



BOLT FROM THE BLUE

Level: Intermediate (B1)

Age: Teenagers/Adults

Time: 45 minutes

Language summary: Expressions related to extreme weather; the language of discussion/negotiation

Image work: Looking at an image from different perspectives; using an image as a stimulus for discussion

PROCEDURE:

1 Ask students to discuss this question in pairs then feedback as a group. The expression is used to indicate something highly unexpected and often shocking.

2 The picture shows a hurricane in progress (it was actually taken in Carolina Beach, North Carolina, USA).

Students might be able to guess that it is in the USA from the classically American street signs. Students should describe the windy, rainy scene and focus on the fact that the tree is swaying and bending in the high wind and the rain is beating down on the street. Students will likely have seen images like this on the news. Hurricanes are a common phenomenon in the USA.

3 Accept any plausible answers here. It is likely that some people are sheltering indoors and they are probably hoping that the weather passes quickly or are perhaps trying to call the emergency services to find out what they should do. The telephone lines may be down. People may be trying to save their belongings by bringing them inside. During hurricanes people sometimes go down into their cellar, if they have one, to be safer.

4 The expression relates to the picture because events like hurricanes often come about very suddenly and often without much warning. This means they inevitably cause a lot of damage. Students might talk about Hurricane Sandy or perhaps about the Japanese Tsunami that happened quite recently where the explosion at a nuclear plant caused further environmental problems.

5 Explain what an extreme weather situation is (anything which is out of the ordinary and a more intense and dangerous version of normal weather patterns). Students then work in pairs to do the matching. The answers are: 1e, 2d, 3a, 4b, 5c.

6 Divide students into groups of three to discuss the question. This is a debate in the media at the moment which students may be aware of. Residents of areas affected argue that governments do not do enough to prepare for extreme weather and are slow with emergency help afterwards. There are predictions that such events may increase in the future, and some scientists argue that it is possible to be better prepared based on their predictions. In the clean-up and rescue efforts, those in remote or poorer communities often say that they are left to fend for themselves. As their homes are more cheaply constructed, damage can be greater and more people left homeless. Buildings that are constructed to withstand extreme weather conditions, along with quicker and more efficient evacuation procedures, are key to ensure less damage and loss of life.

7 Form new groups of three or four. You could ask students to work in pairs within their group and give each pair four of the items on the list to discuss before sharing their ideas with the rest of the group.

Circulate and offer help where necessary. First ask students to focus on the priority list and give detailed reasons for their choices. Then ask them to focus on the funding issue. In relation to question 6 above, you could point out that the cost of emergency services is very high. Ask the students to share their answers with the class and have a general discussion on how best to cope with these events.



BOLT FROM THE BLUE

- 1 What do you think the expression *bolt from the blue* means? With a partner, write a definition and discuss when we might use this expression.
- 2 Look at the picture with your partner. Where do you think it was taken? What is happening? Describe the events in as much details as possible. Have you seen a picture like this before?
- 3 In different pairs continue looking at the picture. Do you think there are any people in the house? What do you think they are doing? Have you ever been in a situation like this?
- 4 How do you think the expression *bolt from the blue* relates to this picture? Can you think of any events like this related to weather that have been in the news recently?
- 5 In pairs, match the extreme weather situation with the right definition.

1. hurricane	a. a large, often destructive, sea wave produced by a submarine, earthquake, subsidence or volcanic eruption
2. wildfire	b. a fall or slide of a large mass, as of snow or rock, down a mountainside
3. tsunami	c. a sudden, localised flood of great volume and short duration
4. avalanche	d. a raging, rapidly spreading fire
5. flash flood	e. a wind that has tremendous speed and power and can destroy buildings and other things in its path

- 6 Discuss whether there is anything we can do to be better protected against extreme weather? Who do you think is most likely to be affected by the aftermath of extreme weather? Give reasons for your answer.
- 7 Imagine you work for the charity SOS Weather. Your aim is to help people who have been affected by an extreme weather event such as one of those in question 5. What help would people need immediately after the event? Using the list below, decide the order of priority. Who do you think should pay for each of these essential services?

- Clothes and shoes
- Counselling services
- Food and water
- Medical supplies
- Rebuilding
- Replacement mobile phones
- Relocation allowances
- Temporary homes