| j. addicts | rapture |

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

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. the early hours | first few days |
| b. anxiously awaiting | inseminated |
| c. They had been on | experience for all concerned |
| d. greeted with whoops | the new arrival |
| e. the critical | pregnancies |
| f. an extremely nerve-racking | their fingers crossed |
| g. artificially | of joy by elated zoo staff |
| h. phantom | of the morning |
| i. team members are keeping | a sneak preview |
| j. panda addicts to get | tenterhooks for days |

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: A giant panda has been born at America's National Zoo for the first time in 16 years. Mother Mei Xiang gave birth in the _____ hours of the morning to the _____ of zoo veterinarians who had been anxiously awaiting the new arrival. They had been on _____ for days in anticipation of the _____ and rare birth. The delivery was greeted with _____ of joy by elated zoo staff. The gender of the newborn will be unknown for a few days as it is still too _____ to be taken from its mother. Zoo officials will _____ from intervening between mother and cub to allow the baby bear's immune system to _____ develop in the critical first few days.

The birth of a giant panda in captivity is an extremely _____ experience for all concerned. Mei Xiang was _____ inseminated in early March. She had previously had two _____ pregnancies and had shown no signs that she was pregnant this time _____ until a week ago. 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 _____ crossed that the cub survives until then. The public will have to wait three months before mother and cub are _____ to the world. However, the zoo has installed webcams for panda _____ to get a _____ preview online at the zoo's website.

tenterhooks

fragile

early

whoops

delight

sufficiently

precious

refrain

addicts

artificially

fingers

nerve-racking

sneak

round

revealed

phantom

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:

- early
- anxiously
- whoops
- fragile
- refrain
- critical
- captivity
- artificially
- phantom
- belong
- crossed
- 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 article?
- d. Are you concerned about the plight 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 in 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 to ensure their survival?
- g. How terrible would it be if giant pandas were to become extinct?
- 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 captivity?
- 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

WHOOPS OF 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 bring out the greatest whoop of 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: A giant panda has been born at America's National Zoo for the first _____
_____ 16 years. Mother Mei Xiang gave birth in _____ of the morning to
the delight of zoo veterinarians who had been anxiously _____ the new
arrival. They had been on _____ for days in anticipation of the precious
and rare birth. The delivery was greeted with whoops of joy _____ zoo
staff. The gender of the newborn will be unknown for a few days as it is still
_____ taken from its mother. Zoo officials will _____
intervening between mother and cub to allow the baby bear's immune system to
sufficiently develop in the critical _____.

The birth of a giant panda _____ is an extremely _____-
experience for all concerned. Mei Xiang was artificially _____ in early
March. She had previously had _____ pregnancies and had shown no
signs that she was pregnant this _____ until a week ago. 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
_____ that the cub survives until then. The public will have to wait
three months before mother and cub are revealed to the world. However, the
zoo has installed webcams _____ to get a sneak preview 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. WHOOP WITH JOY: Write an essay about a time you whooped with 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. F g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| a. early | small |
| b. delight | rapture |
| c. on tenterhooks | in suspense |
| d. whoops | screams |
| e. critical | crucial |
| f. nerve-racking | traumatic |
| g. phantom | ghost |
| h. keeping their fingers crossed | praying |
| i. installed | set up |
| j. addicts | aficionados |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. the early hours | of the morning |
| b. anxiously awaiting | the new arrival |
| c. They had been on | tenterhooks for days |
| d. greeted with whoops | of joy by elated zoo staff |
| e. the critical | first few days |
| f. an extremely nerve-racking | experience for all concerned |
| g. artificially | inseminated |
| h. phantom | pregnancies |
| i. team members are keeping | their fingers crossed |
| j. panda addicts to get | a sneak preview |

GAP FILL:

Giant panda born in U.S. zoo

BNE: A giant panda has been born at America's National Zoo for the first time in 16 years. Mother Mei Xiang gave birth in the **early** hours of the morning to the **delight** of zoo veterinarians who had been anxiously awaiting the new arrival. They had been on **tenterhooks** for days in anticipation of the **precious** and rare birth. The delivery was greeted with **whoops** of joy by elated zoo staff. The gender of the newborn will be unknown for a few days as it is still too **fragile** to be taken from its mother. Zoo officials will **refrain** from intervening between mother and cub to allow the baby bear's immune system to **sufficiently** develop in the critical first few days.

The birth of a giant panda in captivity is an extremely **nerve-racking** experience for all concerned. Mei Xiang was **artificially** inseminated in early March. She had previously had two **phantom** pregnancies and had shown no signs that she was pregnant this time **round** until a week ago. 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 until then. The public will have to wait three months before mother and cub are **revealed** to the world. However, the zoo has installed webcams for panda **addicts** to get a **sneak** preview online at the zoo's website.