

Devastating oil slick hits US coastline

A massive oil slick in the Gulf of Mexico has now hit several US state coastlines. The slick has been caused by a leaking oil pipeline. It follows a huge explosion aboard the BP (British Petroleum) operated Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico. The rig sank on April 22, two days after a huge explosion that killed 11 workers. US President Barack Obama has flown down to see for himself exactly how bad the spill is and to meet the boss of BP. The US President puts the blame firmly on the shoulders of BP who he says will be held personally responsible. Choppy seas and strong winds have so far hampered the clean-up operation. BP has been severely criticised for under estimating the scale of the crisis. The sheer size of the oil spill threatens the very way of life for people all along the shorelines of Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi and Florida. The US state of Louisiana has been hit the hardest, which itself is still battling to recover after hurricane Katrina hit the area in 2005.

The US coastguard said initially that between 50,000 and 200,000 barrels a day were leaking from the pipeline that itself is leaking in at least three places along it. However, no one knows exactly how much really is leaking; only that it is a huge amount of oil. In fact, the sheer disaster far exceeds the Exxon Valdez oil disaster of 1989 when the stricken ship hit a reef off Alaska. Its crude oil then spilled, hitting the Canadian and US pacific coastlines, causing a massive environmental disaster. Louisiana's Wetlands host a multi billion fisheries industry and are a prime spawning area for fish, crabs, shrimp, and oyster beds. BP has launched the 'largest maritime mop-up operation' ever. So far, more than 76 boats have tried to contain the spill with millions of meters of booms being used to contain the oil. Five planes have been used; each spraying oil dispersants. Rescue centres have taken in sea birds covered in oil. Environmental groups say the impact will be felt for a long time. So far, with the size of the leak exceeding the size of Puerto Rico, BP has failed to contain the oil leak. BP said it could take three months to sink a new well to plug the oil leak.

Category: Gulf of Mexico / US states / BP oil leak disaster
Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

EXERCISES

1. Gulf of Mexico oil leak: Think of three things you know about the Gulf of Mexico oil leak? What are the environmental effects? Go round the room swapping details.

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 two - 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 - we 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?
- c) What is the latest on this story?

(Look on Google maps to locate the area)

6. Let's think! With your partner think of five US states on the Gulf of Mexico. Draw a map of them on the board. Think of five things about the Gulf of Mexico.

Five US states on the Gulf of Mexico	Five things you know about the Gulf of Mexico
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 think! Oil Disasters: With your partner think of two other oil disasters. Write them below. Discuss together. What are your conclusions?

1	2
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The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

8. Let's debate: In pairs: The issue: **Is enough being done to prevent environmental disasters?** Debate together. *5 mins.*

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

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9. 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) Name the US states.
- 2) How many barrels of oil a day were leaking?
- 3) What does BP stand for?
- 4) What happened on April 22?
- 5) What happened in 2005?
- 6) What happened in 1989?

Student B

- 1) Where are the wetlands?
- 2) Name the seafood mentioned.
- 3) Briefly, describe the mop-up operation.
- 4) What did the US President say?
- 5) How big *is/was* the leak?
- 6) Which state has been hit the hardest? Why?

10. Let's draw: In pairs: On the board draw an oil well. Label it. Discuss what each feature you label does. Then add five ways to stop an oil leak.

11. Let's think! Look at the list below. In small groups discuss how the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico will affect each of them. What conclusion do you come to?

1	Tourism	6	Fishing
2	Oil exploration	7	Petrochemical industry
3	Oil rig drilling	8	Economy
4	Natural areas - Wetlands	9	Wildlife
5	Ports	10	Estuaries

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

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

- a) The crude oil _____
- b) The US coastline _____
- c) Fishing boats _____
- d) The pipeline _____

13. Quickfire session: In a group the teacher asks students, "**The Gulf of Mexico oil rig disaster...**"

14. Let's talk! In a pub: *In pairs:* You are in a pub in New Orleans discussing **the Gulf of Mexico oil rig disaster**. One of you is a fisherman. The other is an oil man. *5-minutes.*

15. Let's write! An e-mail: Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **Gulf of Mexico oil rig disaster** in your country. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) What do you think of the oil leak?
- 3) Why did BP not act sooner?
- 4) How bad is the disaster?
- 5) Should BP pull in more resources to contain the oil leak?
- 6) What impact will the oil leak have?
- 7) Should BP pay for the clean up operation? Why? Why not?
- 8) What three bits of advice would you give the boss of BP?
- 9) If you were the US President what would you say to the boss of BP?
- 10) If you were a fisherman what would you say to the boss of BP?

Student B questions

- 1) What's the latest on this story?
- 2) What will happen to the Wetlands?
- 3) How can the oil slick be contained?
- 4) How will the weather help the situation?
- 5) What other two oil spills do you know of?
- 6) Why did the rescue effort not cap the leak sooner?
- 7) What lessons can be learnt from this disaster?
- 8) Should more oil drilling be allowed so near to land? Why? Why not?
- 9) Would you want to eat fish caught from the contaminated area, even if it was deemed 'safe'?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's brainstorm! Impact of the oil disaster

Allow 10-20 minutes - Small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

Brainstorm some ideas about **the Gulf of Mexico oil rig disaster**. Choose a spokesperson who can present your ideas to the class at the end of your preparation. Present it visually or use the board etc... Try to be imaginative!

Five environmental issues

Five different clean up operations

Five sea foods caught in the Wetlands

Five ways to stop the oil leak

Five jobs likely to be lost

Five ways to help seabirds etc...

The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

A _____ oil slick in the Gulf of Mexico has now hit several US state coastlines. The slick has been caused by a leaking oil _____. It follows a huge explosion aboard the BP (British Petroleum) operated Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico. The rig sank on April 22, two days after a huge explosion that killed 11 workers. US President Barack Obama has flown down to see for himself exactly how bad the _____ is and to meet the boss of BP. The US President puts the blame firmly on the shoulders of BP who he says will be held personally _____. _____ seas and strong winds have so far hampered the clean-up operation. BP has been severely criticised for under estimating the scale of the _____. The sheer size of the oil spill threatens the very way of life for people all along the _____ of Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi and Florida. The US state of Louisiana has been hit the hardest, which itself is still battling to recover after _____ Katrina hit the area in 2005.

The US coastguard said initially that between 50,000 and 200,000 _____ a day were leaking from the pipeline that itself is leaking in at least three places along it. However, no one knows exactly how much really is _____; only that it is a huge amount of oil. In fact, the _____ disaster far exceeds the Exxon Valdez oil disaster of 1989 when the stricken ship hit a reef off Alaska. Its crude oil then spilled, hitting the Canadian and US pacific coastlines, causing a massive environmental disaster. Louisiana's _____ host a multi billion _____ industry and are a prime spawning area for fish, crabs, shrimp, and oyster beds. BP has launched the 'largest maritime mop-up operation' ever. So far, more than 76 boats have tried to contain the spill with millions of meters of _____ being used to contain the oil. Five planes have been used; each spraying oil dispersants. Rescue centres have taken in sea birds covered in oil. _____ groups say the impact will be felt for a long time. So far, with the size of the leak exceeding the size of Puerto Rico, BP has failed to contain the oil leak. BP said it could take three months to sink a new well to _____ the oil leak.

crisis

spill

responsible

choppy

shorelines

pipeline

hurricane

massive

leaking

fisheries

booms

Wetlands

environmental

plug

barrels

sheer

GAP FILL: LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Devastating oil slick hits US coastline

A massive oil slick in _____ has now hit several US state coastlines. The slick has been caused by a leaking oil pipeline. It follows a huge explosion aboard the BP (British Petroleum) operated Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico. The rig sank on April 22, two days after a huge explosion that killed 11 workers. US President Barack Obama has _____ for himself exactly how bad the spill is and to meet the boss of BP. The US President puts the blame firmly _____ BP who he says will be held personally responsible. _____ winds have so far hampered the clean-up operation. BP has been severely criticised for under estimating the scale of the crisis. The sheer size of the oil spill threatens the _____ people all along the shorelines of Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi and Florida. The US state of Louisiana has been hit the hardest, which itself is still battling to recover after _____ hit the area in 2005.

The US coastguard said initially that between 50,000 and 200,000 barrels a day were leaking from the pipeline that itself is leaking in at least three places along it. However, no one knows exactly how much really is leaking; only that it is _____. In fact, the sheer disaster far exceeds the Exxon Valdez oil disaster of 1989 when the stricken ship hit a reef off Alaska. Its crude oil then spilled, hitting the Canadian and US pacific coastlines, causing a massive _____. Louisiana's Wetlands host a multi billion _____ and are a prime spawning area for fish, crabs, shrimp, and oyster beds. BP has launched the 'largest maritime mop-up operation' ever. So far, more than 76 boats have tried to contain the spill with millions of meters of booms being used to contain the oil. Five planes have been used; each _____. Rescue centres have taken in sea birds covered in oil. Environmental groups say the impact will be felt for a long time. So far, with the size of the leak exceeding the _____, BP has failed to contain the oil leak. BP said it could take three months to sink a new well _____.

GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Devastating oil slick hits US coastline

(1)___ massive oil slick in the Gulf of Mexico has now hit several US state coastlines. The slick has been caused (2)___ a leaking oil pipeline. It follows a huge explosion aboard the BP (British Petroleum) operated Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico. The rig sank on April 22, two days after a huge explosion that killed 11 workers. US President Barack Obama has flown down to see for himself exactly (3)___ bad the spill is and to meet the boss of BP. The US President puts the blame firmly on the shoulders of BP who (4)___ says will be held personally responsible. Choppy seas and strong winds have (5)___ far hampered the clean-up operation. BP has been severely criticised for under estimating the scale of the crisis. The sheer size (6)___ the oil spill threatens the very way of life (7)___ people all along the shorelines of Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi and Florida. The US state of Louisiana has been hit the hardest, which itself is still battling to recover after hurricane Katrina hit (8)___ area in 2005.

The US coastguard said initially (1)___ between 50,000 and 200,000 barrels a day were leaking from the pipeline that itself is leaking in at least three places along it. (2)___, no one knows exactly how much really is leaking; (3)___ that it is a huge amount of oil. In fact, the sheer disaster far exceeds the Exxon Valdez oil disaster of 1989 when the stricken ship hit a reef off Alaska. Its crude oil (4)___ spilled, hitting the Canadian and US pacific coastlines, causing a massive environmental disaster. Louisiana's Wetlands host a multi billion fisheries industry and are a prime spawning area for fish, crabs, shrimp, and oyster beds. BP has launched the 'largest maritime mop-up operation' ever. So far, (5)___ (6)___ 76 boats have tried to contain the spill with millions of meters of booms being used to contain the oil. Five planes have been used; each spraying oil dispersants. Rescue centres have taken in sea birds covered in oil. Environmental groups say the impact will be felt for a long time. So far, (7)___ the size of the leak exceeding the size of Puerto Rico, BP has failed to contain the oil leak. BP said it (8)___ take three months to sink a new well to plug the oil leak.

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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	environmental	11	booms
2	impact	12	oyster
3	spawning	13	fisheries industry
4	Louisiana	14	sheer
5	shrimp	15	hurricane
6	massive	16	shoulders
7	wetlands	17	responsible
8	dispersants	18	devastating
9	coastguard	19	choppy
10	crisis	20	personally

LINKS

<http://www.greenrightnow.com/kabc/2010/04/30/oil-disaster-could-destroy-gulf-of-mexico-fishery-natural-areas-tourism/>

<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0001451.html>

<http://feww.wordpress.com/2010/04/27/gulf-of-mexico-oil-leak-update-apr-27/>

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/environment/article7112465.ece>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8651624.stm>

ANSWERS

GAP FILL: Devastating oil slick hits US coastline: A **massive** oil slick in the Gulf of Mexico has now hit several US state coastlines. The slick has been caused by a leaking oil **pipeline**. It follows a huge explosion aboard the BP (British Petroleum) operated Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico. The rig sank on April 22, two days after a huge explosion that killed 11 workers. US President Barack Obama has flown down to see for himself exactly how bad the **spill** is and to meet the boss of BP. The US President puts the blame firmly on the shoulders of BP who he says will be held personally **responsible**. **Choppy** seas and strong winds have so far hampered the clean-up operation. BP has been severely criticised for under estimating the scale of the **crisis**. The sheer size of the oil spill threatens the very way of life for people all along the **shorelines** of Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi and Florida. The US state of Louisiana has been hit the hardest, which itself is still battling to recover after **hurricane** Katrina hit the area in 2005.

The US coastguard said initially that between 50,000 and 200,000 **barrels** a day were leaking from the pipeline that itself is leaking in at least three places along it. However, no one knows exactly how much really is **leaking**; only that it is a huge amount of oil. In fact, the **sheer** disaster far exceeds the Exxon Valdez oil disaster of 1989 when the stricken ship hit a reef off Alaska. Its crude oil then spilled, hitting the Canadian and US pacific coastlines, causing a massive environmental disaster. Louisiana's **Wetlands** host a multi billion **fisheries** industry and are a prime spawning area for fish, crabs, shrimp, and oyster beds. BP has launched the 'largest maritime mop-up operation' ever. So far, more than 76 boats have tried to contain the spill with millions of meters of **booms** being used to contain the oil. Five planes have been used; each spraying oil dispersants. Rescue centres have taken in sea birds covered in oil. **Environmental** groups say the impact will be felt for a long time. So far, with the size of the leak exceeding the size of Puerto Rico, BP has failed to contain the oil leak. BP said it could take three months to sink a new well to **plug** the oil leak.

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