

In the news

Lesson description

In this lesson you will hold a discussion to decide on the most pressing problem facing humanity today. You will learn about the Longitude Prize which is offering £10 million to help solve a world problem, and practise some expressions to present and discuss a problem.

Aim

Taking part in a discussion to reach a decision.

Language

Expressions to present a problem, give opinions, agree and disagree.

Task

In this lesson students will discuss problems identified as the most pressing problems facing humanity and decide which one will win a monetary prize.

Materials

Handout

Audio 71.1, 71.2, 71.3

Photocopiable (cards for Task)

Suggested running order

Lead-in	Students look at different prizes and what they are awarded for; listen to a description of Longitude Prize and answer questions; guess what six problems were chosen.
Input	Students brainstorm issue of dementia, answer T/F questions about dementia and listen to audio to answer questions.
Language focus	Students listen again to find expressions for presenting and discussing a problem; complete skeleton sentences to practise the expressions.
Task	Students present one of the problems identified as the most pressing problems facing humanity and decide which one should win the prize.

Lead-in

1 In pairs or groups, students match the award with the area that it is awarded for.

1 c


3 e

5 f

2 a

4 d

6 b

2  Tell students they are going to listen to some information about another prize called The Longitude Prize. Ask them to listen and answer the questions.

- 3 The public had to choose 1 of 6 key scientific problems to receive the research funding. Students predict what the problems were. You could show a graphic with the answers (try searching for 'Newsround Longitude Prize vote to decide biggest science problem', which also has a short and simple clip giving the answers) or tell the students.

Flight: How can we fly without damaging the environment?

Food: How can we ensure everyone has healthy, sustainable food?

Antibiotics: How can we prevent bacteria becoming resistant to antibiotic medicines?

Paralysis: How can we restore movement to people who are paralysed?

Water: How can we ensure everyone has access to safe and clean water?

Dementia: How can we help people with dementia live independently for longer?

Input

- In groups, students brainstorm what they know about dementia and share their ideas with the class
- In pairs or groups, students answer the T/F questions.
- ▶71.2** Students listen to audio 71.2 to check if their answers to the T/F sentences were correct and answer two further questions.
 - 1 True 2 False (every four seconds) 3 True 4 True 5 False (younger people have to look after the older people suffering from the disease)
 - It would be used for developing affordable technological solutions that would enable dementia sufferers to live independently for longer.
 - She thinks they should choose a problem that affects younger people too.

Language focus

- ▶71.3** Students listen to the first part of the previous audio again and gapfill the text.
 - The difficulty that we face is
 - The situation at present is
 - It is a fact that
 - The figures show that
- Ask students to add expressions from 1 to the table and give a title to the other two sections.
 - Expressing an opinion
 - Agreeing/Disagreeing
- Students add the expressions to the appropriate column in the table.

Suggested answers:

Presenting the problem	Expressing an opinion	Agreeing/Disagreeing
<i>The problem we need to solve is ...</i>	<i>If you ask me, we need to ...</i>	<i>I don't entirely agree.</i>
<i>Currently, the situation is ...</i>	<i>I feel, we need to prioritise ...</i>	<i>I couldn't agree more.</i>
	<i>... is much more important than ...</i>	<i>The problem with your idea is that ...</i>
	<i>I'm having second thoughts about ...</i>	

4 Ask students to complete the skeleton sentences. Check in pairs.

Suggested answers:

- 1 *The difficulty we face is that people are living longer, so the number of dementia sufferers is increasing.*
- 2 *We need to employ more dementia carers, if you ask me.*
- 3 *The problem with that idea is that it will cost a lot of money.*
- 4 *It is a fact that 15 people are diagnosed with dementia every minute.*
- 5 *I'm in two minds whether it's better to spend money on funding research or on caring for patients.*
- 6 *You could be right that it doesn't really affect young people.*

Task

- 1 Students work in groups. Divide the class into five more-or-less equal sized groups – the size of the group will depend on the size of your class. Give each group one topic from the photocopiable materials. Ask them to prepare to present their topic.
- 2 Now regroup the class so that there is at least one person to present each topic. There are five topics, so each group should have at least five students. Each student presents their problem and the group discusses which problem should be chosen to win the prize. Remind them that problem six is dementia, which they have looked at already. Each group should come to a decision about which topic should win the prize.
- 3 Groups now present and explain their decisions to the class and try to come to a class decision.
 Tell them that the real decision was announced on 25 June 2014 and the winner was antibiotics. It was announced on BBC's 'The One Show'. Search for 'Antibiotics announced as focus of £10m Longitude Prize' to show a clip.

Review

Feedback on language and review learning objectives.

Audio script

71.1

In 1714, the British government offered £20,000 – a lot of money in those days – to the person who could find a way of accurately calculating a ship's position at sea. It was one of the biggest problems facing sailors at that time. It was won in 1765 by John Harrison, who made a chronometer, a kind of clock, which was unaffected by rough seas.

Three hundred years later a new prize has been launched to encourage inventors and scientists to find solutions to one of six key scientific problems facing the world. The problem which receives the £10 million (€12.5 million) prize money will be chosen by public vote.

71.2

S = Sally, C = Carlos, E = Ellen, F = Felix

S So, what's the next problem? Can you tell us about the one you've been looking at, Carlos?

C Yes. The problem is dementia. Dementia is a slow decline in brain functions, which interferes with people's ability to live a normal life. The difficulty that we face is that not only is it an awful disease, but it is also costing society an increasing amount to look after these people. The situation at present is just about under control, but it is a fact that the problem is growing. The figures show that someone is diagnosed with the disease every four seconds and cases are expected to soar from 44 million now to 135 million by 2050. The challenge would be to develop affordable technological solutions that would enable dementia sufferers to live independently for longer.

F Thanks, Carlos. OK. So, ... what does everyone think about that one?

E Personally, I support this option because it's so important. In my opinion, it's a problem which is going to touch us all in some way or another. Even if we don't have dementia ourselves, we will know someone who has it.

C Yeah, I agree absolutely. Money which could be spent on research for other diseases will have to be spent on looking after patients with dementia. The way I see it, if we don't do anything about it, the problem is just going to grow and the health service won't be able to cope.

S Yes, I see what you mean. It's a problem that's only going to get worse. But don't you think that it really only affects older people? Shouldn't we choose a problem which affects a lot of younger people too?

F Well, I'd argue that it does affect young people. It's the young people who are going to have to care for their elderly relatives. Finding a means of enabling sufferers to live independently for longer would have a positive impact on them too.

S You could be right, but it does seem to focus mainly on older people. I'm in two minds about that one. Let's go on to the next choice ...

71.3

S So, what's the next problem? Can you tell us about the one you've been looking at, Carlos?

C Yes. The problem is dementia. Dementia is a slow decline in brain functions, which interferes with people's ability to live a normal life. The difficulty that we face is that not only is it an awful disease, but it is also costing society an increasing amount to look after these people. The situation at present is just about under control, but it is a fact that the problem is growing. The figures show that someone is diagnosed with the disease every four seconds and cases are expected to soar from 44 million now to 135 million by 2050. The challenge would be to develop affordable technological solutions that would enable dementia sufferers to live independently for longer.