
PROFITS OR PRESERVATION?

LEVEL

High-Intermediate to Advanced

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Speaking, listening (primary focus); reading (secondary focus)

GOALS

Students will increase their speaking and listening skills through role-play activities centered on deforestation.

MATERIALS

- Teacher: whiteboard/chalkboard, markers or chalk, a timing device, a world map for reference.
- Students: pencils or pens, notebooks or writing paper.

PREPARATION

This week's Teacher's Corner is a role-play. Each of the three roles has a different agenda and goal on whether forests should be protected or cut down for profit.

1. Read through all the materials carefully.
2. For large classes, consider having students work in pairs or small groups. To encourage speaking and communication, having students work in pairs or small groups is recommended.
3. Prior to class, read the Voice of America article [Deforestation Decreased Over the Past 10 Years](#) and listen to the audio version of the story as well.
4. Print enough role-play cards for each student (or pairs/groups) found in Appendix 1.
5. If needed, print copies of the VOA Article "Deforestation Decreased Over the Past 10 Years" for students to read after you play the audio in class. If possible, show the article to students using a classroom projector instead of printing copies, and save a tree!
6. If possible, give the role-play cards to students before the class. This provides them time to research information online that may be helpful in their role-play.

PROCEDURES

Part 1 – Pre-Role-Play

1. Begin the class with a brainstorm activity. Write the word *trees* on the board and ask students "What makes trees important in our lives?" Have the students do a think, pair, share.
 - a. Think – after asking the students, "What makes trees important in our lives?" give them several minutes to brainstorm some reasons why trees are important. Have them list these ideas on a sheet of paper.
 - b. Pair – once students have generated a list, have them find a partner and share their lists.
 - c. Share – elicit ideas from the pairs of students and list their reasons for the importance of trees.
2. Next, play the Voice of America article "[Deforestation Decreased Over the Past 10 Years](#)" audio file for the students. For the first play of the audio, allow students to just listen.

- a. Check student comprehension by asking:
 - i. What is deforestation? – *The cutting down of trees.*
 - ii. Has deforestation increased or decreased during the last decade? - *Decreased*
3. Play the audio again, but this time, ask students to take notes to answer the following questions. If needed, write the questions on the board as students listen to the audio:
 - a. Which countries reduced their deforestation rates? – *Brazil and Indonesia*
 - b. Which countries began tree planting programs? – *China, India, Vietnam, United States*
 - c. Which parts of the world lost the most trees over the last 10 years? – *Africa, South America*
 - i. If a map is available, show the places after each question is answered.
4. Ask the students again, “What is deforestation?” and elicit answers from the class. Ask, “Can cutting down trees be good?” and again elicit answers from the class.
 - a. Note – students may say that cutting down trees is always bad. The goal of these questions is to encourage them to think critically about the issue of deforestation and why it may happen, so ask follow-up questions to get them to think beyond good and bad.
5. Ask the students two final questions: “If we cut down trees, what can we do with the trees?” and “If we cut down trees, what can we do with the land?”
 - a. Have the students work in pairs to think about and answer these questions. Give them several minutes to brainstorm answers to these questions. When the pairs of students have brainstormed ideas, have them work with another pair and share their ideas as a group. After several minutes, bring the class back together and elicit some answers from the class.
 - i. There is no correct answer to these questions. The goal is to encourage them to think about the economic reasons deforestation may occur. For example, if trees are cut down, wood can be used to build homes or the land can be used for farming.

Part 2 – Role-Play

The role-play can be played with three students, each student playing a unique role. However, to encourage more collaboration and speaking opportunities, have pairs or small groups of students take on each role.

1. Place students into pairs or small groups. These pairs/small groups will work together and get a single roleplay card, of either A, B, or C. They will work with two other groups to make a unit.
2. Combine the pairs/small groups into units of three pairs/small groups each.
3. Provide each pair/small group a role-play card. Each pair/small group should keep their role a secret from the other pairs/small groups in the unit.
 - a. Provide the students time to work in their pairs/small groups to think about their role.
 - b. Circulate around the room and help students brainstorm ideas by asking them what is important for their role. What goal does their role have? What is the best way to convince the other pairs/small groups to share their opinion?
4. Begin the role-play with Group A. They should start with a brief introduction to the other groups and then allow the other groups to introduce themselves.
 - a. Encourage students to role-play! This means they should avoid just reading their cards to the other pairs/small groups. One way to encourage this is to have students put their role cards away after the brainstorming period in step #8!
5. Give the students 10-15 minutes to role-play the discussion. Circulate around the room and check with each unit to ensure that all pairs/small groups are getting speaking time.

- a. If time permits after the debate ends, have the pairs/small groups take on new roles and then form new units with other pairs/small groups. By switching roles, the students can practice understanding different sides of a discussion.
6. End the role play by having Group A of each unit announce their decision to the class. Will they limit deforestation or continue cutting down trees? Encourage them to explain how they reached their decision.
7. This activity can be followed up with a homework writing assignment. Have each group write a report of the meeting to their bosses:
 - a. Group A – Write a report to deliver to the President. Give the President advice on whether the Forestania should continue deforestation or save the trees.
 - b. Group B – Write a report to supporters of Speak for the Trees International and describe the meeting. Was it a success? If so, why? Was it not successful? If so, why?
 - c. Group C – Write a report to the business that Northington Business Advisors supports. Was the meeting a success? If so, why? Was it unsuccessful? If so, why?

For more information on incorporating environmental issues into your class, check out the following resources:

Going Green: Merging Environmental Education and Language Instruction

http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/50_2_3_hauschild-et-al.pdf

Integrating Environmental Education into a Genre-Based EFL Writing Class

http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/52-4_5_setyowati_and_widiati.pdf

Strange Weather: Climate Change Activities for the English

<http://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/shaping-way-we-teach-english-webinars#child-1931>

Appendix 1: Role-Play Cards

Group A – Forestania Government Committee

You represent the country of Forestania. The country of Northington has been purchasing much of the wood your country produces. The land you have cleared of trees has been used for farming. The farms have been raising cows. The cows are sold as meat to restaurants in Northington.

This has helped give the people of your country work, but people have begun to worry about the trees disappearing. Without these trees there have been more floods and many of the unique animals of the forests are now gone.

You have arranged a meeting with two groups, Speak for the Trees and Northington Business Advisors, to hear their ideas. Which group gives the better argument?

What should Forestania do? You must call the President after the meeting with a decision!

Group B – Speak for the Trees International

You represent Speak for the Trees. Your organization works to protect trees and the environment against deforestation.

You want the country of Forestania to stop cutting down their forests and to protect their remaining trees.

Help the representatives of Forestania see the value in keeping the trees.

Group C – Northington Business Advisors

You represent business in the country of Northington. The companies you represent are happy with the low prices on wood and meat they get from the country of Forestania.

As a result, they want to encourage Forestania to cut down more trees and create more farms.

Convince the representatives of Forestania that cutting down trees for more farmland is good business sense.