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The 4 page 60 minute ESL British English lesson – 20/07/13

Detroit files for bankruptcy

Detroit used to be home of the once-thriving American automobile industry. Known as Motor City, USA, the city has now applied for bankruptcy. For decades it has been struggling with spiralling debts, which now total US\$18.5 billion (14 billion Euros).

While General Motors still has its headquarters there the city today is in a sorry state. Urban decline is everywhere. Some 70,000 properties lie abandoned. People have moved out to the suburbs or beyond due to no work in Detroit. The once great city is now regarded as an economic basket case. Its public services are near collapse.

With no money from property taxes the city's decline is indeed stark. There is no money for ambulances and 40% of the street lights are burnt out. The city is being forced to sell off what it can to pay off its creditors. The mess will take years to sort out. The only winners** are the American lawyers filing lawsuits against the city.

Republican Governor Rick Snyder on Friday said the city had filed for bankruptcy because it was "basically broke". Governor Snyder said, "There has been a long period of decline. It's time to do something about it. We're the comeback State in Michigan, but to be a great State, we need Detroit on the path to being a great city again." He added, "Now is the opportunity to stop 60 years of decline. We will come out with a stronger, better Detroit and a format to grow this city. The citizens of not just this city but the State deserve it."

What are at stake are the future pensions and retiree health benefits of city workers who now appear to be in battle with the Governor. Unions have accused the governor of using bankruptcy to try to seize power. ***This story is ongoing...***

SPEAKING

Think of three things you know about Detroit, USA. Go round the room swapping details with others.

LISTENING – WRITING - DICTATION

The teacher will read some lines of the article slowly to the class.

READING

Students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

SPEAKING - UNDERSTANDING

1) The article – Students check any unknown vocabulary or phrases with the teacher.

2) The article - Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- 1) What is the article about?
- 2) What do you think about the article?
- 3) Was this an easy or difficult article to understand?
- 4) Was this a boring or interesting article?
- 5) Discuss the article.

3) Article quiz - Students quiz each other in pairs. Score a point for each correct answer. Score half a point each time you have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A questions

- 1) Where is Detroit?
- 2) Name the Governor.
- 3) How much is the debt?
- 4) What is at stake?
- 5) Who are the 'only' winners?

Student B questions

- 1) What does 'an economic basket case' mean?
- 2) Explain the meaning of 'Motor City'.
- 3) Name the car manufacturer.
- 4) How many properties lie abandoned?
- 5) Sum up what the Governor said.

*****Strictly speaking the main beneficiaries are future Detroit taxpayers who won't have to pay down old debts.***

Category: Business / Economic / Detroit – USA
Level: Intermediate / Upper Intermediate

Detroit files for bankruptcy – 20th July 2013

WRITING / SPEAKING

In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with '**Detroit**'. *One-two minutes.* Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

WRITING / SPEAKING

In pairs – Think of three positive things about Detroit. Write them below. Talk about them!

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Add three negative things about Detroit.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

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

SPEAKING - VISION

In pairs / groups – There is going to be an 'Open Forum' in the University of Michigan next week. The subject of the forum is called 'Detroit - The way forward...' The guest speaker will be the Governor of Detroit Rick Snyder.

During the debate several groups will present their vision of how they see the future of Detroit.

Your group is attending the forum. You need to prepare a vision of how to help the city recover from its current economic mess. Prepare and present your vision in class... *10 mins.*

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) Is Detroit 'an economic basket case'?
- 3) Would you like to go to Detroit?
- 4) What is Detroit best known for?
- 5) Why is Detroit in such a mess?
- 6) Would you buy an American car?
- 7) What should the American government do to help Detroit?
- 8) Why do Americans like to file lawsuits against each other?
- 9) Do you know of any other city that is run down like Detroit? Why so?
- 10) Have you learnt anything in today's English lesson?

SPEAKING – ROLEPLAY 1

In groups. One of you is the interviewer. The others are one of the following people. You are in the *BBC America TV* studio. Today's interview is about: *Detroit files for bankruptcy.*

- 1) An retired white Detroit city employee
- 2) President Obama
- 3) Republican Governor Rick Snyder
- 4) A young unemployed black person from Detroit.

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

SPEAKING - ROLEPLAY 2

In pairs. You are in a Starbucks café in Detroit with a friend. Start a conversation about the city filing for bankruptcy. *5 mins.*

SPEAKING

On the board – List 10 things about Detroit. Talk about them.

SPEAKING - DISCUSSION

Allow 10 minutes – As a class.

Discuss the following...

- Why is Detroit an economic basket case?
- Discuss the causes of Detroit's decline
- What future does the city have?

The teacher can moderate the session.

DISCUSSION

Student B questions

- 1) Will Detroit ever be great again?
- 2) What famous '60s sound' came from Detroit?
- 3) Is the Governor right to do what he did?
- 4) What is the latest on this news story?
- 5) Why have people moved out from the centre of Detroit to the suburbs?
- 6) Why has Detroit become so run-down?
- 7) Is Michigan the "Comeback State"?
- 8) Think of three famous music artists or groups that came from Detroit?
- 9) Has this been a difficult lesson in English for you to understand?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

GAP FILL: READING

Detroit files for bankruptcy

Detroit used to be home of the once-(1)___ American automobile industry. Known as Motor City, USA, the city has now applied for (2)__. For decades it has been struggling with (3)___ debts, which now total US\$18.5 billion (14 billion Euros).

While General Motors still has its headquarters there the city today is in a sorry state. (4)___ (5)___ is everywhere. Some 70,000 properties lie abandoned. People have moved out to the (6)___ or beyond due to no work in Detroit. The once great city is now regarded as an economic basket case. Its public services are near collapse.

With no money from property taxes the city's decline is indeed stark. There is no money for ambulances and 40% of the street lights are burnt out. The city is being forced to sell off what it can to pay off its creditors. The mess will take years to sort out. The only winners are the American (7)___ filing (8)___ against the city.

decline / urban / lawyers / suburbs / spiralling / lawsuits / bankruptcy / thriving

Republican Governor Rick Snyder on Friday said the city had filed for bankruptcy because it was "(1)___ (2)___". Governor Snyder said, "There has been a long period of decline. It's time to do something about it. We're the (3)___ State in Michigan, but to be a great State, we need Detroit on the path to being a great city again." He added, "Now is the opportunity to stop 60 years of decline. We will come out with a stronger, better Detroit and a (4)___ to grow this city. The (5)___ of not just this city but the State deserve it."

What are at (6)___ are the future pensions and retiree health (7)___ of city workers who now appear to be in battle with the Governor. Unions have accused the governor of using bankruptcy to try to (8)___ power.

This story is ongoing...

stake / comeback / broke / seize / basically / citizens / benefits / format

GAP FILL: GRAMMAR

Detroit files for bankruptcy

Detroit used to be home of the once-thriving American automobile industry. Known as Motor City, USA, the city has now applied for bankruptcy. For decades it has been struggling with spiralling debts, (1)___ now total US\$18.5 billion (14 billion Euros).

(2)___ General Motors (3)___ has its headquarters there the city today is in a sorry state. Urban decline is everywhere. (4)___ 70,000 properties lie abandoned. People have moved out to the suburbs or beyond due to no work in Detroit. The once great city is now regarded as an economic basket case. Its public services are near collapse.

(5)___ no money from property taxes the city's decline is indeed stark. (6)___ is no money for ambulances and 40% of the street lights are burnt out. The city is being forced to sell off (7)___ it can to pay off its creditors. The mess will take years to sort out. The (8)___ winners are the American lawyers filing lawsuits against the city.

with / only / what / while / there / which / still / some /

Republican Governor Rick Snyder on Friday said the city had filed (1)___ bankruptcy because it was "basically broke". Governor Snyder said, "There has been (2)___ long period of decline. It's time to do something about it. We're the comeback State in Michigan, (3)___ to be a great State, we need Detroit on the path to being a great city again." (4)___ added, "Now is the opportunity to stop 60 years of decline. (5)___ will come out with a stronger, better Detroit and a format to grow this city. The citizens of not just this city but the State deserve (6)___."

What are (7)___ stake are the future pensions and retiree health benefits of city workers (8)___ now appear to be in battle with the Governor. Unions have accused the governor of using bankruptcy to try to seize power. ***This story is ongoing...***

we / at / he / it / but / for / who / a

GAP FILL: LISTENING

Detroit files for bankruptcy

Detroit used to be home of _____ American automobile industry. Known as Motor City, USA, the city has now applied for bankruptcy. For decades it has been struggling with spiralling debts, which now total US\$18.5 billion (14 billion Euros).

While _____ has its headquarters there the city today is in a sorry state. Urban decline is everywhere. Some 70,000 properties lie abandoned. People have moved out to the suburbs or beyond due to no work in Detroit. The once great city is now regarded as an _____. Its public services are near collapse.

With no money from _____ city's decline is indeed stark. There is no money for ambulances and 40% of the street lights are burnt out. The city is being forced to sell off what it can to pay off its creditors. The mess will take years to sort out. The only winners are the American _____ against the city.

Republican Governor Rick Snyder on Friday said the city had filed for bankruptcy because it was "_____". Governor Snyder said, "There has been a long period of decline. It's time to do something about it. We're _____ in Michigan, but to be a great State, we need Detroit on the path to being a great city again." He added, "Now is the opportunity to stop 60 years of decline. We will come out with a stronger, better Detroit and a format to grow this city. The citizens of not just this city but _____."

What are at stake are the future pensions and _____ of city workers who now appear to be in battle with the Governor. Unions have accused the governor of using bankruptcy to _____. ***This story is ongoing...***

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WRITING/SPELLING

WRITING / SPEAKING

1) Music - *In pairs/As a class* – Talk about the following: *The music of Motor City. 5 mins.*

- a) Motown - *Diana Ross and The Supremes / The Four Tops / Marvin Gaye / Stevie Wonder / Smokey Robinson and the Miracles / Martha Reeves*
- b) Iggy Pop
- c) Techno – abandoned warehouses and car factories
- d) Eminem – Hip Hop

2) Cars – Think of 10 great American cars that were built in Detroit – List them on the board – Talk about them. *5 mins.*

3) Homework - Write and send a 200 word email to your teacher about: ***Detroit files for bankruptcy.*** Your email can be read out in class.

GAP FILL READING

- 1) thriving
- 2) bankruptcy
- 3) spiralling
- 4) urban
- 5) decline
- 6) suburbs
- 7) lawyers
- 8) lawsuits

SPELLING

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards check your answers.

- 1) once
- 2) thriving
- 3) automobile
- 4) known
- 5) bankruptcy
- 6) struggling
- 7) spiralling
- 8) seize
- 9) headquarters
- 10) sorry

ANSWERS

- 1) basically
- 2) broke
- 3) comeback
- 4) format
- 5) citizens
- 6) stake
- 7) benefits
- 8) seize

SPELLING

Use the following ratings:

Pass = 12

Good = 15

Very good = 18

Excellent = 20

- 11) urban
- 12) decline
- 13) everywhere
- 14) properties
- 15) suburbs
- 16) collapse
- 17) stark
- 18) ambulances
- 19) lawsuits
- 20) opportunity

Detroit files for bankruptcy – *20th July 2013*