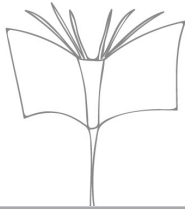
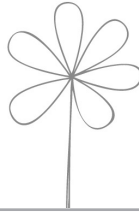


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TEACHER'S NOTES

The 21st Century Flux – Part 1

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Overview: Suggestions for using the first part of the poem *The 21st Century Flux* by Dizraeli

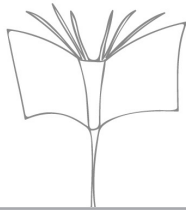
Total time for worksheet activities: 30 minutes + discussion

Suggested level: Upper intermediate to advanced

1. Make a copy of **Worksheet 1** and **Worksheet 2** for each student.
2. Tell students that you have part of a poem for them. Give out **Worksheet 1** and ask students to work out the missing word. Point out that the three gaps refer to the same word.
3. Allow students to compare their answers before telling them that the missing word is *English*.
4. Draw students' attention to the name *Babel* on line three. Ask students what they know about it.
5. Remind students that language in poetry is often playful. Draw their attention to the following phrase in the poem:
hotch potch rag-tag scrabble bag
Ask students to chant it and ask them not to worry about the individual words. Ask them to consider the phrase as a whole to mean a 'confusing mixture'.
6. Give out **Worksheet 2** and ask students to complete exercises 1 and 2. Allow students to compare their answers before conducting a feedback.
7. Put students into pairs and ask them to complete exercise 3. Allow pairs to share their answers and ideas.
8. Play the video clip of Dizraeli's poem up until the end of the excerpt (up to 0:55).

The Tower of Babel is a story from the Old Testament of the Bible. The Babylonians decided to build a tower so high that it would reach heaven. These actions displeased God who came down to Earth and punished them. He decided that humankind would no longer be united by a common language and this was, according to the Bible, the reason for the multilingual nature of our world.

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WORKSHEET 1

The 21st Century Flux – Part 1

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Find the missing word

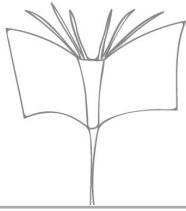
Below is an excerpt from a poem called *The 21st Century Flux*. Can you work out what the missing word is? (It is the same word in each case.) Try not to worry if you are unfamiliar with any words or other pieces of language.

The 21st Century Flux (part 1)

_____ *The new disease?*
It pours out of television speakers and computer screens
Disregarding Babel with its very cocky fluency
Sticking on its labellings at every opportunity.
5 *Nothing's safe; it won't stop when it begins to spread*
it dominates the airwaves and reigns/rains on the internet
leaving cultures altered and confused as to what's what
turns the dialecting of the youths to a hotch-potch
rag-tag scrabble bag; everyone's affected
10 *the little languages will not survive unprotected.*
So hold your own, but get a firm hold of _____
and every last one of us shall be a multilinguist:
sing it!
Shampoo juggernaut moolah hullabaloo
15 *ad infinitum, pow-wow, kudos, déjà vu*
Won ton, billabong, beef, potato, hobo, dream
Wha gwan with the wigwam
mr Chimpanzee?
Welcome to the twenty-first century flux
20 *for now, _____ is the language of choice*
And when it dies, as every tongue eventually must
let it be said you added your voice

(excerpt from *The 21st Century Flux*. Copyright © Rowan Sawday (Dizraeli) 2010)

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WORKSHEET 2

The 21st Century Flux – Part 1

www.macmillandictionary.com

1 Find the information

Look at the poem excerpt on Worksheet 1. Does it describe English in a negative or positive way? Give examples of three words, pieces of language or ideas from the text to support your answer.

2 Vocabulary

Below are six definitions from the *Macmillan Dictionary* that refer to words in the poem excerpt. Find the words and write them in their correct forms (part of speech) beside the definitions.

1. _____ *adjective*: very confident in an annoying way
2. to _____ *verb*: to be very important, or to be a powerful influence at a particular time
3. _____ *noun*: a way of speaking a language that is used only in a particular area or by a particular group
4. _____ *noun*: a condition of continuous change
5. to _____ *verb*: to not consider something important, or to not pay any attention to it
6. to _____ *verb*: to gradually affect or cover a larger area

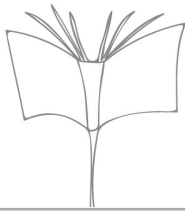
3 Discussion

Discuss these questions in pairs.

1. "Sticking on its labellings at every opportunity"
Languages are continually evolving. Can you think of any new words that have arisen in your own language recently? Can you think of any new words in English that have arisen recently?

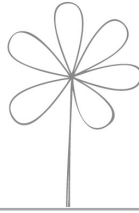
2. "It doesn't stop when it begins to spread"
Decide if the following statement is true or false: There are currently more native English speakers in the world than non-native English speakers.

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WORKSHEET 2

The 21st Century Flux – Part 1

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3. *“leaving cultures altered and confused as to what’s what”*

In what ways have you seen your own country or culture being affected by English in your lifetime?

4. *“turns the dialecting of the youths to a hotch-potch”*

In what ways does English affect youth culture or advertising in your country?

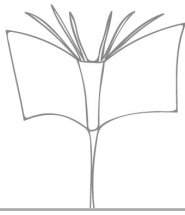
5. Do you agree that English is *“The new disease”* or should it be celebrated? Why / why not?

6. What sort of person do you think wrote the poem? Give as much information about your mental image as possible (e.g. age, appearance, nationality, etc).

7. *“Shampoo juggernaut moolah hullabaloo
ad infinitum, pow-wow, kudos, déjà vu
Won ton, billabong, beef, potato, hobo, dream
Wha gwan with the wigwam
mr Chimpanzee?”*

Can you make sense of this verse? What is it all about?

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KEY TO WORKSHEET 2

The 21st Century Flux – Part 1

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1 Find the information

Much of the language refers to English in a negative light. Some examples:

“The new **disease**?”

“... **cocky** fluency”

“It won't stop when it begins to **spread**” (reinforcing the image of disease)

“... **reigns** / **rains** on the Internet”

“... leaving cultures altered and **confused**”

“... everyone's **affected**”

NB: It is important to bear in mind that the author of the poem Dizraeli is merely reflecting on current attitudes towards the language at this point. Much of the rest of the poem celebrates English as a global language.

2 Vocabulary

1. cocky 2. to reign 3. dialect 4. flux 5. to disregard 6. to spread

3 Discussion

1. Technology is always a good place to look for lexical change. The Internet, for example, has given rise to a lot of neologisms (= new words or expressions or existing words used in new ways). Examples include: *the blogosphere*, *the twitterverse* (a blend of the words *Twitter* and *universe*), *avatar*, *downstream*, *go viral*, *bookmark*, *app*. A great resource for English teachers is the *BuzzWord* section at www.macmillandictionary.com. Every week, a different neologism is discussed and accompanying lesson plans are also available for some of the *BuzzWord* articles.
2. The statement is false. In *English as a Global Language* (1997), Professor David Crystal calculates that the ratio of native to non-native speakers of English is around 1:3.
6. The poem was written and performed by Dizraeli, a rapper, writer, poet and singer from the UK. You can find out more about him at his website: www.dizraeli.com.
7. Most or all of the words and terms in this verse have been borrowed from other languages. We will take a closer look at this verse in the third lesson plan, which will deal with word borrowing. Mention to your students that you will come back to this verse later.