"The fact that there was no catastrophic pandemic in recent history does not mean there won't be another one. And we are certainly not prepared for the next pandemic."

Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft (speaking in 2017)

1. Pandemic Discussion

1. What pandemics do you know about from history? Which pandemics are we living with today?
2. Have you seen any films or TV shows about pandemics? What happened in them? Are zombies a type of pandemic?
3. What measures can you take to protect yourself from an infectious disease during a pandemic? Do you think face masks help?
4. Which events could be super-spreaders of an infectious disease?
5. Why do viruses mutate?
6. What is the connection between virus outbreaks and environmental problems?
7. What effect has globalisation had on pandemics?
8. Are pandemics nature's way of controlling populations?

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2. Pandemic Vocabulary

- **outbreak** (noun) – *a sudden spontaneous increase or occurrence of something unwanted or undesirable (such as war or disease).*
- **epidemic vs pandemic** (nouns) – *a large outbreak of an infectious disease in a localised area (epidemic) or various parts of the world (pandemic).*
- **lockdown vs quarantine** (noun) –*restrictions on movement, travel and work (lockdown); the isolation of people or products suspected of carrying an infectious disease (quarantine).*
- **to flatten the curve** (verb) – *a number of actions taken to slow the spread of a disease in order to reduce the stress on health services and other public services.*
- **vaccine** (noun) – *a substance introduced into the body of a person to stimulate the production of antibodies that will protect them from an infectious disease.*
- **R-number (reproduction number)** (noun) – *an estimate of the amount of people one infectious person would spread the disease to, used to determine how contagious a disease is.*

Using the vocabulary words above, complete the following sentences (remember to use the correct form of the word, e.g. verb conjugation or plural noun)

1. After reports of multiple infections of the coronavirus in Nottingham, the entire city was placed into _____ to prevent further spread.
2. After the development of a smallpox _____, the disease was eradicated around the world.
3. Health officials issued a public warning after an _____ of the Zika virus was detected in hospitals in northern Brazil.
4. It is vital that government recommendations are followed in order to _____. ICU capacity is already at 70% and if this figure rises, the health system will begin to collapse.
5. Measles has one of the highest _____ of all infectious diseases. One person with measles passes it on to a further 12 people on average.
6. The Ebola _____ in Western Africa failed to become a _____ thanks to travel restrictions placed on affected countries.

Pandemic vocabulary comprehension questions

1. How should governments and the international community respond to an outbreak of an infectious disease?
2. Which epidemics do you know about?
3. Are lockdowns and quarantines the best way of controlling a virus? What are the advantages and disadvantages of these? What alternatives can you think of?
4. What problems might there be if the curve is not flattened during an outbreak of an infectious disease?
5. Will there ever be a vaccine that can protect against all viruses? If there were, would you take it?
6. What can reduce the r-number of an infectious disease?

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3. Video: Preparing for Pandemics

You are going to watch a TED Talk by Bill Gates from in 2015 called "The Next Outbreak? We're Not Ready."

Watch the video here: https://yourenglishpal.com/blog/esl-conversation-lesson-plan-pandemic/

While you watch the video, answer the following questions:

Multiple choice

1. What disaster were people most worried about when Bill Gates was a child?
   a) pandemic *b) the ozone layer* *c) nuclear war*
2. What did the barrel in Bill Gates' basement contain?
   a) nuclear waste *b) survival supplies* *c) microchips*
3. Medicine Sans Frontiers did a good job of what?
   a) paper case reports *b) stopping the spread of Ebola* *c) organising volunteers*
4. How many workers would be required in a large epidemic?
   a) hundreds *b) thousands* *c) hundreds of thousands*

Sentence completion

5. The World Health Organisation's main responsibility is to _____ epidemics.
6. The spread of Ebola was prevented by the _____ work of healthcare workers.
7. By the time someone is contagious with Ebola, they are so _____ they cannot get out of bed to spread the virus.
8. With some viruses, people feel well enough to get on a _____ while they are infectious, spreading the disease around the world.

Short answer

9. What shows where people are, and where they are moving?
10. What are needed in poor countries to prepare against pandemics?
11. A medical reserve corps should be paired with what?
12. What should be played instead of war games?

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4. Pandemic Conversation Questions

1. Do you think global pandemics will become more common in the future? Why or why not?
2. Was the coronavirus the 'big one', or is the 'big one' still to come? Does a pandemic have the potential to destroy humanity?
3. How do you feel about governments that are developing biological agents, including viruses, to be used as weapons? Could the next pandemic be as a result of one of these agents accidentally escaping the lab?
4. How can governments be better prepared for the next global pandemic?
5. How can governments protect poor people during a national lockdown or those that have lost their jobs and their income?
6. How should governments protect businesses during a lockdown?
7. Who are the essential workers in society? Why are they essential? Is it fair that essential workers have to continue working through a pandemic for the same money while non-essential workers stay at home and receive payments from the government?
8. What conspiracy theories and misinformation are there about the spread of infectious diseases? What motivates people to make up and spread this misinformation?

5. Pandemic Writing Task

Write about your opinion on how best to prepare for the next global pandemic. Try to use some of the vocabulary you learned earlier in this lesson. In your answer, you could include some of the following topics:

- What should happen if an outbreak is detected somewhere in the world.
- What precautions individuals can take.
- How to balance flattening the curve with economic concerns.

Alternative exam practice question:

During a global pandemic, many people argue that stopping the spread of the infection should be given the highest priority, no matter what measures need to be taken. Other people, however, argue that placing restrictions on the economy causes more problems for society than would be caused by the spread of the disease. Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

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