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Man trapped in 23-year coma feels reborn

http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0911/091127-being_reborn.html

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THE ARTICLE

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0911/091127-being_reborn.html

A Belgian man who was wrongly believed to be in a coma for 23 years has said he feels reborn. Rom Houben, 46, was badly injured in a car accident in 1983. He was just 20 years old. The crash left him so paralyzed that doctors thought he was in a coma. For the next 23 years he was trapped inside his own body. He could not tell doctors that he was able to communicate and he was awake. Mr. Houben could hear everything that went on around him. He was able to understand that everyone thought he was in a permanent coma. He said he felt "alone, lonely, frustrated". A new type of brain scan found Mr Houben had a condition called "locked-in syndrome". This is where people cannot speak or move but can think and understand the world around them.

Rom Houben typed his thoughts about the horror of the past two-and-a-half decades on a special keyboard. "It was especially frustrating when my family needed me. I could not share in their sorrow," he wrote. He added: "Just imagine. You hear, see, feel and think but no one can see that...You cannot participate in life....I will never forget the day they finally discovered what was wrong. It was my second birth." He described his pain at being unable to communicate: "I would scream, but no sound would come out." Rom was in good humour in a press conference. He cracked a joke and explained he looked under the weather because of a cold: "You catch me at a bad moment, I have looked better," he typed. Doctors now hope that they can find more people like Rom Houben.

WARM-UPS

1. BEING REBORN: Walk around the class and talk to other students about being reborn. Change partners often. Sit with your first 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.

being in a coma / car accidents / paralyzed / being trapped / feeling alone / brain scan / keyboards / frustrating things / scream / in good humour / under the weather / hope

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

3. LOST DECADES: What would you miss if you slept for 23 years? Complete this table with your partner(s). Change partners and share what you heard.

	How I'd feel about...	What I'd do about...
family		
world news		
music		
technology		
my looks		
my interests		

4. PARALYSIS: Students A **strongly** believe doctors will one day be able to reverse any kind of paralysis; Students B **strongly** believe the opposite. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

5. ABILITIES: Which of these are most important? Rank them (most important at the top) and share your rankings with your partner. Change partners and share your rankings again.

- sight
- hearing
- running
- dreaming
- touch
- smell
- taste
- speaking

6. SCREAM: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'scream'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0911/091127-being_reborn.html

1. TRUE / FALSE: Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. Doctors thought a man was in a coma for 23 years, but he wasn't. | T / F |
| b. The man (called Rom) wanted to communicate, but couldn't. | T / F |
| c. Rom could see but he couldn't hear. | T / F |
| d. "Locked-in syndrome" is where people can speak but can't think. | T / F |
| e. Rom typed his thoughts about the 23 years on a keyboard. | T / F |
| f. Rom remembers the day doctors discovered he wasn't in a coma. | T / F |
| g. Rom explained in a press conference the weather wasn't so good. | T / F |
| h. Doctors don't believe there are more people out there like Rom. | T / F |

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

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| 1. wrongly | a. conscious |
| 2. injured | b. join in |
| 3. awake | c. everlasting |
| 4. permanent | d. terror |
| 5. frustrated | e. sadness |
| 6. horror | f. incorrectly |
| 7. sorrow | g. time |
| 8. participate | h. ill |
| 9. under the weather | i. hurt |
| 10. moment | j. upset |

3. PHRASE MATCH: (Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. wrongly believed to | a. horror of the past |
| 2. The crash left him | b. a permanent coma |
| 3. he was trapped | c. humour |
| 4. everyone thought he was in | d. so paralyzed |
| 5. a condition called | e. in their sorrow |
| 6. thoughts about the | f. be in a coma |
| 7. I could not share | g. discovered what was wrong |
| 8. the day they finally | h. inside his own body |
| 9. in good | i. weather |
| 10. under the | j. "locked-in syndrome" |

Man trapped in 23-year coma feels reborn – 27th November, 2009

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WHILE READING / LISTENING

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0911/091127-being_reborn.html

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

A Belgian man who was _____ believed to be in a coma for 23 years has said he feels reborn. Rom Houben, 46, was badly _____ in a car accident in 1983. He was just 20 years old. The crash _____ him so paralyzed that doctors thought he was in a coma. For the next 23 years he was trapped inside his _____ body. He could not tell doctors that he was able to communicate and he was _____. Mr. Houben could hear everything that went on around him. He was able to understand that everyone thought he was in a _____ coma. He said he felt "alone, lonely, frustrated". A new type of brain scan found Mr Houben had a _____ called "locked-in syndrome". This is where people cannot speak or _____ but can think and understand the world around them.

permanent

left

move

own

wrongly

condition

injured

awake

Rom Houben typed his _____ about the horror of the past two-and-a-half decades on a special keyboard. "It was _____ frustrating when my family needed me. I could not share in their _____," he wrote. He added: "Just imagine. You hear, see, feel and think but no one can see that...You cannot _____ in life....I will never forget the day they finally discovered what was wrong. It was my second birth." He _____ his pain at being unable to communicate: "I would _____, but no sound would come out." Rom was in good humour in a press conference. He _____ a joke and explained he looked under the weather because of a cold: "You catch me at a bad _____, I have looked better," he typed. Doctors now hope that they can find more people like Rom Houben.

cracked

especially

described

thoughts

moment

sorrow

scream

participate

LISTENING – Listen and fill in the gaps

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0911/091127-being_reborn.html

A Belgian man who was wrongly _____ a coma for 23 years has said he feels reborn. Rom Houben, 46, was badly injured in a car accident in 1983. He was just 20 years old. The _____ paralyzed that doctors thought he was in a coma. For the next 23 years he was _____ own body. He could not tell doctors that he was able to communicate _____. Mr. Houben could hear everything that went on around him. He was able to understand that everyone thought he was in a permanent coma. He said he felt "alone, lonely, frustrated". A _____ found Mr Houben had a condition called "locked-in syndrome". This is where people cannot speak or _____ and understand the world around them.

Rom Houben typed his thoughts _____ the past two-and-a-half decades on a special keyboard. "It was especially frustrating when my family needed me. I could _____ sorrow," he wrote. He added: "Just imagine. You hear, see, feel and think but no one can see that...You cannot _____....I will never forget the day they finally discovered what was wrong. It was my second birth." He described his pain _____ communicate: "I would scream, but no sound would come out." Rom was in good humour in a press conference. He cracked a joke and explained he looked _____ because of a cold: "You catch me at a bad moment, I have looked better," he typed. Doctors _____ can find more people like Rom Houben.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0911/091127-being_reborn.html

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

second	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 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">• believed• badly• trapped• able• lonely• speak	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• horror• sorrow• forget• second• weather• doctors
--	---

STUDENT CAR ACCIDENT SURVEY

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0911/091127-being_reborn.html

Write five GOOD questions about being car accidents 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 'coma'?
- c) What do you know about comas?
- d) What do you think about the news article?
- e) What advice would you give to a friend who became paralyzed?
- f) What kind of life do you think Rom had in his 23 years of silence?
- g) Have you ever had a bad accident?
- h) When was the last time you felt alone or lonely?
- i) How do you think people cope with paralysis?
- j) How would you cope with paralysis?

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DISCUSSION

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

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) What three adjectives would you use to describe this story?
- c) What do you think Rom wants to do now?
- d) How do you think Rom stayed sane during the 23 years?
- e) What things would you miss most if you couldn't participate in life?
- f) Could you describe what it must be like to be unable to scream?
- g) Are people who are paralyzed well cared for in your country?
- h) When was the last time you were under the weather?
- i) What could you do to help scientists do more research into comas?
- j) What questions would you like to ask Rom Houben?

LANGUAGE – MULTIPLE CHOICE

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0911/091127-being_reborn.html

A Belgian man who was wrongly (1) _____ to be in a coma for 23 years has said he feels reborn. Rom Houben, 46, was badly injured in a car accident in 1983. He was just 20 years old. The crash (2) _____ him so paralyzed that doctors thought he was in a coma. For the next 23 years he was trapped inside his own body. He could not tell doctors that he was (3) _____ to communicate and he was awake. Mr. Houben could hear everything that went (4) _____ around him. He was able to understand that everyone thought he was in a (5) _____ coma. He said he felt "alone, lonely, frustrated". A new type of brain scan found Mr Houben (6) _____ a condition called "locked-in syndrome". This is where people cannot speak or move but can think and understand the world around them.

Rom Houben typed his (7) _____ about the horror of the past two-and-a-half decades on a special keyboard. "It was especially frustrating when my family needed me. I could not share (8) _____ their sorrow," he wrote. He added: "Just imagine. You hear, see, feel and think but no one can see that...You cannot participate in life....I will never forget the day they finally discovered what was wrong. It was my second (9) _____." He described his pain at (10) _____ unable to communicate: "I would scream, but no sound would come out." Rom was in good humour in a press conference. He (11) _____ a joke and explained he looked under the (12) _____ because of a cold: "You catch me at a bad moment, I have looked better," he typed. Doctors now hope that they can find more people like Rom Houben.

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

- | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. | (a) believes | (b) believer | (c) believed | (d) believing |
| 2. | (a) leaving | (b) left | (c) leave | (d) leavers |
| 3. | (a) can | (b) capable | (c) able | (d) ability |
| 4. | (a) in | (b) up | (c) on | (d) to |
| 5. | (a) permanently | (b) permanent | (c) permanence | (d) perm |
| 6. | (a) was | (b) took | (c) did | (d) had |
| 7. | (a) thoughts | (b) thought | (c) thoughtless | (d) thoughtful |
| 8. | (a) on | (b) in | (c) at | (d) to |
| 9. | (a) birthday | (b) born | (c) born again | (d) birth |
| 10. | (a) being | (b) been | (c) was | (d) be |
| 11. | (a) cracked | (b) crackled | (c) crackling | (d) cracking |
| 12. | (a) monsoon | (b) clouds | (c) rain | (d) weather |

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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 paralysis. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. SECOND LIFE: Make a poster about important things from the past 23 years. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to Rom. Ask him three questions about being reborn. Give him three ideas on what he should do to participate in life. 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. T f. T g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| 1. wrongly | a. incorrectly |
| 2. injured | b. hurt |
| 3. awake | c. conscious |
| 4. permanent | d. everlasting |
| 5. frustrated | e. upset |
| 6. horror | f. terror |
| 7. sorrow | g. sadness |
| 8. participate | h. join in |
| 9. under the weather | i. ill |
| 10. moment | j. time |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. wrongly believed to | a. be in a coma |
| 2. The crash left him | b. so paralyzed |
| 3. he was trapped | c. inside his own body |
| 4. everyone thought he was in | d. a permanent coma |
| 5. a condition called | e. "locked-in syndrome" |
| 6. thoughts about the | f. horror of the past |
| 7. I could not share | g. in their sorrow |
| 8. the day they finally | h. discovered what was wrong |
| 9. in good | i. humour |
| 10. under the | j. weather |

GAP FILL:

Man trapped in 23-year coma feels reborn

A Belgian man who was **wrongly** believed to be in a coma for 23 years has said he feels reborn. Rom Houben, 46, was badly **injured** in a car accident in 1983. He was just 20 years old. The crash **left** him so paralyzed that doctors thought he was in a coma. For the next 23 years he was trapped inside his **own** body. He could not tell doctors that he was able to communicate and he was **awake**. Mr. Houben could hear everything that went on around him. He was able to understand that everyone thought he was in a **permanent** coma. He said he felt "alone, lonely, frustrated". A new type of brain scan found Mr Houben had a **condition** called "locked-in syndrome". This is where people cannot speak or **move** but can think and understand the world around them.

Rom Houben typed his **thoughts** about the horror of the past two-and-a-half decades on a special keyboard. "It was **especially** frustrating when my family needed me. I could not share in their **sorrow**," he wrote. He added: "Just imagine. You hear, see, feel and think but no one can see that...You cannot **participate** in life...I will never forget the day they finally discovered what was wrong. It was my second birth." He **described** his pain at being unable to communicate: "I would **scream**, but no sound would come out." Rom was in good humour in a press conference. He **cracked** a joke and explained he looked under the weather because of a cold: "You catch me at a bad **moment**, I have looked better," he typed. Doctors now hope that they can find more people like Rom Houben.

LANGUAGE WORK

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

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