

## Building Language Skills with The Seattle Times

December 10, 2015

**Article: "With smog, Beijing residents turn face masks into fashion accessories"**

**Wednesday, December 9, 2015** in the e-Edition of The Seattle Times, Main page A2

### Pre-Reading:

Before reading the article, read the title and look at the photograph. Where is Beijing? Why is the woman wearing a mask? Why do you think the woman chooses to wear a face mask with a monkey on it?

### 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.

*episodes*

*smog*

*nauseating*

*contamination*

*fashion statement*

*haze*

*boon*

*air-purifying*

*rippled*

*uptick*

*phlegm*

*purifiers*

*prominent*

### Comprehension:

1. Along with a hat and gloves, what has become a routine cold-weather accessory in Beijing?
2. How many times beyond the World Health Organization's safe level are the levels of air contamination in Beijing?
3. What alert has Beijing issued this week?
4. What is one consequence of the smog alert?
5. What types of "fashion statement" face masks are available?
6. What types of businesses do well in Beijing's pollution crisis?
7. How have snack stands taken advantage of the pollution crisis?
8. What types of businesses were told to close or reduce operations?
9. What fraction of cars were ordered off the streets?
10. When action did city inspectors take?
11. What change in travel bookings have travel companies experienced?
12. How far are some travelers going on "smog holidays?"
13. What product typically does well at Ele.me and what product has surpassed it in sales this week?

### Post-Reading:

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

**"Mr Fruit, a fruit-juice stand in the lobby of a Beijing office building, offered 12 percent off pear and pomegranate juice, which traditional Chinese medicine says can moisten the lungs and reduce phlegm.**

**At Ele.me, an online food delivery company, antismog face masks passed spicy chicken burgers as the product requested most by customers in Beijing, said a company spokesman, Zou Yang. He said the company sold 40 percent more masks than chicken burgers Tuesday, and the number was up eight times compared with the previous week."**

What do you think about companies like Mr. Fruit and Ele.me whose businesses thrive as a result of Beijing's pollution problem? If you were a business owner in Beijing, what actions would you take? Would you sell face masks or another product? Why?

### Building Language Skills:

Read the following passage, and complete the activity below:

**"Not content with just the industrial white variety of mask, many Beijingers make a fashion statement while filtering out the pollution."**

If you lived in Beijing would you wear a plain face mask or one that made a fashion statement? If you wore a fashion statement mask, what would it look like? Are there other products you could design which would help fight pollution? Design a mask or other product and share your design with the class.

### Comprehension Question Answers:

1. Face masks have become a routine cold-weather accessory.
2. The levels of air contamination are 12 times that deemed safe by the World Health Organization.
3. Beijing has issued a red alert this week.
4. Schools are closed and half of the vehicles are off the streets.
5. Masks with patterns, textures, logos, messages and cutesy animals bring some color to the gray haze.
6. Business that sell air-purifying equipment and travel do well in the pollution crisis.
7. Snack stands promoted sales of pear and pomegranate juices, a traditional remedy for lung problems.
8. Facilities in cement, petrochemicals and other industries were told to close or reduce operations after pollution soared to many times beyond safe levels.
9. Half of the cars were ordered off the streets.
10. City inspectors set up 650 video cameras to watch construction sites and confirm they obey dust-control rules, the statement said.
11. Travel companies saw an uptick in demand as some residents left Beijing on “smog holidays.”
12. Travelers are taking trips to Tangshan, three hours from Beijing, or as far away as Indonesia.
13. Antismog face masks passed spicy chicken burgers as the product requested most by customers in Beijing.