

Warning: extreme weather ahead

Level 1 • Elementary

1 Warmer

- What is the weather like today? Is it typical for this time of year?
- Describe a typical British summer. Quickly read paragraphs one and two. Compare your answer with the information there.

2 Key words

Match the key words from the article with their meanings. Then scan the article to find them.

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. extreme | a. a situation in which there are many big and sudden changes; like a fairground ride |
| 2. drought | b. the type of weather that a country or region has |
| 3. climate | c. a long time without rain, when everything is very dry |
| 4. roller coaster | d. never very hot or very cold |
| 5. mild | e. things that are as different from another as it is possible to be |
| 6. seasons | f. plants grown for food, usually on a farm |
| 7. remarkable | g. a period of very hot weather |
| 8. crops | h. the four periods into which the year is divided according to the weather |
| 9. wildfires | i. fires that starts in an area of countryside and grow very quickly |
| 10. heatwave | j. very unusual |
| 11. disaster | i. a very strong wind that goes quickly round in a circle |
| 12. reservoirs | j. hotter or colder than ever before |
| 13. floods | k. lakes where water is kept |
| 14. tornado | l. something very bad that happens and causes a lot of damage or kills a lot of people |
| 15. record temperatures | m. large amounts of water that cover areas that were dry before |

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John Vidal

13 June, 2011

- 1 There is a drought in many parts of England and Wales, but Scotland had its wettest May ever. Britain had one of the coldest winters in 300 years and then the warmest spring in 100 years. June in London has been colder than March. February was warm on Mount Snowdon, the highest mountain in Wales, but in June it snowed there.
- 2 Welcome to the climate roller coaster; the “new normal” of weather. In the past, the British weather was mild – it was always warm and wet – but now the seasons are reversed and temperature and rainfall records are broken almost every year. Kent, in southern England, had as much rain (four millimetres) in May as Timbuktu, Manchester had more sunshine than Marbella, and southern England was drier than Egypt. Something is happening.
- 3 Government scientists say the recent weather in Britain is “remarkable” and “shocking”, but this is nothing compared to the weather in the rest of the world.
- 4 In 2010, 50,000 people died in eastern Europe and Russia as temperatures stayed more than 6°C above normal for many weeks. Crops were destroyed and hundreds of giant wildfires started. It was the hottest summer in about 500 years.
- 5 In 2011, western Europe is having a heatwave. It is very dry in 16 countries, including France, Switzerland and Germany. Large areas of Europe have had less than half the rainfall they would normally have in March, April and May, and temperatures have been much higher than usual.
- 6 But for real extremes in 2011, look at Australia, China and the southern US. In Queensland, Australia, an area the size of Germany and France was flooded in December and January. This was called the country’s “worst natural disaster”.
- 7 In China, a very rare drought in southern and central regions dried up hundreds of reservoirs and rivers. Then 30 centimetres of rain fell in 24 hours, floods and mudslides killed 94 people, and tens of thousands of people lost their homes.
- 8 Meanwhile, there were 600 tornados in north America’s worst tornado season in April. One hundred and thirty-eight people were killed in Joplin, Missouri, by a tornado. People in Arizona are fighting some of the largest wildfires they have known, and the greatest flood in US history is happening along the Missouri river.
- 9 The effects of extreme weather are greater in poorer countries. In Mexico, there is a drought in nearly half the country. There have already been 9,000 wildfires, and more than 3.5 million farmers cannot feed their animals or grow crops. While, in parts of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, millions of people have little or no food left. This is because it hasn’t rained enough in the last few rainy seasons.
- 10 Wherever you look, there are extreme weather conditions. In 2010, 17 countries had record temperatures. Colombia, Peru, Cuba, Kenya, Somalia and many other countries all had a lot more or less rainfall or major heatwaves than in the past few years, he says. Bangladesh has had near record temperatures; Kuwait has had temperatures above 50°C and Rajasthan in India has had 49.6°C, and parts of Canada have been extremely hot with a record 33°C.
- 11 Droughts and heatwaves, deeper snowfalls, more widespread floods, heavier rains, and temperature extremes are now the “new normal”. Studies of natural disasters in 140 countries show that climate is becoming more extreme.

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3 Comprehension check

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the article?

1. There is a drought in the whole of Britain.
2. In the past, British weather was milder.
3. In May 2011, parts of southern England had the same amount of rain as parts of Africa.
4. In the summer of 2010, people in Russia set fire to their ruined crops.
5. The biggest temperature extremes are in Scotland.
6. In the US, 600 people were killed by tornadoes in 2011.
7. There have been 900 wildfires in Queensland, Australia this year.
8. Studies show that the weather is becoming more extreme.

4 Comparisons

a. Complete the table with the missing forms of the adjectives

warm		
		wettest
	colder	coldest
	drier	
mild		
		hottest
	higher	
		largest
	greater	greatest
	heavier	
windy		

b. Look at these weather words from the article. Use the adjectives from the table above to talk about them and their conditions, e.g. 'drought' is the driest.

drought

flood

tornado

heatwave

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5 Discussion

- Talk about where you live. What was the weather like ...
 - ... last summer?
 - ... last winter?
 - ... when you were a child?
- Do you think the weather is changing?

6 Webquest

- Go to the BBC website and look at the forecast for your area: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/weather/>
Are there any weather warnings?
- Read about your country's weather in the country guides:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/weather/hi/country_guides. Is the information correct?

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KEY

2 Key words

1. e
2. c
3. b
4. a
5. d
6. h
7. j
8. f
9. i
10. g
11. l
12. k
13. m
14. i
15. j

3 Comprehension check

1. F
2. T
3. T
4. F
5. F
6. F
7. F
8. T

4 Comparisons

a.

warm	warmer	warmest
wet	wetter	wettest
cold	colder	coldest
dry	drier	driest
mild	milder	mildest
hot	hotter	highest
high	higher	highest
large	larger	largest
great	greater	greatest
heavy	heavier	heaviest
windy	windier	windiest

b. **Teacher's note:** This task can be extended by talking about further weather words as well as comparing them.