

'When disaster strikes, you have to help': the volunteers in a global crisis

Level: Intermediate – Teacher's notes

Article summary: From Syrians in a flooded town in Germany, and firefighters putting out fires in Russia to an older woman helping in floods in China and young women fighting fires in the US: many normal people are volunteering to help others who have been affected by natural disasters.

Time: 90 minutes+

Skills: Using authentic materials such as articles for Writing

Language focus: Writing opinion comments on social media

Learner training: predicting the meaning of a new authentic text, organising new knowledge, reacting to the content of a text, writing opinions on social media

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

- a. Divide students into pairs or groups. Then, ask students to read the headline of the article and predict its content. Follow the questions to elicit ideas and predictions. You can ask students to cover the text so they are not tempted to read it.

HOW TO: activate students' schemata when using authentic materials

When using an authentic text or source, it is important to keep in mind where students might encounter it. This text is a newspaper article students are likely to see on the internet or in their social media feed. Activate their knowledge about the topic of an article by having them read the title and subtitle and eliciting what they may know about it before reading.

2. Reading the article carefully

- a. Students read the article carefully. If they need more guidance, ask them to pick and underline a specific number of things they agree and disagree with

e.g., three things that they think are true or good points and one thing that they are unsure about or disagree with.

HOW TO: get students engaged with authentic texts

For engagement with authentic materials, let students express their real opinions about the text. Ask if they agree or disagree with any of the ideas. This personal response will also motivate them to process the text more carefully.

3. Writing comments on social media

- a. Students check their understanding of the main idea of the article and identify the parts in the text that they agree and disagree with. In preparation for the writing task, you can ask students to work in pairs or small groups and briefly share and discuss the things they agreed and disagreed with.

Key:

1. b
- b. Students write their posts by starting with a general response or opinion, followed by more specific points. Remind students to use Handy Phrases and to be polite. You can also encourage students to peer-edit their comments before sharing them more widely with other classmates.
- c. If time allows, get students to exchange their comments, read a classmate's comment, and then reply on the comment like they would in a real-life setting. Monitor and choose examples of good responses and ask students to share them with the rest of the class.

HOW TO: use authentic materials to teach writing (comments on social media)

Writing comments on social media in response to a text involves a general understanding of the text, identifying key points in the text that inform an opinion, and lastly, writing a personal response or opinion in a comment.

'When disaster strikes, you have to help': the volunteers in a global crisis

Level: Intermediate – Teacher's notes

To use an authentic text for comment writing, you need to create a plausible and realistic scenario in which the student would respond to a text by commenting online. Consider the following questions:

1. **Why would someone be interested in this text?** (e.g., interest in the topic, relevance to their own interests, personal life or hobbies)
2. **Why would the students feel the need to comment on the text?** (e.g., it is of an emotional nature, it affects the lives of many people, it is a controversial topic)
3. **How much support do students need to identify points to include in their comment?** (e.g., do they need the main points or statements pulled from the text that they then agree or disagree with, or do you expect them to identify the points independently? Do they need specific instructions regarding the number of points?)
4. **What target language do they need to write their comments?** (e.g., language for stating opinions, agreeing and disagreeing, criticising, evaluating, or justifying, etc.)
5. **Do they need support with the structure of the writing task?** (e.g., tell them to first give their general reaction and then support this with facts or examples)

4. Optional homework

- a. Students write a short message to share the article with a friend on social media.