

## Chile's Trapped Miners

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A specially designed rescue pod has been created that will winch the miners up one by one to the surface. It has now been delivered to the mine head. It is 50cm (20in) wide and is fitted with communication equipment allowing the miners to stay in touch with the surface, and with enough oxygen to last for 90 minutes. Should the cage get stuck, the miner can winch himself back down. It is expected to take about 30 minutes to pull each miner up from their shelter deep underground. Nicknamed Phoenix the steel cage's designers hope it will offer the men a new life, much like the bird of Greek mythology.

Three drills are being used to rescue the miners. On Saturday (25/09) Strata 950, one of three drills working to bore a hole wide enough for the pod to fit in to rescue the miners had reached a depth of 442m (1,450ft). However, this is merely a pilot hole. It will need to drill a second time to widen the shaft to fit the rescue pod. The second drill, which had already completed its pilot hole, had reached 175m (574ft). The third drilling machine, which is the only one to drill a shaft wide enough in the first go was at 62m (203ft). So there is still a long way to go!

The miners are undertaking daily routines and are keeping healthy. They are divided into three groups of 11, each working eight-hour shifts on chores such as clearing debris, reinforcing mine walls, cleaning and measuring oxygen levels. Their meals are strictly regulated for nutritional value and boosted by regular vitamin supplements. The meals arrive at the same time each day, as do cigarettes.

**Category: South America / Chile / Mining rescue**  
**Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate**

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## Chile's Trapped Miners – 5<sup>th</sup> October 2010

There are health issues to address. The darkness, 95% humidity and high temperatures cause great discomfort, not to mention 120 days of human waste from 33 miners to manage. When they were first contacted after 17 days alone the miners were undernourished, underweight, had been sleeping badly, had no strength and some serious dental problems. Glucose, rehydration tablets, oxygen and medicine were at first sent down to the men from the surface in an 11cm supply tube sent through a 12cm drilled borehole, which forms a lifeline into the miner's refuge.

Meanwhile wives, girlfriends and relatives of the men continue to camp out at the mine head. A village has mushroomed around it. One wife has even given birth to a baby girl, who was named by her father Esperanza, the Spanish word for 'hope'.

Communication with their families has been vital in keeping the miners motivated. NASA the US space agency was even brought in to offer advice on confined spaces. There has also been a lot of praying by the families and by the miners themselves. Thirty-three flags have been erected, one for each of the miners, at the mine head. By the side of the road shrines to each of the men have been set up.

The new Chilean President Sebastian Pinera has made the mine rescue a top priority. There has never been a rescue like it. The fate of the miners has become one of the biggest stories to emerge from Chile in years. The international media has been very supportive of the miners.

One of the psychologists with the rescue team Claudio Ibanez said, "When the men do emerge they will be psychologically much stronger. They'll have a more positive view on life, and won't take life for granted anymore." They will undoubtedly be Chilean national heroes.

Meanwhile, as the miner's wives, girlfriends and relatives wait patiently for their men to be rescued, the world waits with them. This is certainly one of the most daring rescue missions ever undertaken in a mine so deep. Everyone hopes it will turn out to be a successful rescue. It does put a whole new meaning into the phrase, 'Is there light at the end of the tunnel'?

**Update:** On the 29<sup>th</sup> September it was announced that one drill had advanced 50 metres (164ft) through the rock in 24 hours, meaning the men could be rescued by mid October. The T-130 drill has now penetrated more than 300m of rock. The rock fall that blocked the miners escape happened on the 5<sup>th</sup> August. Relatives of the miners cheered when they heard the news.

## EXERCISES

**1. The Chilean Miners:** Briefly, what three things do you know about the Chilean Miners who are stuck underground in a mine in Chile? Go round the room swapping details.

**2. Geography +: Chile:** Where is Chile? What is its capital? What countries surround it? What sea lies off it? Who is the President of Chile? Draw a map on the board then look on Google maps to help you.

**3. 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!

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

**5. 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.

**6. 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?
- c) **What's the latest on this story?**

**7. Let's think!** Think of five things to keep the men busy. Then add five things that are sent down daily to the miners through the 12cm borehole. Write them below. Explain to your partner why you chose these. What would you send down to them?

Five things to keep the men busy	Five things sent down daily to the miners
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.

**8. Let's talk! Radio Chile:** *In pairs/groups.* You are in the English service of Radio Chile International. One of you is the presenter; the other student(s) is a journalist who has just got back from the mine. You have the latest details of the rescue effort, how it's going, how people are feeling etc... 5 *minutes*.

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9. **Let's draw: The Chilean Mine:** On the board draw the Chilean mine where the miners are stuck underground. Label it. Include the surface, the mine shafts, and the shelter where the men are. (Imagine!)

10. **Let's discuss: The Chilean Miners:** In pairs. Look at the below issues the Chilean miners face. Discuss together.

<b>Survival</b>	
Having contact with their loved ones	Enduring the heat
Identifying leaders and allocating tasks	Keeping active
Keeping the truth from them	Avoiding infections
<b>The Mental battle</b>	
Depression	Extreme environment

**The teacher** will choose some pairs to tell their stories in front of the class.

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

12. **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) How many miners are stuck underground?
- 2) What is the nickname of the rescue pod?
- 3) How many meters has the second drill reached?
- 4) What are the trapped miners underground doing?
- 5) What have the wives done?

**Student B**

- 1) What is the name of the new baby?
- 2) How many flags have been erected?
- 3) How many days did it take to make first contact with the miners?
- 4) Describe the conditions where the miners are.
- 5) What health problems have the miners had?

13. **The Chilean Miners:** In pairs/groups. Choose to be one of the following people. Create a short story about the Chilean miners. Use the 'communication line' to communicate with each other. Tell your story to your partner/group or try to interlink **or** interact student storylines!

1	A miners wife/girlfriend	3	A Chilean miner stuck underground
2	Rescuer on the surface	4	Rescue miner at the mine head HQ

**The teacher** will choose some pairs to tell their stories in front of the class.

14. **Let's write an e-mail:** Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **The Chilean miners**. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

15. **Let's imagine!** You are all going to be stuck in the room you are in for this lesson for the next month. There is no escape. The only access is a 12cm hole, through which you will live. Discuss together!

## DISCUSSION

### Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) What three bits of advice would you give the miners?
- 3) What three types of food would you recommend they eat?
- 4) What three things should they do during their day?
- 5) What three challenges might the miners experience?
- 6) What three bits of advice would you give the wives of the miners?
- 7) What advice would you give to the Chilean President?
- 8) What three bits of advice would you give to the rescuers?
- 9) What three bits of advice would you give in containing the smell of the human waste?
- 10) Is there light at the end of the tunnel?

### Student B questions

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) What would you do if you were stuck down a mine?
- 3) What exercise would you recommend the miners undertake?
- 4) What three bits of motivational advice would you give to the leader(s) of the miners stuck underground?
- 5) How has the world reacted?
- 6) Describe the rescue pod.
- 7) Describe the rescue drilling operation.
- 8) What after-effects might the men suffer once they are rescued?
- 9) Will these men become heroes of Chile?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

## SPEAKING

Let's debate! The Chilean miners

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

Open session.

The rescue of the Chilean miners – and a typical day for them, the rescuers, their wives etc...
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The teacher can moderate the session.

## GAP FILL: READING:

*Put the words into the gaps in the text.*

Deep underground in a gold and copper mine in San Jose, Chile, 33 (1)\_\_\_\_\_ await rescue. Buried alive these men have now lived at 700m (2,296ft) (2)\_\_\_\_\_, cut off from the outside world, for longer than any other miner in history. Hopes of getting them all out alive rest on a (3)\_\_\_\_\_ operation that is currently underway. Initially, the miners were advised they might not be rescued till Christmas. However, the latest indicators are that they could be out by the first week in November. Chile's Mining Minister Laurence Golbourne has so far refused to be drawn on a (4)\_\_\_\_\_ date. A specially designed rescue (5)\_\_\_ has been created that will winch the miners up one by one to the surface. It has now been delivered to the mine head. It is 50cm (20in) wide and is fitted with communication equipment allowing the miners to stay in touch with the surface, and with enough oxygen to last for 90 minutes. Should the (6)\_\_\_\_\_ get stuck, the miner can winch himself back down. It is expected to take about 30 minutes to pull each miner up from their (7)\_\_\_\_\_ deep underground. Nicknamed Phoenix the steel cage's designers hope it will offer the men a new life, much like the bird of Greek (8)\_\_\_\_\_.

*cage*

*pod*

*miners*

*mythology*

*rescue*

*underground*

*shelter*

*drilling*

Three drills are being used to rescue the miners. On Saturday (25/09) Strata 950, one of three drills working to (1)\_\_\_\_\_ a hole wide enough for the pod to fit in to rescue the miners had reached a depth of 442m (1,450ft). However, this is merely a pilot hole. It will need to (2)\_\_\_\_\_ a second time to widen the shaft to fit the rescue pod. The second drill, which had already completed its pilot hole, had reached 175m (574ft). The third drilling machine, which is the only one to drill a (3)\_\_\_\_\_ wide enough in the first go was at 62m (203ft). So there is still a long way to go! The miners are undertaking daily (4)\_\_\_\_\_ and are keeping healthy. They are divided into three groups of 11, each working eight-hour (5)\_\_\_\_\_ on (6)\_\_\_\_\_ such as clearing debris, reinforcing mine walls, cleaning and measuring oxygen levels. Their meals are strictly (7)\_\_\_\_\_ for nutritional value and boosted by regular (8)\_\_\_\_\_ supplements. The meals arrive at the same time each day, as do cigarettes.

*vitamin*

*regulated*

*routines*

*drill*

*shaft*

*shifts*

*bore*

*chores*

## GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

### Chile's Trapped Miners

Deep underground in a gold and copper mine in San Jose, Chile, 33 miners await rescue. Buried alive (1)\_\_\_ men have now lived at 700m (2,296ft) underground, cut off from the outside world, for longer than any other miner in history. Hopes of getting them all out alive rest on a drilling operation (2)\_\_\_ is currently underway. Initially, the miners were advised they might not be rescued till Christmas. (3)\_\_\_, the latest indicators are that they (4)\_\_\_ be out by the first week in November. Chile's Mining Minister Laurence Golbourne has so far refused to be drawn on a rescue date. A specially designed rescue pod has been created that will winch the miners up one by one to the surface. It has now been delivered to the mine head. It is 50cm (20in) wide and is fitted (5)\_\_\_ communication equipment allowing the miners to stay in touch with the surface, and with enough oxygen to last for 90 minutes. Should the cage get stuck, the miner can winch himself back down. It is expected to take (6)\_\_\_ 30 minutes to pull each miner up from (7)\_\_\_ shelter deep underground. Nicknamed Phoenix the steel cage's designers hope it will offer the men a new life, (8)\_\_\_ like the bird of Greek mythology.

**that**

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**a**

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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	specially	11	oxygen
2	healthy	12	rehydration
3	debris	13	pod
4	communication	14	equipment
5	psychologists	15	supplements
6	mushroomed	16	merely
7	vitamin	17	discomfort
8	nutritional	18	undoubtedly
9	winch	19	successful
10	mythology	20	vital

### LINKS

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-11431565>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-11071151>

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/lt\\_chile\\_mine\\_collapse](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/lt_chile_mine_collapse)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/sep/09/chilean-miners-typical-day>

<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/MindMoodNews/trapped-chilean-miners-signs-cabin-fever/story?id=11585408>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/09/22/AR2010092206410.html>

### ANSWERS

GAP FILL: Chile's Trapped Miners: Deep underground in a gold and copper mine in San Jose, Chile, 33 **miners** await rescue. Buried alive these men have now lived at 700m (2,296ft) **underground**, cut off from the outside world, for longer than any other miner in history. Hopes of getting them all out alive rest on a **drilling** operation that is currently underway. Initially, the miners were advised they might not be rescued till Christmas. However, the latest indicators are that they could be out by the first week in November. Chile's Mining Minister Laurence Golbourne has so far refused to be drawn on a **rescue** date. A specially designed rescue **pod** has been created that will winch the miners up one by one to the surface. It has now been delivered to the mine head. It is 50cm (20in) wide and is fitted with communication equipment allowing the miners to stay in touch with the surface, and with enough oxygen to last for 90 minutes. Should the **cage** get stuck, the miner can winch himself back down. It is expected to take about 30 minutes to pull each miner up from their **shelter** deep underground. Nicknamed Phoenix the steel cage's designers hope it will offer the men a new life, much like the bird of Greek **mythology**.

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