

BBC World Service is 80!

"This is London" – Part 1 - Recently the *BBC World Service* celebrated 80 years of broadcasting. Started in 1932, it broadcast originally on short-wave only. Today it broadcasts on short-wave, FM, digital radio and the internet. Its audiences continue to grow. However, short-wave listening has declined. But for millions *BBC World Service* remains a lifeline to the outside world. Short-wave is still important because listeners can catch the signal that travels thousands of miles across international boundaries, sometimes eluding the censors, by bouncing off the turbulent gases of the ionosphere, the layers of electrified gas several hundred kilometres above the earth. Listeners are used to the background noise of electronic warbling, whistling and hissing, that short-wave has reliably delivered for 80 years.

Back in 1932 the *BBC's Empire Service* (as it was then known) was launched from Broadcasting House in London, helped by new short-wave radio technology that allowed signals to be broadcast over vast distances. The opening day saw the BBC's Director General John Reith broadcast to Australia, India, South Africa, West Africa and Canada. Six days after the opening of the *Empire Service* a broadcasting tradition was born: the Royal Christmas message. The address was delivered by King George V live from the Royal family's Norfolk retreat in Sandringham. BBC Director General John Reith said "It was the most spectacular success in BBC history so far. The King has been heard all over the world with surprising clarity."

In 1940, the leader of the 'Free French', General Charles de Gaulle, broadcast to France from London. He did so for the next four years. During World War II the *Empire Service* was renamed the *BBC Overseas Service*. Started in November 1939 it greatly expanded its overseas output in Arabic, Spanish for Latin America and Spain, German, French, and Italian. By the end of 1940, the BBC was broadcasting in 34 languages. New languages included Albanian, Hindi, and Burmese. The government of the day realised the importance of broadcasting. *BBC Overseas Service* was relocated to Bush House as a result of a mine damaging its studios in Broadcasting House in December 1940. By 1941, there were 1,400 members of staff. Secret messages were broadcast from London to the resistance fighters in Europe. BBC War reporters recorded their reports onto discs that were

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Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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taken by an army despatch rider to an airport where it would be flown to London for transmission.

Part 2 - After World War II with the 'Iron Curtain' descending over Europe a Russian service was started. Though transmissions were regularly jammed by the Communist block. Forward to the 1960s and it was here we saw an expansion of radio ownership, thanks to the development of portable, battery-powered sets. In May 1965, the *BBC Overseas Service* became the *BBC World Service* to reflect a new emphasis on world affairs.

BBC World Service has covered many important moments in history, for example, the Hungarian uprisings in 1956, also Vaclav Havel sneaking around the Communist censors in the late 60s to speak to the BBC. Interestingly, during the cold war Russian spies would learn English by listening to the BBC English language courses: "They were like a university to us!" *BBC World Service* covered the Falkland's conflict in 1982, and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. In January 1991, during the first Iraq war it cleared its schedules to become a rolling news service.

The BBC even broadcast messages to hostages like special envoy Terry Waite, Brian Keenan, and television journalist John McCarthy who were held in Lebanon by the militant group Islamic Dawn. All three listened to the BBC and were released safely in 1986. Mikhail Gorbachev listened to the BBC when he was held hostage for three days in Russia's August 1991 coup. His only contact with the outside world was listening to the foreign radio broadcasts via an aerial his guards had rigged up. Likewise when Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi was released from imprisonment in November 2010, she revealed she used to listen to the *BBC World Service* radio show 'A Jolly Good Show' presented by DJ Dave Lee Travis during her confinement. In fact, for several decades *BBC World Service* on short-wave in Burma was invaluable to the Burmese people as a source of information.

Today, *BBC World Service* radio broadcasts 28 languages, having significantly reduced the language output. It has however, diversified into television. *World Service TV* became *BBC World TV* and is now called *BBC World News*. Today, social media outlets help the BBC gather and broadcast news about the Arab Spring effectively and quickly. In 2012, the *BBC World Service* is moving back to Broadcasting House from Bush House to a state of the art newsroom that will put it at the heart of the BBC's output.

(Note: This is a short edited history!)

EXERCISES

1. BBC World Service: Think of three things you know about *BBC World Service!* Go round the room swapping details with others.

2. Dictation: The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

3. Reading: The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

4. Vocabulary: Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

5. The article: Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?

6. BBC World Service: In pairs from the article think of five names the *BBC World Service* has used. Then from the article add five moments from history. Write them below. Discuss together.

BBC World Service alternative names ...	Moments in history
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

7. Let's roleplay 1: In pairs/groups. One of you is the interviewer. The others are one of the following people. You are in the *BBC World Service* radio studio. Today's interview is about: *BBC World Service is 80.*

1	A listener in Burma
2	A listener in Africa
3	A journalist
4	BBC Director General

The teacher will choose some pairs to roleplay their interview in front of the class.

8. Let's think! In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with **BBC World Service**. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

9. **Let's roleplay 2:** In pairs. You are visiting the BBC bar in London. Start a conversation about 'BBC World Service – TV and radio.' 5-minutes.

10. **Let's do 'The Article Quiz':** Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) What happened in 1932?
- 2) What happened in 1940?
- 3) What is happening in 2012?
- 4) How many languages does the BBC broadcast in today?
- 5) Name the King.

Student B

- 1) What happened in 1956?
- 2) What happened in 1965?
- 3) What happened in 1991?
- 4) Who is Dave Lee Travis?
- 5) What is short-wave radio?

11. **Short-wave:** In pairs think of three advantages and three disadvantages of listening to the radio on short-wave. Write them below. Discuss together.

Advantages	Disadvantages
1	1
2	2
3	3

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

12. **A radio promotion:** In pairs, groups or individually: Prepare in class or at home a 30 second advert about **BBC World Service**. Present your promotion to the class. The class can vote on the best radio promotion.

13. **Competitors:** In pairs think of three radio and television competitors the BBC has worldwide. Discuss together.

Radio stations	TV stations
1	1
2	2
3	3

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

14. **Let's draw!** In pairs, draw a radio studio on the board. Label it! Add what accessories they might have in it.

15. **Let's write an e-mail:** Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **BBC World Service**. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

16. **Sentence starters:** Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) The BBC _____
- b) I listen to _____

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) Do you listen to shortwave radio? Explain.
- 3) Why do people listen to the BBC?
- 4) Would you consider smuggling in short-wave radios to a country where a regime stopped common people listening to the outside world?
- 5) How important is the news?
- 6) Why is the BBC so important in the world today?
- 7) What competition does the BBC have from other broadcasters?
- 8) What do you like to listen to on the radio?
- 9) Which is your favourite radio station?
- 10) Which is your favourite TV station?

Student B questions

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) Have you learnt anything in today's English lesson?
- 3) Do you listen to the *BBC World Service*?
- 4) Do you watch *BBC World News*?
- 5) How do you *watch/listen* to the BBC?
- 6) Do you know anyone who listens to the BBC?
- 7) What do you like to listen *to/watch* on the BBC?
- 8) Is *BBC World Service* impartial (neutral)?
- 9) Is there a future for shortwave radio?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's discuss! BBC World Service

Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

20 things about <i>BBC World service</i>
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The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING: edited

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

BBC World Service is 80!

Recently the *BBC World Service* celebrated 80 years of broadcasting. Started in 1932, it broadcast originally on short-wave only. Today it broadcasts on short-wave, FM, digital radio and the internet. Its audiences continue to (1)__. However, short-wave listening has declined. But for millions *BBC World Service* remains a (2)__ to the outside world. Short-wave is still important because listeners can catch the signal that travels thousands of miles across international boundaries, sometimes eluding the (3)__, by bouncing off the turbulent gases of the ionosphere, the layers of electrified gas several hundred kilometres above the earth. Listeners are used to the background noise of electronic warbling, whistling and (4)__, that short-wave has reliably delivered for 80 years. Back in 1932 the *BBC's Empire Service* (as it was then known) was launched from Broadcasting House in London, helped by new short-wave (5)__ technology that allowed (6)__ to be broadcast over (7)__ (8)__. The opening day saw the BBC's Director General John Reith broadcast to Australia, India, South Africa, West Africa and Canada.

Six days after the opening of the *Empire Service* a broadcasting (1)__ was born: the Royal Christmas (2)__. The (3)__ was delivered by King George V live from the Royal family's Norfolk (4)__ in Sandringham. BBC Director General John Reith said "It was the most spectacular (5)__ in BBC history so far. The King has been heard all over the world with surprising (6)__.” In 1940, the leader of the 'Free French', General Charles de Gaulle, broadcast to France from London. He did so for the next four years. During World War II the *Empire Service* was renamed the *BBC Overseas Service*. Started in November 1939 it greatly expanded its overseas (7)__ in Arabic, Spanish for Latin America and Spain, German, French, and Italian. By the end of 1940, the BBC was broadcasting in 34 (8)__. New languages included Albanian, Hindi, and Burmese. The government of the day realised the importance of broadcasting.

vast
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success
tradition
message

GRAMMAR - edited

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

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Six days after the opening of the *Empire Service* (1)__ broadcasting tradition was born: the Royal Christmas message. The address was delivered (2)__ King George V live from the Royal family's Norfolk retreat in Sandringham. BBC Director General John Reith said "(3)__ was the most spectacular success in BBC history (4)__ far. The King has been heard all over the world with surprising clarity." (5)__ 1940, the leader of the 'Free French', General Charles de Gaulle, broadcast to France from London. (6)__ did so for the next four years. During World War II the *Empire Service* was renamed the *BBC Overseas Service*. Started in November 1939 it greatly expanded its overseas output in Arabic, Spanish for Latin America (7)__ Spain, German, French, and Italian. By the end of 1940, the BBC was broadcasting in 34 languages. New languages included Albanian, Hindi, and Burmese. The government (8)__ the day realised the importance of broadcasting.

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	several	11	technology
2	ionosphere	12	listeners
3	resistance	13	sometimes
4	government	14	turbulent
5	spectacular	15	broadcasting
6	output	16	short-wave
7	tradition	17	electronic
8	important	18	background
9	reliably	19	warbling
10	lifeline	20	whistling

LINKS

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/indepth/80th_anniversary.shtml
<http://www.radiotimes.com/news/2012-02-29/celebrating-80-years-of-the-bbc-world-service>
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/tv-radio/80-years-of-the-bbc-world-service-7466845.html>
http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/institutional/bbc_world_service_80.shtml
<http://ukinnigeria.fco.gov.uk/en/news/?view=Speech&id=737770782>

Note: BBC=British Broadcasting Corporation

ANSWERS

GAP FILL: BBC World Service is 80! Recently the *BBC World Service* celebrated 80 years of broadcasting. Started in 1932, it broadcast originally on short-wave only. Today it broadcasts on short-wave, FM, digital radio and the internet. Its audiences continue to **grow**. However, short-wave listening has declined. But for millions *BBC World Service* remains a **lifeline** to the outside world. Short-wave is still important because listeners can catch the signal that travels thousands of miles across international boundaries, sometimes eluding the **censors**, by bouncing off the turbulent gases of the ionosphere, the layers of electrified gas several hundred kilometres above the earth. Listeners are used to the background noise of electronic warbling, whistling and **hissing**, that short-wave has reliably delivered for 80 years. Back in 1932 the *BBC's Empire Service* (as it was then known) was launched from Broadcasting House in London, helped by new short-wave **radio** technology that allowed **signals** to be broadcast over **vast distances**. The opening day saw the BBC's Director General John Reith broadcast to Australia, India, South Africa, West Africa and Canada.

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