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Angry Argentina commuters torch trains

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THE ARTICLE

Train passengers in Argentina have become so angry with rail delays that a group of them set fire to two trains. The furious commuters took their frustrations out on the trains at a station outside the capital Buenos Aires. It is the latest in a series of attacks on the country's overstretched rail network. The latest attacks came as the result of train cancellations during Thursday morning's busy rush hour. Besides torching the trains, passengers also blocked train tracks and ransacked ticket offices. Gabriel Marquez, a construction worker from the suburb of Merlo, fumed: "This is unacceptable. We live in the 21st century and we cannot travel by train. I have lost a day's pay again. The rail company will make me bankrupt." His feelings were similar to many of those throwing stones.

Argentina's government has said the attacks were criminal in nature and organized by left-wing activists. Justice Minister Anibal Fernandez accused anti-government militants of sabotage. He said they damaged the brakes of one of the cancelled trains to try and make people angry. Fernandez told a press conference the incident was planned. He said members of Argentina's Workers Party came prepared with backpacks full of rocks and flares. Police used tear gas and rubber bullets to break up the protests. Mr. Fernandez said the protestors caused nearly \$8 million in damage and virtually destroyed one of Argentina's newest trains. Last year, commuters rioted and clashed with police at a main railway station. Dozens were arrested and injured in the violence.

WARM-UPS

1. TRAINS: Walk around the class and talk to other students about trains. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your partner(s) and share your findings.

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

passengers / delays / frustrations / rail network / cancellations / rush hour / bankrupt / criminal / sabotage / backpacks / rubber bullets / tear gas / protestors / violence

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

3. FRUSTRATION: What do you get angry about? How do you deal with your frustrations? Complete the table below. Change partners and share your ideas.

Frustrations	Why? What happens?	How I deal with it
Trains / Buses		
Computers		
Shopping		
Money		
Friends		
Other _____		

4. COMMUTING: Students A strongly believe going to work by car is best; Students B strongly believe commuting by bus and train is best. Change partners again and talk about your roles and conversations.

5. TRANSPORT: What is the best way to travel to work? Rank the following in order. Change partners to share and discuss your ranking.

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| _____ train | _____ taxi |
| _____ bus | _____ on foot |
| _____ bicycle | _____ motorbike |
| _____ subway | _____ other |

6. ANGRY: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'angry'. 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. Rail passengers in Argentina have received train-shaped torches. T / F
- b. Argentina's rail network is not used very much. T / F
- c. Some angry commuters took their frustrations out on the ticket office. T / F
- d. A passenger complained the railway was losing him money. T / F
- e. Argentina's government said criminals planned the railway attacks. T / F
- f. The government said the protestors sabotaged the brakes of a train. T / F
- g. Police used real bullets to break up the protests. T / F
- h. This is the first time people have used violence against the railway. T / F

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

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. delays | a. setting fire to |
| 2. frustrations | b. demonstrations |
| 3. torching | c. protestors |
| 4. ransacked | d. fought |
| 5. bankrupt | e. annoyances |
| 6. activists | f. in debt |
| 7. accused | g. vandalism |
| 8. sabotage | h. holdups |
| 9. protests | i. blamed |
| 10. clashed | j. turned upside down |

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

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. rail | a. out on the trains |
| 2. commuters took their frustrations | b. gas and rubber bullets |
| 3. the country's overstretched | c. militants of sabotage |
| 4. Thursday morning's busy | d. pay again |
| 5. I have lost a day's | e. rail network |
| 6. the attacks were criminal in | f. clashed with police |
| 7. Fernandez accused anti-government | g. rush hour |
| 8. prepared with backpacks full of | h. delays |
| 9. Police used tear | i. rocks and flares |
| 10. commuters rioted and | j. nature |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

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

Train passengers in Argentina have become so _____ with rail delays that a group of them set _____ to two trains. The furious commuters took their frustrations out on the trains at a station outside the capital Buenos Aires. It is the _____ in a series of attacks on the country's overstretched rail network. The latest attacks came as the _____ of train cancellations during Thursday morning's busy rush hour. Besides torching the trains, passengers also blocked train tracks and ransacked _____ offices. Gabriel Marquez, a construction worker from the _____ of Merlo, fumed: "This is unacceptable. We live in the 21st century and we cannot travel by train. I have lost a day's _____ again. The rail company will make me bankrupt." His _____ were similar to many of those throwing stones.

suburb
latest
feelings
angry
ticket
pay
fire
result

Argentina's government has said the _____ were criminal in nature and organized by left-wing activists. Justice Minister Anibal Fernandez _____ anti-government militants of sabotage. He said they damaged the brakes of one of the cancelled trains to try and _____ people angry. Fernandez told a press conference the incident was _____. He said members of Argentina's Workers Party came prepared with backpacks _____ of rocks and flares. Police used tear gas and _____ bullets to break up the protests. Mr. Fernandez said the protestors caused nearly \$8 million in damage and virtually _____ one of Argentina's newest trains. Last year, commuters rioted and clashed with police at a main railway station. Dozens were arrested and injured in the _____.

planned
violence
make
rubber
attacks
accused
full
destroyed

LISTENING: Listen and fill in the spaces.

Train passengers in Argentina have become _____ delays that a group of them set fire to two trains. The furious commuters took their _____ the trains at a station outside the capital Buenos Aires. It is the latest in a series _____ country's overstretched rail network. The latest attacks came as the result of train cancellations during Thursday morning's _____. Besides torching the trains, passengers also blocked train tracks and ransacked ticket offices. Gabriel Marquez, a construction worker _____ Merlo, fumed: "This is unacceptable. We live in the 21st century and we cannot travel by train. I have _____ again. The rail company will make me bankrupt." His feelings were similar to many of those throwing stones.

Argentina's government has said the attacks were _____ and organized by left-wing activists. Justice Minister Anibal Fernandez accused anti-government militants _____. He said they damaged the brakes of one of the cancelled trains _____ people angry. Fernandez told a press conference _____ planned. He said members of Argentina's Workers Party came prepared with backpacks full of rocks and flares. Police _____ and rubber bullets to break up the protests. Mr. Fernandez said the protestors caused nearly \$8 million in damage and virtually destroyed one of Argentina's newest trains. Last year, commuters _____ with police at a main railway station. Dozens were arrested and injured in the violence.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

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

rail	delay
-------------	--------------

- 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 how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• so• took• series• result• offices• pay	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• nature• brakes• backpacks• rubber• 8• dozens
---	---

STUDENT TRAIN SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about trains 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.

COMMUTING 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 'commuting'?
- c) Do you understand the frustrations of the commuters?
- d) What do you get angry about in your daily life?
- e) Is the rail network in your country good?
- f) Have you ever seen a crowd of very angry people?
- g) Have you ever been delayed because of a cancelled train, bus or plane?
- h) What do you think is unacceptable about your country in the 21st century?
- i) Do you think Argentina's train company should give money to passengers if trains are cancelled?
- j) What's the best way for angry commuters to take out their frustrations?

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COMMUTING DISCUSSION

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

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Do you like taking trains? Is it always a pleasure?
- c) Do you think the protestors should go to prison?
- d) Do you believe the Justice Minister who said the train's brakes were sabotaged?
- e) What should the railway do to stop this kind of thing from happening again?
- f) Was it right for the police to use tear gas and rubber bullets?
- g) Are there many riots and protests in your country?
- h) Do you think you could ever be so angry to clash with the police?
- i) Who is right and wrong in this incident?
- j) What questions would you like to ask Justice Minister Anibal Fernandez?

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LANGUAGE

Train passengers in Argentina have become so angry (1) ____ rail delays that a group of them set fire to two trains. The furious commuters took their frustrations (2) ____ on the trains at a station outside the capital Buenos Aires. It is the latest in a (3) ____ of attacks on the country's overstretched rail network. The latest attacks came as the result of train cancellations during Thursday morning's busy rush hour. (4) ____ torching the trains, passengers also blocked train tracks and ransacked ticket offices. Gabriel Marquez, a construction worker from the suburb of Merlo, (5) ____: "This is unacceptable. We live in the 21st century and we cannot travel by train. I have lost a day's pay again. The rail company will make me bankrupt." His (6) ____ were similar to many of those throwing stones.

Argentina's government has said the attacks were criminal (7) ____ nature and organized by left-wing activists. Justice Minister Anibal Fernandez accused anti-government militants (8) ____ sabotage. He said they damaged the brakes of one of the cancelled trains to try and (9) ____ people angry. Fernandez told a press conference the incident was planned. He said members of Argentina's Workers Party came prepared with backpacks full of rocks and flares. Police used (10) ____ gas and rubber bullets to break up the (11) _____. Mr. Fernandez said the protestors caused nearly \$8 million in damage and virtually destroyed one of Argentina's newest trains. Last year, commuters rioted and (12) ____ with police at a main railway station. Dozens were arrested and injured in the violence.

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | | |
|-----|--------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. | (a) with | (b) for | (c) to | (d) together |
| 2. | (a) off | (b) in | (c) out | (d) on |
| 3. | (a) cereal | (b) serial | (c) serious | (d) series |
| 4. | (a) Next to | (b) Besides | (c) Joined | (d) Bordering |
| 5. | (a) burned | (b) fired | (c) smoked | (d) fumed |
| 6. | (a) feeling | (b) feel | (c) feelings | (d) feelers |
| 7. | (a) to | (b) in | (c) on | (d) of |
| 8. | (a) of | (b) to | (c) in | (d) on |
| 9. | (a) make | (b) have | (c) be | (d) do |
| 10. | (a) teardrop | (b) crying | (c) tear | (d) eye |
| 11. | (a) projects | (b) protection | (c) protects | (d) protests |
| 12. | (a) clashes | (b) clashed | (c) clashing | (d) clash |

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 more about the problems with Argentina's trains. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. COMMUTING: Make a poster about the different methods of transport in your country. Give each a score from 1 to 10, with reasons for your score. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. ANGRY: Write a magazine article about the protests at the Argentine train station. Include imaginary interviews with the head of the railway and Gabriel Marquez (the passenger interviewed in the article).

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. DIARY / JOURNAL: You are a commuter. Write about one journey in your working week. How can it improve? Read your entry to your classmates in the next lesson.

6. LETTER: Write a letter to the leader of Argentina's rail network. Ask him/her three questions about his/her country's railway. Make three suggestions on what he/she should do to make things better. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

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

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | | | |
|-----|--------------|----|--------------------|
| 1. | delays | a. | holdups |
| 2. | frustrations | b. | annoyances |
| 3. | torching | c. | setting fire to |
| 4. | ransacked | d. | turned upside down |
| 5. | bankrupt | e. | in debt |
| 6. | activists | f. | protestors |
| 7. | accused | g. | blamed |
| 8. | sabotage | h. | vandalism |
| 9. | protests | i. | demonstrations |
| 10. | clashed | j. | fought |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|----|------------------------|
| 1. | rail | a. | delays |
| 2. | commuters took their frustrations | b. | out on the trains |
| 3. | the country's overstretched | c. | rail network |
| 4. | Thursday morning's busy | d. | rush hour |
| 5. | I have lost a day's | e. | pay again |
| 6. | the attacks were criminal in | f. | nature |
| 7. | Fernandez accused anti-government | g. | militants of sabotage |
| 8. | prepared with backpacks full of | h. | rocks and flares |
| 9. | Police used tear | i. | gas and rubber bullets |
| 10. | commuters rioted and | j. | clashed with police |

GAP FILL:

Angry Argentina commuters torch trains

Train passengers in Argentina have become so **angry** with rail delays that a group of them set **fire** to two trains. The furious commuters took their frustrations out on the trains at a station outside the capital Buenos Aires. It is the **latest** in a series of attacks on the country's overstretched rail network. The latest attacks came as the **result** of train cancellations during Thursday morning's busy rush hour. Besides torching the trains, passengers also blocked train tracks and ransacked **ticket** offices. Gabriel Marquez, a construction worker from the **suburb** of Merlo, fumed: "This is unacceptable. We live in the 21st century and we cannot travel by train. I have lost a day's **pay** again. The rail company will make me bankrupt." His **feelings** were similar to many of those throwing stones.

Argentina's government has said the **attacks** were criminal in nature and organized by left-wing activists. Justice Minister Anibal Fernandez **accused** anti-government militants of sabotage. He said they damaged the brakes of one of the cancelled trains to try and **make** people angry. Fernandez told a press conference the incident was **planned**. He said members of Argentina's Workers Party came prepared with backpacks **full** of rocks and flares. Police used tear gas and **rubber** bullets to break up the protests. Mr. Fernandez said the protestors caused nearly \$8 million in damage and virtually **destroyed** one of Argentina's newest trains. Last year, commuters rioted and clashed with police at a main railway station. Dozens were arrested and injured in the **violence**.

LANGUAGE WORK

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