

Looking back at the Paralympics – London 2012

Did you watch the Paralympics that were held in London recently? I did - but oddly many of my students surprisingly did not. Like many other Brits I watched the opening ceremony, which like the Olympic Games opening ceremony I thought was breathtaking to watch. Entitled 'Enlightenment' - it featured the actor Sir Ian McKellan and Professor Stephen Hawking, the British physicist and author. Both played their parts in the theatrical and musical extravaganza that was inspired by Shakespeare's 'The Tempest'. Thousands of umbrellas were used that typified the British weather.

During the evening Her Majesty The Queen declared the event open from the Olympic Stadium in Stratford, East London. Some 4,200 Paralympians from 165 nations took part including 16 countries that entered teams for the first time. Margaret Maughan, Britain's first ever Paralympics champion lit the flame.

Throughout the 10 day games the British appeared to take the Paralympics 'to their hearts'. An extra 10,000 tickets were snapped up daily within minutes of being issued. I must say it was refreshing to see the stadiums full. Many Brits travelled to the event on the railways to give it their support. People were jovially queuing at railway stations buying railway tickets to the games in London. On hand were thousands of 'London 2012' volunteers who have helped throughout both events.

Host broadcaster Channel 4 in the UK had to increase its daily coverage midway through the games such was the demand from viewers who wanted more. In fact, the opening ceremony saw 11.2 million viewers watching, making it the channel's most watched programme of the decade.

The Paralympics grew out of the sport introduced at the National Spinal Injuries Centre at the Stoke Mandeville Hospital in England in 1944 as an aid for rehabilitation. Four years later it was renamed the Stoke Mandeville Games, with two teams of former British servicemen and servicewomen taking part. This turned into an annual event. In 1960, the first Paralympics were held in Rome following the Olympic Games with 400 athletes from 23 countries taking part.

Category: Sport / Paralympics / London 2012

Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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EXERCISES

1. The Paralympics - London 2012: Think of three things you know about the Paralympics – London 2012. 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?
- c) **Discuss the article**

6. The Paralympics - London 2012: In pairs choose five things from the article. Then add five thoughts of your own. Write them below. Discuss together.

From the article	Your thoughts
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: Sport FM: In pairs/groups. One of you is the interviewer. The others are one of the following people. You are in the *Sport FM* radio studio in London. Today's interview is about: *The Paralympics – London 2012*.

1	Paralympics organiser	3	The Mayor of London
2	A Londoner	4	An athlete taking part

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 **The Paralympics**. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

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9. Let's roleplay 2: In pairs. You are in a bar in the Olympic Village in Stratford, East London. Start a conversation about *'the Paralympics - London 2012'*. 5-minutes.

10. The rules and scores: In pairs choose three of the sports played at the Paralympics. Discuss some of the rules. What makes the sport different to how it is normally played? How is it scored?

11. 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 was the name of the opening ceremony?
- 2) Who opened the Paralympics?
- 3) How many days were the games on for?
- 4) How many nations took part?
- 5) How many athletes took part?

Student B

- 1) Name the UK broadcaster.
- 2) Who were on hand at railway stations?
- 3) What happened in 1960?
- 4) What happened in 1944?
- 5) Who is Margaret Maughan?

12. Best bits of the Paralympics - London 2012: Choose three of your favourite bits of the games. Discuss and compare with your partner

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

13. An athlete's day: Imagine you were an athlete taking part in the Paralympics - London 2012. Describe to your partner your particular sport, your preparation for it, the selection process that got you travelling to London, the actual race/game, who watched you, your result, etc... *Swap around.*

14. An evening at the Paralympics: In pairs, imagine you spent an evening at Paralympics. Discuss what you saw!

15. Let's write an e-mail: Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: ***The Paralympics - London 2012***. 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 Paralympics _____
- b) The opening ceremony _____
- c) The athletes _____

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) What did you think of the opening ceremony at the Paralympics - London 2012?
- 3) How did the opening ceremony differ from Beijing 2008?
- 4) Which Paralympics have you been watching?
- 5) Which is your favourite Paralympics sport?
- 6) Which Paralympics does your country excel in?
- 7) How many gold medals did your country win?
- 8) How do you think the athletes felt at the Paralympics opening ceremony in London?
- 9) What was the best bit of the Paralympics opening ceremony in London?
- 10) Have you learnt anything in today's English lesson?

Student B questions

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) Will you be going to visit London this year?
- 3) Which were your favourite Paralympics? Why?
- 4) Can you think of any 'special moments' during these games?
- 5) There was a discussion that British athletes in wheelchairs had an unfair advantage over Jamaican athletes who could not afford 'state of the art' wheelchairs. Should competing athletes using wheelchairs all have the same chairs? Did the British or other similar teams have an unfair advantage? Explain!
- 6) Who is your favourite Paralympics sportsman?
- 7) Who is your favourite Paralympics sportswoman?
- 8) Which sports event do you think drew the highest number of TV viewers? Explain.
- 9) What challenges lay ahead for the next Paralympics in Rio in 2016?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's discuss! The London 2012 Paralympics

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

20 things about the London 2012 Paralympics

The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING:

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

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During the evening Her Majesty The Queen declared the event open from the Olympic Stadium in Stratford, East London. Some 4,200 Paralympians from 165 (6)_____ took part including 16 countries that entered (7)_____ for the first time. Margaret Maughan, Britain's first ever Paralympics champion lit the (8)_____.

Throughout the 10 day games the British appeared to take the Paralympics 'to their (1)_____'. An extra 10,000 tickets were snapped up daily within minutes of being issued. I must say it was refreshing to see the (2)_____ full. Many Brits travelled to the event on the railways to give it their (3)_____. People were (4)_____ queuing at railway stations buying railway tickets to the games in London. On hand were thousands of 'London 2012' (5)_____ who have helped throughout both events.

Host (6)_____ Channel 4 in the UK had to increase its daily coverage midway through the games such was the demand from viewers who wanted more. In fact, the opening ceremony saw 11.2 million viewers watching, making it the channel's most watched (7)_____ of the (8)_____.

extravaganza

actor

nations

ceremony

teams

flame

umbrellas

Paralympics

volunteers

jovially

support

hearts

decade

programme

stadiums

broadcaster

GAP FILL: LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

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GRAMMAR:

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

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During the evening Her Majesty The Queen declared the event open (5)___ the Olympic Stadium in Stratford, East London. (6)___ 4,200 Paralympians from 165 nations took part including 16 countries (7)___ entered teams for the first time. Margaret Maughan, Britain's first ever Paralympics champion lit the flame.

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Host broadcaster Channel 4 in the UK had to increase (5)___ daily coverage midway through the games such was the demand from viewers (6)___ wanted more. (7)___ fact, the opening ceremony saw 11.2 million viewers watching, making it the channel's most watched programme (8)___ the decade.

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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	extravaganza	11	rehabilitation
2	umbrellas	12	typified
3	broadcaster	13	annual
4	athletes	14	midway
5	surprisingly	15	jovially
6	ceremony	16	queuing
7	stadiums	17	viewers
8	volunteers	18	Paralympics
9	enlightenment	19	throughout
10	champion	20	breathtaking

LINKS

<http://www.london2012.com/paralympics/spectators/ceremonies/opening-ceremony/>
<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/london-2012-shakespeares-the-tempest-1281567>
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/sport/2012/aug/29/london-2012-paralympics-opening-ceremony>
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/in-pictures-19417144>
<http://www.channel4.com/programmes/paralympics-on-4od/4od>
<http://paralympics.channel4.com/news-pictures/pictures/day=1/index.html>
<http://www.channel4.com/news/paralympic-games>

ANSWERS

GAP FILL: Looking back at the Paralympics – London 2012: Did you watch the **Paralympics** that were held in London recently? I did - but oddly many of my students surprisingly did not. Like many other Brits I watched the opening **ceremony**, which like the Olympic Games opening ceremony I thought was breathtaking to watch. Entitled 'Enlightenment' - it featured the **actor** Sir Ian McKellan and Professor Stephen Hawking, the British physicist and author. Both played their parts in the theatrical and musical **extravaganza** that was inspired by Shakespeare's 'The Tempest'. Thousands of **umbrellas** were used that typified the British weather.

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Throughout the 10 day games the British appeared to take the Paralympics 'to their **hearts**'. An extra 10,000 tickets were snapped up daily within minutes of being issued. I must say it was refreshing to see the **stadiums** full. Many Brits travelled to the event on the railways to give it their **support**. People were **jovially** queuing at railway stations buying railway tickets to the games in London. On hand were thousands of 'London 2012' **volunteers** who have helped throughout both events.

Host **broadcaster** Channel 4 in the UK had to increase its daily coverage midway through the games such was the demand from viewers who wanted more. In fact, the opening ceremony saw 11.2 million viewers watching, making it the channel's most watched **programme** of the **decade**. (V2)

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