

### Russia burns: Moscow under smog: Grain export ban

The heat wave that has gripped Russia this summer continues. As a result devastating fires continue to burn continuously right across Central Russia. The fires have caused havoc. There has been no rain for months. In parts, the land resembled the results of implementing a 'scorched earth policy'. Thousands of people have lost their homes in 14 regions of Russia over the past few days. Up to 2,000 homes have been destroyed in the blazes.

The Russian capital hasn't escaped the fires horrendous effect. Moscow has been under smog. The government has issued a health warning to Muscovites; advising them to stay inside and avoid physical exertion, as smog from the worst wildfires in modern history smothers the city. Haze and smoke have spread through Moscow's streets, even seeping into the Metro network. Some people are wearing face masks indoors. The fires meanwhile show no sign of abating. Fire crews are still fighting to extinguish nearly 900 fires across central Russia. Of these, 39 were peat bog fires, 27 of them in the Moscow region alone, accounting for the acrid smoke choking the capital. The wildfires have cost over 52 lives.

The Russian President Dmitry Medvedev sacked several top military officials for failing to stop wildfires from destroying a naval base in Kolomna, 100km south-east of Moscow. His announcement was made after he halted his summer holiday to return to Moscow for emergency talks on the wildfires which continue to rage. Mr Medvedev said commanders of the base were absent when the fire occurred and that it was "unclear where they were".

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has introduced a temporary ban on grain exports from mid-August to mid-December after the drought and fire devastated one-fifth of Russia's grain crop. The ban was introduced by him following his tour of some the worst areas hit by the fires. Russia is one of the biggest producers of wheat, barley and rye. It exported nearly a quarter of its 2009 grain output. Mr Putin's announcement sent grain prices to a 23 week high. As a result bread prices are likely to increase worldwide. Russia is the second biggest world producer of grain after the USA.

**Category: Russia / Moscow / Devastating fires**

**Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate**

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## EXERCISES

**1. Russian fires:** Briefly, what three things do you know about the recent fires in Russia? Go round the room swapping details.

**2. Geography: Russia:** Where is Russia? What is its capital? What countries surround it? What seas surround it? Who is its President? Who is its Prime Minister? 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 - we 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 ways to put out a fire. Then add five places in Russia you think the summer fires have affected life the most. Write them below. Explain to your partner why you chose these.

Five ways to put out a fire	Five places in Russia worst affected
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 discuss: Heat wave:** In pairs. Think of four ways to beat a heat wave. Compare and discuss together with your partner.

1	3
2	4

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

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9. **Let's think:** In *pairs/ groups* think of as many songs, artists, DVDs or films with the word **fire**, or **Russia** or **Moscow** in them. Write your findings on the board.

10. **Let's think!** Swap partners. With your new partner on the board think of as many uses for '**Russian fires**' as you can. Write them on the board. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

11. **Let's talk! Radio Moscow:** *In pairs/threes*. Imagine you are in the Radio Moscow studio. One of you is the presenter. The other student is a villager from a village near Moscow that has been lost to fire. Describe how you managed to escape etc... The third person can be a Muscovite\* - describe the situation in Moscow recently e.g. the haze, the smog, wearing a mask etc... (\*see p4). *5-minutes*.

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) Name the Russian President and the Russian Prime Minister.
- 2) What do we mean by a 'scorched earth policy'?
- 3) How many regions have been affected?
- 4) How many homes have been destroyed?
- 5) How many fires have there been?

**Student B**

- 1) What happened in Moscow?
- 2) Why did the Russian Prime Minister ban the export of wheat?
- 3) Who got sacked?
- 4) What was the health warning given?
- 5) Who stopped his holiday and why?

13. **A day in Moscow during the fires:** In pairs/groups. Choose to be one of the following people. Create a short story about them. Tell it to your partner/group. Try to make it interesting! Students try to interlink **or** interact student storylines!

1	A Muscovite** (**see p4)	3	Russian President/PM
2	Fire fighter	4	Russian journalist

**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: **Russian fires**. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

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

- a) The fires \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Moscow \_\_\_\_\_
- c) The President of Russia \_\_\_\_\_

## DISCUSSION

### Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) Have you ever encountered a wildfire? If yes, when and where?
- 3) How have the hot summer temperatures affected you?
- 4) Should rain-making chemicals have been used to help to put out the fires in Russia?
- 5) If you lost your house due to fire what would you do?
- 6) Do you think the Russian government should be doing more to help the people affected by the fires?
- 7) How critical are you on the response and help given by the Russian government?
- 8) What three lessons have been learnt in Russia by these terrible fires?
- 9) How safe is Moscow for Muscovites\*\* and their health? (\*\*see below)
- 10) Is this tragedy because of global warming? Explain.

### Student B questions

- 1) What do you think of what you read?
- 2) What three bits of advice would you give the Russian President?
- 3) Was Mr Putin right to stop Russian grain exports? Explain.
- 4) Was the Russian President right to halt his holiday to head the emergency?
- 5) How modern is the Russian fire service?
- 6) Would you have helped to put out the fire if you had lived nearby?
- 7) Have you ever had to put out a fire? If yes, where and when?
- 8) Have you ever had to wear a mask? If yes, when?
- 9) What three bits of advice would you give Muscovites\*\*? (\*\*see below)
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

**Note \*\*** from pages 1, 3, 4 - A *person from Moscow* is called a Muscovite\*\* in English or Moskvich in Russian

## SPEAKING

Let's debate! Russia

*Allow 10-20 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1*

Debate the following: - Russia

Think of ten topical subjects about Russia. Write them on the board. Then briefly discuss each one together. What are your conclusions? Is Russia changing for the better or worse? Why?

The teacher can moderate the session.

## GAP FILL: READING

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

The heat wave that has gripped Russia this summer continues. As a result devastating (1)\_\_\_\_\_ continue to burn continuously right across Central Russia. The fires have caused (2)\_\_\_\_\_. There has been no rain for months. In parts, the land resembled the results of implementing a 'scorched earth policy'. Thousands of people have lost their homes in 14 regions of Russia over the past few days. Up to 2,000 homes have been destroyed in the blazes.

*acrid*

*haze*

*abating*

*choking*

The Russian capital hasn't escaped the fires horrendous effect. Moscow has been under (3)\_\_\_\_\_. The government has issued a health warning to Muscovites; advising them to stay inside and avoid physical exertion, as smog from the worst wildfires in modern history smothers the city. (4)\_\_\_\_\_ and smoke have spreads through Moscow's streets, even seeping into the Metro network. Some people are wearing face masks indoors. The fires meanwhile show no sign of (5)\_\_\_\_\_. Fire crews are still fighting to (6)\_\_\_\_\_ nearly 900 fires across central Russia. Of these, 39 were peat bog fires, 27 of them in the Moscow region alone, accounting for the (7)\_\_\_\_\_ smoke (8)\_\_\_\_\_ the capital. The wildfires have cost over 52 lives.

*havoc*

*smog*

*fires*

*extinguish*

The Russian President Dmitry Medvedev (1)\_\_\_\_\_ several top military officials for failing to stop wildfires from destroying a naval base in Kolomna, 100km south-east of Moscow. His announcement was made after he halted his summer holiday to return to Moscow for emergency talks on the (2)\_\_\_\_\_ which continue to (3)\_\_\_\_\_. Mr Medvedev said commanders of the base were absent when the fire occurred and that it was "unclear where they were". Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has introduced a temporary ban on grain (4)\_\_\_\_\_ from mid-August to mid-December after the drought and fire devastated one-fifth of Russia's grain (5)\_\_\_\_\_. The ban was introduced by him following his tour of some the (6)\_\_\_\_\_ areas hit by the fires. Russia is one of the biggest producers of wheat, barley and rye. It exported nearly a quarter of its 2009 grain (7)\_\_\_\_\_. Mr Putin's announcement sent grain prices to a 23 week high. As a result bread prices are likely to increase worldwide. Russia is the second biggest world producer of (8)\_\_\_\_\_ after the USA.

*grain*

*crop*

*rage*

*output*

*sacked*

*exports*

*worst*

*wildfires*

## GAP FILL: LISTENING

*Listen and fill in the spaces.*

### Russia burns: Moscow under smog: Grain export ban

The heat wave that \_\_\_\_\_ this summer continues. As a result devastating fires continue to burn continuously right across Central Russia. The fires have caused havoc. There has been no rain for months. In parts, the land resembled the results of implementing a '\_\_\_\_\_'. Thousands of people have lost their homes in 14 regions of Russia over the past few days. Up to 2,000 homes have been destroyed in the blazes. The Russian capital hasn't escaped the fires horrendous effect. Moscow \_\_\_\_\_. The government has issued a health warning to Muscovites; advising them to stay inside and avoid physical exertion, as smog from the worst wildfires in modern history smothers the city. \_\_\_\_\_ have spreads through Moscow's streets, even seeping into the Metro network. Some people are wearing face masks indoors. The fires meanwhile show no sign of abating. Fire crews are still fighting to extinguish nearly 900 fires \_\_\_\_\_. Of these, 39 were peat bog fires, 27 of them in the Moscow region alone, accounting for the acrid smoke choking the capital. The wildfires \_\_\_\_\_ 52 lives.

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## GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

The heat wave (1)\_\_\_ has gripped Russia this summer continues. As a result devastating fires continue to burn continuously right across Central Russia. The fires have caused havoc. (2)\_\_\_ has been no rain for months. In parts, the land resembled the results of implementing a 'scorched earth policy'. Thousands of people have lost (3)\_\_\_ homes in 14 regions of Russia over the past few days. Up to 2,000 homes have been destroyed in the blazes.

**these**

**even**

**through**

**there**

**them**

**their**

**that**

**meanwhile**

The Russian capital hasn't escaped the fires horrendous effect. Moscow has been under smog. The government has issued a health warning to Muscovites; advising (4)\_\_\_ to stay inside and avoid physical exertion, as smog from the worst wildfires in modern history smothers the city. Haze and smoke have spreads (5)\_\_\_ Moscow's streets, (6)\_\_\_ seeping into the Metro network. Some people are wearing face masks indoors. The fires (7)\_\_\_ show no sign of abating. Fire crews are still fighting to extinguish nearly 900 fires across central Russia. Of (8)\_\_\_, 39 were peat bog fires, 27 of them in the Moscow region alone, accounting for the acrid smoke choking the capital. The wildfires have cost over 52 lives.

The Russian President Dmitry Medvedev sacked several top military officials (1)\_\_\_ failing to stop wildfires from destroying a naval base in Kolomna, 100km south-east of Moscow. His announcement was made after he halted his summer holiday to return to Moscow for emergency talks on the wildfires which continue to rage. Mr Medvedev said commanders of (2)\_\_\_ base were absent when the fire occurred (3)\_\_\_ that it was "unclear where they were". Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has introduced a temporary ban (4)\_\_\_ grain exports from mid-August to mid-December after the drought and fire devastated one-fifth of Russia's grain crop. The ban was introduced by (5)\_\_\_ following (6)\_\_\_ tour of some the worst areas hit (7)\_\_\_ the fires. Russia is one of the biggest producers of wheat, barley and rye. It exported nearly a quarter of its 2009 grain output. Mr Putin's announcement sent grain prices to a 23 week high. (8)\_\_\_ a result bread prices are likely to increase worldwide. Russia is the second biggest world producer of grain after the USA.

**and**

**on**

**him**

**as**

**for**

**his**

**by**

**the**

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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	smothers	11	physical
2	horrendous	12	haze
3	resemble	13	seeping
4	havoc	14	extinguish
5	meanwhile	15	wildfires
6	emergency	16	drought
7	temperatures	17	grain
8	devastating	18	blazes
9	announcement	19	abating
10	commanders	20	rage

**LINKS** <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/worldnews/article-1300856/Russian-wildfires-Smog-blankets-Moscow-fires-rage-control-record-heatwave.html>  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-10897116>  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-10879138>  
[http://rt.com/Best\\_Videos/2010-08-01/russia-wildfires-eyewitness-account.html](http://rt.com/Best_Videos/2010-08-01/russia-wildfires-eyewitness-account.html)  
[http://rt.com/Top\\_News/2010-08-07/russia-smog-heat-wildfires.html](http://rt.com/Top_News/2010-08-07/russia-smog-heat-wildfires.html)  
<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/europe/08/06/russia.smog/index.html?hpt=T2#fbid=uT0ukN94rdX&wom=false>

### ANSWERS

GAP FILL: Russia burns: Moscow under smog: Grain export ban: The heat wave that has gripped Russia this summer continues. As a result devastating **fires** continue to burn continuously right across Central Russia. The fires have caused **havoc**. There has been no rain for months. In parts, the land resembled the results of implementing a 'scorched earth policy'. Thousands of people have lost their homes in 14 regions of Russia over the past few days. Up to 2,000 homes have been destroyed in the blazes.

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