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South Korea loses national treasure in fire

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12th February, 2008

THE ARTICLE

South Korea has lost its most important national treasure in a fire. A blaze broke out in the 600-year-old *Namdaemun*, or Great South Gate, in central Seoul on Sunday night. It was the country's most famous landmark and a symbol of great national pride. Police suspect an arsonist started the fire, which reduced the monument to ashes. Many Seoul residents gathered to watch in horror as firefighting teams fought a losing battle against the flames. More than 100 firefighters tried to put out the inferno, but the flames got the better of them and the centuries-old wooden structure. Initial attempts at extinguishing the fire seemed to have succeeded. However, shortly after midnight it reignited and the whole structure collapsed in ruins and came tumbling to the ground. The Yonhap news agency said a taxi driver saw a man in his 50s at the gate minutes before the blaze started.

The loss of the *Namdaemun* has left South Koreans in shock. One citizen at the scene described his heart was burning along with the burning gate. The gate, surrounded by gleaming modern buildings, was an icon of South Korea's history. All school children learn about its importance and develop a lifelong pride in it. An onlooker, housewife Lee Mimi said: "It feels like the pride of the nation and hope is lost and crumbled." A spokesman for President Roh Moo-Hyun told of his nation's grief over the destruction of the gate: "It was our heritage, more significant and more symbolic than any other cultural asset," he said. Korea's Cultural Heritage Administration said in a statement: "We are deeply sorry. No words can express our sadness." An Administration official promised it would rebuild the gate, which would take three years and cost \$21 million.

WARM-UPS

1. FIRE: Walk around the class and talk to other students about fire. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your original partner(s) and share what you found out.

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

national treasures / landmarks / national pride / arsonists / firefighters / ruins / shock / gleaming modern buildings / icons / heritage / sorrow / sadness

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. PREDICTION: With your partner(s), use all of the above words and phrases to make your own story of what you think is in the article. Change partners and share your stories.

4. WORLD TREASURES: Talk with your partner(s) about the following treasures of the world. Where are they? Rank them in order of the most important. How else could you rank them? Share your ideas with others.

- a. _____ The Pyramids
- b. _____ The Taj Mahal
- c. _____ Big Ben
- d. _____ Machu Pichu
- e. _____ The Eiffel Tower
- f. _____ Sydney Opera House

5. MY TREASURES: With your partner, talk about which of the items below you would save from your burning house and risk injury (or worse). Grade them from 10 (= worth risking your life) to 1 (= let it/them burn).

- your photographs
- your computer
- your pet
- your English homework
- your passport and other documents
- your savings of \$20,000
- all of your clothes
- other _____

6. ICON: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'icon'. 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. Fire has destroyed a centuries old gate in South Korea's capital. | T / F |
| b. The gate was the most famous and important site in the country. | T / F |
| c. Police suspect faulty electrical wiring started the fire. | T / F |
| d. A taxi driver was seen at the gate seconds before the blaze began. | T / F |
| e. The gate was in the middle of many other ancient ruins. | T / F |
| f. Very few Korean children outside of the capital know of the gate. | T / F |
| g. A heritage spokesperson expressed sadness using many words. | T / F |
| h. The gate will take three months to reconstruct. | T / F |

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

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| 1. blaze | a. first |
| 2. arsonist | b. past |
| 3. initial | c. falling |
| 4. extinguishing | d. eyewitness |
| 5. tumbling | e. symbol |
| 6. shock | f. firebug |
| 7. icon | g. sorrow |
| 8. onlooker | h. trauma |
| 9. grief | i. fire |
| 10. heritage | j. putting out |

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

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. A blaze | a. against the flames |
| 2. a symbol | b. express our sadness |
| 3. Police suspect an arsonist | c. modern buildings |
| 4. firefighting teams fought a losing battle | d. pride in it |
| 5. the whole structure collapsed | e. cultural asset |
| 6. surrounded by gleaming | f. broke out |
| 7. an icon of | g. of great national pride |
| 8. develop a lifelong | h. started the fire |
| 9. more symbolic than any other | i. in ruins |
| 10. No words can | j. South Korea's history |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

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

South Korea has _____ it's most important national treasure in a fire. A blaze broke out in the 600-year-old *Namdaemun*, or Great South Gate, in _____ Seoul on Sunday night. It was the country's most famous landmark and a symbol of _____ national pride. Police suspect an arsonist started the fire, which reduced the monument to _____. Many Seoul residents gathered to watch in horror as firefighting teams fought a _____ battle against the flames. More than 100 firefighters tried to put out the inferno, but the flames got the _____ of them and the centuries-old wooden structure. Initial attempts at extinguishing the fire seemed to have succeeded. However, shortly after midnight it _____ and the whole structure collapsed in ruins and came tumbling to the _____. The Yonhap news agency said a taxi driver saw a man in his 50s at the gate minutes before the blaze started.

*losing**great**ground**lost**better**ashes**reignited**central*

The _____ of the *Namdaemun* has left South Koreans in shock. One citizen at the _____ described his heart was burning along with the burning gate. The gate, surrounded by gleaming modern buildings, was an _____ of South Korea's history. All school children learn about its importance and develop a lifelong pride in it. An _____, housewife Lee Mimi said: "It feels like the pride of the nation and hope is lost and crumbled." A spokesman for President Roh Moo-Hyun told of his nation's _____ over the destruction of the gate: "It was our heritage, more _____ and more symbolic than any other cultural asset," he said. Korea's Cultural Heritage Administration said in a statement: "We are _____ sorry. No words can express our sadness." An Administration official promised it would _____ the gate, which would take three years and cost \$21 million.

*significant**scene**onlooker**loss**rebuild**grief**deeply**icon*

LISTENING: Listen and fill in the spaces.

South Korea _____ important national treasure in a fire. A blaze broke out in the 600-year-old *Namdaemun*, or Great South Gate, in central Seoul on Sunday night. It _____ famous landmark and a symbol of great national pride. Police _____ started the fire, which reduced the monument to ashes. Many Seoul residents gathered to _____ firefighting teams fought a losing battle against the flames. More than 100 firefighters tried to put out the inferno, but the flames _____ them and the centuries-old wooden structure. Initial attempts at extinguishing the fire _____ succeeded. However, shortly after midnight it reignited and the whole structure collapsed in ruins and _____ ground. The Yonhap news agency said a taxi driver saw a man in his 50s at the _____ the blaze started.

The loss of the *Namdaemun* has left South Koreans in shock. _____ described his heart was burning along with the burning gate. The gate, surrounded _____ buildings, was an icon of South Korea's history. All school children learn about its importance and develop a _____. An onlooker, housewife Lee Mimi said: "It feels like the pride of the nation _____ and crumbled." A spokesman for President Roh Moo-Hyun told of his nation's grief over the destruction of the gate: "It _____, more significant and more symbolic than any other cultural asset," he said. Korea's Cultural Heritage Administration said in a statement: "We are deeply sorry. No words can _____." An Administration official promised _____ the gate, which would take three years and cost \$21 million.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

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

national	treasure
-----------------	-----------------

- 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. 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"> • broke • landmark • horror • better • ruins • minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shock • gleaming • lifelong • grief • asset • express
---	--

STUDENT LANDMARK SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about landmarks in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

DISCUSSION

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

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'treasure'?
- c) What are your feelings toward your country's most important national treasure?
- d) What do you think when you see a building on fire?
- e) What is the biggest symbol of national pride in your country?
- f) Would you be sad if an important landmark in your town was destroyed?
- g) Why do you think an arsonist would want to destroy the *Namdaemun*?
- h) What punishment do you think the arsonist should get?
- i) What has got the better of you recently?

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

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) When was the last time the citizens in your town were in a state of shock?
- c) Has your heart ever felt like it was burning?
- d) What did you learn at school about your country's history that you were proud of?
- e) Does your country have a rich cultural heritage compared with other countries?
- f) Do you think a rebuilt historical monument is as good as the original? Would you feel cheated?
- g) When was the last time you were lost for words?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the arsonist?
- i) Did you like this discussion?

LANGUAGE

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

South Korea has lost its most important national treasure in a fire. A blaze broke (1) ____ in the 600-year-old *Namdaemun*, or Great South Gate, in (2) ____ Seoul on Sunday night. It was the country's most famous landmark and a symbol of (3) ____ national pride. Police suspect an arsonist started the fire, which reduced the monument to ashes. Many Seoul residents gathered to watch (4) ____ horror as firefighting teams fought a losing battle against the flames. More than 100 firefighters tried to put out the inferno, but the flames got the better of them and the centuries-old wooden structure. (5) ____ attempts at extinguishing the fire seemed to have succeeded. However, shortly after midnight it reignited and the whole structure collapsed in ruins and (6) ____ tumbling to the ground. The Yonhap news agency said a taxi driver saw a man in his 50s at the gate minutes before the blaze started.

The loss of the *Namdaemun* has left South Koreans (7) ____ shock. One citizen at the scene described his heart was burning (8) ____ with the burning gate. The gate, surrounded by gleaming modern buildings, was an icon of South Korea's history. All school children learn about its importance and develop a (9) ____ pride in it. An onlooker, housewife Lee Mimi said: "It feels like the pride of the nation and hope is lost and crumbled." A spokesman for President Roh Moo-Hyun told of his nation's (10) ____ over the destruction of the gate: "It was our heritage, more significant and more symbolic than any other cultural (11) _____," he said. Korea's Cultural Heritage Administration said in a statement: "We are (12) ____ sorry. No words can express our sadness." An Administration official promised it would rebuild the gate, which would take three years and cost \$21 million.

- | | | | | |
|-----|--------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. | (a) up | (b) down | (c) in | (d) out |
| 2. | (a) central | (b) centered | (c) centre | (d) town center |
| 3. | (a) big | (b) great | (c) large | (d) giant |
| 4. | (a) by | (b) on | (c) in | (d) out |
| 5. | (a) Initially | (b) Initials | (c) Initial | (d) Initialed |
| 6. | (a) been | (b) came | (c) go | (d) comes |
| 7. | (a) by | (b) on | (c) to | (d) in |
| 8. | (a) along | (b) long | (c) alongside | (d) longing |
| 9. | (a) life | (b) lifelong | (c) life cycle | (d) life span |
| 10. | (a) grief-stricken | (b) grieve | (c) grieves | (d) grief |
| 11. | (a) profit | (b) loss | (c) asset | (d) liability |
| 12. | (a) deeply | (b) deeper | (c) depth | (d) deepest |

WRITING:

Write about *fire* for 10 minutes. Correct your partner's paper.

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 out about world famous monuments. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. CULTURAL ASSET: Make a poster about the greatest cultural asset in your country. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. ARSON: Write a magazine article about the destruction of your country's greatest national treasure by fire. Include imaginary interviews with the arsonist and an average citizen.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down new words and expressions.

5. LETTER: Write a letter to South Korea's President Roh Moo-Hyun. Ask him three questions about the *Namdaemun*. Give him three suggestions on what he should do instead of rebuilding it. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

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

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| 1. blaze | a. fire |
| 2. arsonist | b. firebug |
| 3. initial | c. first |
| 4. extinguishing | d. putting out |
| 5. tumbling | e. falling |
| 6. shock | f. trauma |
| 7. icon | g. symbol |
| 8. onlooker | h. eyewitness |
| 9. grief | i. sorrow |
| 10. heritage | j. past |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. A blaze | a. broke out |
| 2. a symbol | b. of great national pride |
| 3. Police suspect an arsonist | c. started the fire |
| 4. firefighting teams fought a losing battle | d. against the flames |
| 5. the whole structure collapsed | e. in ruins |
| 6. surrounded by gleaming | f. modern buildings |
| 7. an icon of | g. South Korea's history |
| 8. develop a lifelong | h. pride in it |
| 9. more symbolic than any other | i. cultural asset |
| 10. No words can | j. express our sadness |

GAP FILL:

South Korea loses national treasure in fire

South Korea has **lost** its most important national treasure in a fire. A blaze broke out in the 600-year-old *Namdaemun*, or Great South Gate, in **central** Seoul on Sunday night. It was the country's most famous landmark and a symbol of **great** national pride. Police suspect an arsonist started the fire, which reduced the monument to **ashes**. Many Seoul residents gathered to watch in horror as firefighting teams fought a **losing** battle against the flames. More than 100 firefighters tried to put out the inferno, but the flames got the **better** of them and the centuries-old wooden structure. Initial attempts at extinguishing the fire seemed to have succeeded. However, shortly after midnight it **reignited** and the whole structure collapsed in ruins and came tumbling to the **ground**. The Yonhap news agency said a taxi driver saw a man in his 50s at the gate minutes before the blaze started.

The **loss** of the *Namdaemun* has left South Koreans in shock. One citizen at the **scene** described his heart was burning along with the burning gate. The gate, surrounded by gleaming modern buildings, was an **icon** of South Korea's history. All school children learn about its importance and develop a lifelong pride in it. An **onlooker**, housewife Lee Mimi said: "It feels like the pride of the nation and hope is lost and crumbled." A spokesman for President Roh Moo-Hyun told of his nation's **grief** over the destruction of the gate: "It was our heritage, more **significant** and more symbolic than any other cultural asset," he said. Korea's Cultural Heritage Administration said in a statement: "We are **deeply** sorry. No words can express our sadness." An Administration official promised it would **rebuild** the gate, which would take three years and cost \$21 million.

LANGUAGE WORK

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