

Building Language Skills with The Seattle Times

February 4, 2016

Article: “Tiny town in Italy sees first birth in 28 years”

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Pre-Reading:

Read the title of this article. What reasons can you think of that a town would have no births in 28 years? Are there any words in the title of the article that would give you clues to why there have been no births? How do you think people in the town feel about the birth and why?

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.

continuously

decline

fate

indication

inhabitant

population

prospects

reversal

refuge

strategy

trend

Comprehension:

1. What is the name of the new baby that was born last week in the town of Ostana?
2. How many inhabitants does the town of Ostana have, including the new baby?
3. What did Oostana Mayor Giacomo Lombardo say would be done to celebrate the birth of the baby?
4. In what year did Mayor Lombardo say the real decline in the population of Oostana started?
5. Mayor Lombardo said that previously the last baby born was in 1987. Was that baby a boy or a girl?
6. How many babies did Mayor Lombardo say were born between 1976 and 1987?
7. According to the article, many younger Italians have moved to the cities. What did the mayor say he has tried to do to prevent other young people from leaving the town of Oostana?
8. According to the article, the new baby’s parents wanted to move away several years ago. Why did they decide to stay instead?

Post-Reading:

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

“According to La Stampa, the town has only 85 inhabitants, including newborn Pablo. Its population has continuously fallen – a fate shared by many other Italian towns and villages.”

What do you think causes population decline? What areas of the world do you think might experience more population decline than others and why? What areas do you think might experience population growth and why? What do you think the effects of population decline are on a country, city or town?

Building Language Skills:

Read the following passage, and complete the activity below:

“But the population decline will be hard to stop, no matter what ideas Lombardo comes up with. Younger Italians, in particular, say there are few attractive job prospects in rural areas. Many have moved to cities, leaving their hometowns to the elderly. Ostana, which is in northern Italy, has only one shop, a bar and two restaurants, according to the Italian news site, the Local.”

Why do you think bigger towns and cities might be more attractive to young people? What do you think the benefits of living in a city are? What are the benefits of living in a small town or rural area? Make a list of advantages and disadvantages of living in both a small town and a city. How would you make a town like Ostana more attractive to young people? Make a brochure/poster for the town of Ostana highlighting the benefits of living in a small town that would make it attractive for people to come live or travel there.

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Comprehension Question Answers:

1. Pablo
2. 85 inhabitants
3. He said a party would be held.
4. 1975
5. That baby was a boy.
6. He said 17 babies were born between 1976 and 1987.
7. He has tried to create jobs to prevent other young people from leaving the town.
8. They were offered the opportunity to work at a mountain refuge.