

Keep your English
up to date 2

Teacher's pack

Lesson plan and student worksheets with answers

Wuss



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Lesson Plan: Teacher's notes

Wuss

CONTENTS

1. Level, topic, language, aims, materials
2. Lesson stages
3. Answers
4. Audio script
5. Student worksheets 1, 2, 3

Level: Intermediate and above

Topic: Personal courage and decisiveness

Aims: Listening skills – A short talk
Language – ‘Wuss’ and other colloquial adjectives

Materials: Worksheet 1 – Introductory speaking and vocabulary exercises,
Listening section 1
Worksheet 2 – Listening section 2
Worksheet 3 – Extra work: Vocabulary, language and discussion
Audio script – Available in teacher’s notes
Recording of the talk – Available online at bbclearningenglish.com

This plan was downloaded from:

bbclearningenglish.com/radio/specials/1130_uptodate2/page2.shtml

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LESSON STAGES

A

Explain to the students that they are going to listen to a talk by Professor David Crystal, an expert on the English language, and that the talk is about the way English is changing. This particular talk is about the word 'wuss'.

B

Hand out **Student Worksheet 1**. Students do **Speaking, Exercise 1** in small groups or pairs.

C

Students do **Vocabulary, Exercise 2** - without dictionaries at first.
Practise the pronunciation of the vocabulary, as they will hear it in the talk.

D

Students read **Listening: Section 1, Exercise 3** and then listen to Section 1 of the talk.
They answer questions 'a' and 'b'.

Students listen again and do **Listening: Section 1, Exercise 4**.

E

Hand out **Student Worksheet 2**
Students read **Listening: Section 2, Exercise 5** and then listen to Section 2 of the talk.
They answer question 'a'.

F

Students try to answer **Listening: Section 2, Exercise 6**. They listen again to Section 2 to check/complete their answers.

G

If you wish to do some extra work with the class, hand out **Student Worksheet 3**

For the vocabulary exercise, give the students copies of the audio script and play the complete talk as they read.

The language work focuses on other blend words. Encourage students to use their imagination to make the blend words. What sounds right/possible?

The final discussion activity is connected to the language work – a selection of questions that use blend words.

AUDIO SCRIPTS

Listening Section 1

‘He’s a wuss.’ ‘She’s a wuss.’ It means ineffectual person, indecisive, weak. It’s from the United States; it came in in the 1980s. To be honest, I didn’t think it would last, but it’s still here.

It has a very unclear etymology. It may be from ‘wussy’ – that is from pussy wussy, you know, the pussy cat. It’s a kind of talking down about a cat. Or it might be a blend of ‘wimp’ – that is an ineffectual person – plus ‘pussy’: wimp/pussy, wussy, wuss. ‘Stop being a wuss!’ that’s the usage you hear a lot these days.

Listening Section 2

Anyway, whatever the etymology, a politician was said to be ‘a liberal wuss’ – that is a coward. And there are even Wuss Awards now. I saw on the web the other day, ‘Who was the biggest Wuss of 2005?’ - with a capital W – this is obviously something very attractive to be.

The word seems to be developing. It’s become a verb – ‘Stop wussing!’ ‘Ah! He’s wussing around!’ And I’ve even seen a new noun, wusser, wussers – ‘We’re all wussers now!’ ‘We’ve all become a complete pack of wussers now,’ says somebody on a website.

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ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY

Exercise 2

- a. **ineffectual** not good at getting things done or not good at a job
- b. **indecisive** unable to make clear choices; tends to hesitate
- c. **weak** not strong
- d. **etymology** the linguistic history of a word
- e. **pussy** an affectionate term for a cat
- f. **an award** a prize or recognition of great achievement

LISTENING: SECTION 1

Exercise 3

- a. A wuss would choose answer 'c', because they would not be good at making decisions nor at being brave/emotionally strong.
- b. No, we don't. It is very unclear

Exercise 4

- a. False – 'It came in in the 1980s'
- b. True – 'To be honest, I didn't think it would last, but it's still here.'
- c. False – 'that's an ineffectual person'

LISTENING: SECTION 2

Exercise 5

- a. Verb – to wuss/wuss around
Noun - wusser

Exercise 6

- a. False – 'a politician was said to be a 'liberal wuss' - that is a coward.'
- b. True – 'Who was the biggest Wuss of 2005?'
- c. False – 'says somebody on a website'

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EXTRA WORK

VOCABULARY

Exercise 7

- a. came in
- b. talking down
- c. pack

LANGUAGE

Exercise 8a

- 1 satphone
- 2 sportscast
- 3 emoticon
- 4 ezine
- 5 spork
- 6 ginormous
- 7 screenager
- 8 webcam
- 9 cybercrime
- 10 parasailing
- 11 motel

WORKSHEET 1

SPEAKING

1. Discuss with a partner. Which of these things do you think you could...
- a) do easily, without hesitation? You'd feel fine doing it.
 - b) do, but you'd need encouragement/support? You'd feel unsure about doing it
 - c) not do at all? You'd feel terrible doing it.
- i. Go rock climbing
 - ii. Tell a good friend that his/her clothes didn't suit him/her
 - iii. As a boss, make someone redundant from his/her job
 - iv. Admit to your parents that you had lied about something e.g. smoking
 - v. Kill an animal in order to eat it
 - vi. Eat insects/small animals that are still alive e.g. worms
 - vii. Sing on a stage in front of a group of strangers
 - viii. Be the captain of a sports team

VOCABULARY

2. Match these words and phrases to their definitions

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| a. ineffectual | unable to make clear choices; tends to hesitate |
| b. indecisive | an affectionate term for a cat |
| c. weak | the linguistic history of a word |
| d. etymology | a prize or recognition of great achievement |
| e. pussy | not strong |
| f. an award | not good at getting things done or not good at a job |

LISTENING SECTION 1

3. Now, listen to Professor Crystal talking about the use of the word ‘wuss’ in English and answer these questions.

- a. How would a wuss answer the questions in the first speaking task, Exercise 1?
- b. Do we know exactly the linguistic history of the word ‘wuss’?

4. Listen to Section 1 again and decide if the following statements are true or false, according to Professor Crystal.

- a. The word ‘wuss’ first appeared in 1918.
- b. Professor Crystal is surprised that we still use the word ‘wuss’.
- c. A wimp is a strong and brave person.

WORKSHEET 2

LISTENING SECTION 2

5. Listen to Section 2 of the talk and answer this question.

a. What other word forms have developed from the original noun 'wuss'?

6. Listen again to Section 2. Are the following sentences true or false?

a. A businessman was insulted with the word 'wuss'.

b. There was a prize for big wusses in the year 2005.

c. Professor Crystal has seen new uses in the newspapers.

WORKSHEET 3 - EXTRA WORK

VOCABULARY

7. Find the phrases in the text that have the following meanings.

- a. appeared/started to be used
- b. referring to something in a negative way
- c. a group of people or animals

LANGUAGE

8a. 'Wuss' might be a blend of 'wimp' and 'puss'. Make blend words from the words in brackets for the definitions below. You may need to change the order of the two words.

- 1 A telephone that transmits via a satellite in space. (satellite and telephone)
- 2 A television screening of a sports event. (broadcast and sports)
- 3 A visual character or sign which indicates emotion eg. :) (emotion and icon)
- 4 A magazine that only exists on the Internet. (electronic and magazine)
- 5 A utensil that is both a spoon and a fork. (fork and spoon)
- 6 Very very big. (enormous and gigantic)
- 7 A young person who spends a lot of time using a computer. (screen and teenager)
- 8 A video camera that transmits over the Internet (Camera and World Wide Web)
- 9 Criminal activity that takes place over the Internet. (crime and cyber)
- 10 A watersport - people fly in the air when pulled behind a boat. (parachute and sailing)
- 11 A hotel for people travelling by car, situated near a main road. (hotel and motor car)

DISCUSSION

9. Discuss these questions with your partner.

- a. What was the last sportscast that you watched?
- b. Do you ever use emoticons?
- c. Do you read any ezines?
- d. Have you ever seen a spork?
- e. What ginormous things have you seen?
- f. Are/were you a screenager?
- g. Have you ever used a webcam?
- h. Do you know anyone who has been a victim of cybercrime?
- i. Would you like to go parasailing?
- j. Which professions often use satphones?
- k. Have you ever stayed in a motel?