

PLANNED OBSOLESCENCE TEACHER'S NOTES

A. WARMER

Get the students to discuss the questions.

B. VIDEO – THE LIGHT BULB CONSPIRACY

The students are going to watch a video called 'The Light Bulb Conspiracy'. It is a documentary about 50 minutes long, but I have it up divided into 4 parts, and so can be spread over a few lessons.

Start each section by pre-teaching the vocabulary, and tell the students that after they have watched the video, they will need to discuss in what context the words were used.

B1. PART 1

Pre teach the vocabulary on the students' notes. The students need to watch the video, and then afterwards tell you in what context the words were used.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONy3uvKyhVI> (the first 12-13 minutes) If this is not available, then search for the documentary under the title, either 'Planned Obsolescence', or 'Pyramids of Waste'. The total should be about 52 minutes long.

B2. PART 2

Go through the vocabulary. The students need to listen out for the collocations to these words while watching the second part of the documentary, ie the second 12 minutes of the video clip (ie 12:00 to 24:00).

B3. PART 3

1. Before watching the third segment, get the students to discuss whether they would expect any difference in attitude towards planned obsolescence between communism and capitalism.
2. Go through the vocabulary and get the students to note in what context they are used in the video.
Get them to watch the third 12 minutes (ie 24:00 to 36:00)

B4. PART 4

1. Before watching the video, get the students to discuss whether they can think of any ways to fight against, or stop planned obsolescence.
2. Go through the vocabulary and get the students to note in what context they are used in the video.
Get the students to watch the rest of the video clip.

VOCABULARY REVISION

From the 4 vocabulary lists, choose the words that the students had the most difficulty with. Write them onto small pieces of paper, and place them face down on the table.

Each of the students needs to have a blank A4 piece of paper.

Start off a story by giving the students the following sentence to write on their paper: 'Cows, sheep ,and chickens belong on the farm, not in the middle of.....' (or choose your own story starter). Give them a moment to finish the sentence.

They then have to pick up a word from the vocabulary pile and continue the story. They then have to replace the card back down on the table, choose another one and continue the story. They can continue on like this until they have each used about 8-10 words.

Each student can then read their story to the class.

C. IDIOMS

Teach the students the following idioms:

a clean break
to break out in a cold sweat
to break ranks
to break the back of
it won't break the bank
the straw that breaks the camel's back

Get the students to ask each other questions with the idioms.

ANSWERS TO B2

mass production
staggering proportions
kick start the economy
lease of life
legal obligations
detest products (that are dull)
the second hand market
seduced consumers
product lifecycle
holy grail
boundless growth
flagrant contradiction

A. DISCUSSION

1. When you buy electronic items, how long do you expect them to last?
2. Have you bought any items, especially electronics and appliances (printers, phones, fridges washing machines etc) that have broken quite soon after you bought them?
3. Do you think that manufacturers ever deliberately design products to have a shorter lifespan?
4. How often do you replace your mobile phone and computer?

B. THE LIGHT BULB CONSPIRACY

B1. PART 1

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONy3uvKyhVI> (the first 12-13 minutes) If this is not available, then search for the documentary under the title, either 'Planned Obsolescence', or 'Pyramids of Waste'. The total should be about 52 minutes long.

VOCABULARY

In what context are the following words used?

planned obsolescence
fragile
discard
posterity
filament
off the mark
patent



B2. PART 2

The second 12-13 minutes....

VOCABULARY

While watching the video, listen out for the collocations of the following words:

mass
staggering
kickstart
legal
detest
secondhand
seduced
product
holy
boundless
flagrant

B3. PART 3

The third 12-13 minutes....

PRE-VIEWING DISCUSSION

Would you expect there to be a difference in attitude towards planned obsolescence between the capitalist free market and communism?

VOCABULARY

nylon stockings
sturdy
back to the drawing board
fibres
chronic shortage
on the contrary
class action
settlement
counter intuitive
meandered
teeming

B4. PART 4

The remainder of the video clip....

PRE-VIEWING DISCUSSION

Can you think of any ways in which we can fight against, or stop, planned obsolescence?

VOCABULARY

salvage
bridge the divide
reaching its last legs
punitive measures
virtuous
paradigm shift
provocative slogan

C. IDIOMS

a clean break	it won't break the bank
to break out in a cold sweat	the straw that breaks the camel's back
to break ranks	to break the back of