

Building Language Skills with The Seattle Times

December 3, 2015

Article: “Chinese artist molds potent symbol of Beijing’s pollution”

Wednesday, December 2, 2015 in the e-Edition of The Seattle Times, Main page A10

Pre-Reading:

Before reading the article, read the title and look at the photograph. Where is Beijing? What does a “potent symbol” mean? What do you think a potent symbol of pollution could be?

Vocabulary:

As you read, look for the following vocabulary words that appear in today’s article. Write down what you think the words mean based on the “context,” or how the words are used in the sentence in which they appear. Next, look up the definitions in a dictionary and see how close your guess was for each word.

potent

miasma

rasping

ailments

chronic

acrid

coincided

accumulated

hygienic

catapulted

reputedly

onslaught

complacent

static

fathom

Comprehension:

1. What is Brother Nut's real name?
2. What did Brother Nut create?
3. How did Brother Nut create this object?
4. What did Brother Nut mix with accumulated gray gunk to form the brick?
5. Why did Brother Nut stop wearing a hygienic mask after his first few days in Beijing?
6. The topic of Beijing's pollution is compared to what country's rainfall?
7. How many bricks are suspected to be in older people's stomachs?
8. Where does much of China's greenhouse-gas pollution originate from?
9. What is an "orange alert?"
10. When was the last time an orange alert was issued?
11. What did Brother Nut use to collect dust from the atmosphere?
12. What did some people mistake Brother Nut for?

Post-Reading:

Read the following passage from the article and discuss the following questions in a group:

"The wave of smog across northern China arrived shortly before the start on Monday of negotiations in Paris, where governments hope to settle on a new agreement to reduce the greenhouse-gas pollution causing global warming. Much of that smog originates from the same coal-fire boilers, vehicle exhausts and industrial plants that pump out carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas."

What causes smog? How can residents of a city individually and collectively reduce smog? Do you foresee these changes realistically occurring in Beijing? Why or why not? What kind of impact can and have governments had in reducing smog? If you lived in Beijing would you wear a hygienic mask to protect yourself from smog? Would you travel by car, bus, bicycle or walk? Why?

Building Language Skills:

Read the following passage, and complete the activity below:

"Dust represents the side effects of humankind's development, including smog and building-site dust," he explained in an interview Tuesday. "When I first arrived in Beijing, I wore a hygienic mask for a few days, but later I stopped. In smog like this, there's no escaping."

Pollution is a major concern in Beijing. What is an environmental concern in Seattle or the city you live in? What artistic object or display could you create to represent and bring awareness to this problem? How would you make the public aware of your creation? What steps could the public take after viewing your art object or display? How is your idea similar to or different from Brother Nut's creation?

Comprehension Question Answers:

1. Brother Nut's real name is Wang Renzheng.
2. Brother Nut created a brick of condensed pollution.
3. For 100 days, Brother Nut dragged a roaring, industrial strength vacuum cleaner around the Chinese capital's landmarks, sucking up dust from the atmosphere.
4. Brother Nut mixed red clay with the gunk to create the brick.
5. Brother Nut explained that there was no escaping that kind of smog.
6. Beijing's pollution is compared to England's rain.
7. Five bricks are suspected to be in older people's stomachs.
8. Much of China's greenhouse gas originates from coal-fire boilers, vehicle exhausts and industrial plants that pump out carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas.
9. An orange alert is the second-highest pollution warning.
10. The last time an orange alert was issued was February, 2014.
11. Brother Nut used a 6,800-renminbi (\$1,060) vacuum cleaner with rechargeable batteries.
12. Some people mistook Brother Nut for a high-tech street sweeper or thought he was selling vacuum cleaners.