
CALAMITY – NATURAL DISASTER PREPARATION

LEVEL

Low-Intermediate to Advanced

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Speaking, writing (primary focus); Reading (secondary focus)

GOALS

Students will increase their speaking and writing abilities through a task-based activity on preventing and responding to natural disasters.

MATERIALS

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

PREPARATION

Bringing world affairs into the classroom provides students opportunities to explore real world issues and consider how these issues may affect their own countries and towns. These types of classroom activities can get students thinking about the issues in their own communities and prepare for real-life events such as natural disasters.

In this week's Teacher's Corner, students will learn about natural disasters and disaster prevention.

1. Read through all the materials carefully.
2. This activity utilizes resources created by the United Nations' Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). You can find out more about the UNISDR [here](#).
3. During the activity students will play the UNISDR game [Stop Disasters!](#) The game requires players to implement safety measures in a community before a disaster strikes. Play the game before class to learn the rules to provide students help as needed.
4. The third part of the activity uses the website [Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System](#). Prior to class, view the website to ensure it works on your Internet browser software.
5. For larger classes, consider having students work in pairs or small groups. Having students work in pairs or small groups is recommended because it encourages speaking and communication.
6. This activity can be used in one class or across several class periods. Decide which approach is best for your classroom goals and objectives.
7. This activity uses the computer game *Stop Disasters!* Playing the game requires an Internet connection. If computers with Internet are not possible, consider assigning the game as homework prior to doing this activity in class. If only a teacher computer with Internet is accessible, consider playing the game in class. Students can, as a group, make decisions in the game.
8. Students may have questions on vocabulary such as *hurricane* and *tsunami*. Encourage the students to play the game first to discover the vocabulary in context. After playing the game, check for any vocabulary they may not have understood.

9. This activity has disasters as the major theme. When using serious subjects in the classroom, be sensitive to student experiences and their age, and consider if such material is appropriate for your classroom.

* The game *Stop Disasters!* uses the English word *hurricane*. However, in English the terms *typhoon* and *cyclone* are also used depending on where the storm originates. According to the U.S. [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#):

Hurricanes, cyclones, and typhoons are all the same weather phenomenon; we just use different names for these storms in different places. In the Atlantic and Northeast Pacific, the term “hurricane” is used. The same type of disturbance in the Northwest Pacific is called a “typhoon” and “cyclones” occur in the South Pacific and Indian Ocean. Depending on your location, you may want to use *typhoon* or *cyclone* as the in-class vocabulary.

PROCEDURES

Part 1 – Stop Disasters! Game

Using video games in the classroom requires allowing students time to understand the rules of game. In this part of the activity, students may seem unfocused and appear to click on everything in the game during the first five to ten minutes of playing the game. This is a normal part of learning how a game’s rule structure works, so be sure to plan for this time accordingly. If time is limited, consider having students play the game prior to class so they come to class with an understanding of the game.

1. Place students in pairs or small-groups and have them play [Stop Disasters!](#) Encourage the students to play at least three scenarios if time permits.
2. Instruct the students to have a pencil and notebook available. In their pairs/small groups, one student should act as note-taker. Their responsibility is to take notes on the decisions their pair/small group makes during gameplay.
 - During gameplay, remind the note-taker to document the score their pair/small group receives.

Part 2 – Disaster Debriefing

Video games work best in classroom practice when students are allowed to make choices and see the results of those choices. In this section of the activity, students will engage in sharing their decisions with other teams.

1. After the pairs/small groups have finished playing *Stop Disasters!*, have them review their notes on the decisions and choices they made.
 - a. Encourage students to think about their gameplay by asking them, “How successful was your team?”
2. Next, have the pairs/small groups partner with another pair/small group to form larger teams. Have these teams share notes and discuss their in-game actions. On the board, write the following questions for the teams to discuss:
 - a. Which scenarios of the game did you play?
 - b. Why did you choose those scenarios?
 - c. How well did you complete the scenario?
 - d. What would you do differently next time?
3. If time permits, have the students play again. Instruct them to replay the scenario in which they did the worst. Prior to playing the game again, encourage the students to think about the

discussion they had with the other pair/small group and have the students write out a brief plan of action.

- a. These plans of action will vary from group to group. What is important about the plan is the students take time to reflect on the decisions they made during the first play through, the conversation with the other pair/small group, and the notes they took. The goal here is for the pairs/small groups to develop a strategy before playing the game a second time.

Part 3 – Disaster Management

Video games can be an effective part of classroom practice when used to provide experiences to students. This experience can then be used as a resource for follow-up expansion activities such as the one below. *Stop Disasters!* is an example of a serious game. In serious games, the goal is to use the digital experience to draw attention to real world issues and events. This part of the activity uses real natural disasters around the world, so consider this before bringing this part of the activity into your classroom.

1. In the game *Stop Disasters!* players are asked to prepare communities for the following types of disasters. Begin this section of the activity by asking the students which disasters are shown in the game. As students name the disasters, write the names on the board:
 - a. Floods
 - b. Wild Fires
 - c. Hurricanes
 - d. Tsunamis
 - e. Earthquakes
2. Have the students form teams of three or four students each.
3. Ask the teams to organize the disasters in order of most critical to least critical. Instruct the students that they must also be able to explain why they ranked the emergencies in the order they did.
 - a. **Important** – There is no correct answer to the order of most to least critical. The goal of this section of the activity is to encourage students to think critically about disasters and to understand the challenges of providing disaster relief around the world.
4. After the teams have made their rankings, have them share their ordered lists and the reasons for the order of disasters that they selected.

Part 4 – Disaster Response

1. Instruct the students that their teams work for the United Nations [Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System](#) and they must respond to disasters around the world.
2. Have the teams visit the [Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System](#) website and check the Open Emergencies. This is a list of current global natural disasters.
 - a. Students may notice the dates on the website can be old, in some cases up to a year. If students ask about the date, inform them that these dates refer to the initial event and that people in the region are still in need of assistance. These dates should influence their decision-making process in the next step.
3. Have the students check the recent emergencies and make critical decisions on where to send help. Inform the teams that they have only enough resources to assist in three natural disasters or disaster recovery situations. Each team must decide where to allocate their resources. After each team has decided the disasters to which they will allocate resources, have them present their decision to the class. Instruct them to explain their decisions.

4. The goal of this activity is to help students understand how decisions can be influenced by real world events. As students decide which natural disasters are in need of the most attention, have them check the list they made in step #8 and think critically about how that list was made. Encourage them to consider decisions made about the disasters shown on the Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System website and how those compared to that earlier list made in step #8.

POSSIBLE FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

This activity requires students to make decisions about real world disasters. It is important to encourage students to consider how disasters can affect their community. Here are some possible follow-up activities to encourage students to consider disasters in their community.

Poster Presentation

For homework, have teams make disaster prevention posters. The teams should design the posters to teach classmates how to prepare for disaster that could possibly occur in their community.

Disaster Relief Debate

How should disaster relief be decided? An in-class debate can be organized in which students debate the statement: Disaster relief is a global responsibility. In the debate, students should take two sides: one that supports the statement and one that refutes the statement.

For more information on using both video games and debates in the English classroom, check out the [September 2015 Teacher's Corner](#).