Briefing: The strange, sad fate of the honey bee

Before you read:
This article is about the honey bee (honeybee in American English).
1. Working with a partner write down five words you know about bees. Think about:
   • how they move
   • where they live
   • what they make and how.
2. Look at headline and sub-headline. Find five negative words that suggest this story is about a problem.
3. Here are some ‘bee words’ that you’ll need in the lesson. Can you match them with the definitions?

   a) hive                                  i. adjective that means ‘of bees’
   b) colony                               ii. person who works with bees
   c) apian                                iii. noise that bees make
   d) pupae                                iv. structure where bees live
   e) pollinate                            v. group of bees
   f) beekeeper                           vi. bees do this to flowers
   g) sting (n. and v.)                   vii. stage of bee development between egg and adult
   h) buzz (n. and v.)                     viii. bees can hurt you with this

Task 1 B2
Form groups of four. Summarise one of the following paragraphs / sections each, in your own words:
1. When was the problem identified?
2. So what is Colony Collapse Disorder?
3. Why are people so worried about this?
4. So what is the cause of CCD?

Tell the others in your group about:
   a) the main points
   b) any of the ‘bee words’ from above.
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**Task 2 B1**

In the article the words ‘Colony Collapse Disorder’ begin with capitals. This is because in English all proper nouns (or names) do this.

1. Work in pairs. Can you find the following words starting with capitals in sections 1 - 4:
   a) nine nationalities, countries or continents
   b) three medical conditions or syndromes
   c) three organisations, associations or government departments
   d) one name of an old ship?

**Task 3 B2**

Return to your groups of four. Again, summarise one of the following paragraphs/sections each, in your own words:

1. **And what gave rise to that damage?**
2. **But how are pesticides affecting bees?**
3. **So disappearing bees aren’t a new problem, then?**
4. **What is the situation in the UK?**

Tell the others in your group about:

a) the main points
b) any of the ‘bee words’ from above.

**Task 4 B1**

The article mentions several parts of the world where there are now fewer bees. Work in pairs. Complete the table below with the country, the people, the official language(s) spoken and the capital city. The first one has been done for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continent</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>Language(s)</th>
<th>Capital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Colombian</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Bogotá</td>
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<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>Canada</td>
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<td>English/?</td>
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<td>South America</td>
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<td>Croatia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Warsaw</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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**Task 5 B2**

Look at the table below. It includes five possible causes of CCD mentioned in the fifth paragraph/section. One of them is false.

1. Identify the false cause.
2. Choose a word or phrase from the list below for each explanation. You can use each one more than once.

   **probable, possible, unlikely, impossible**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible cause</th>
<th>How probable?</th>
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<tr>
<td>immune system damaged when transported</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

Check your answers with your partner and then with the rest of the class.

**Task 6 B1 / B2**

Look at the box (Can we survive without bees?). Read the text quickly to see whether the answer is ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Don’t worry about understanding everything for the moment.

Look at the words of the opening statement by Albert Einstein: ‘If the bee disappeared ... man would only have four years of life left.’

Think about its grammar:

a) What tense goes with the ‘if’ clause:
   - for most verbs?
   - for the verb ‘to be’?

b) What tense goes with the other clause?

c) Did Einstein think the disappearance of bees was probable or improbable?

i. Read the text more carefully. Write four more sentences about what would happen if there were no bees. Try to use your own words.

ii. Work in pairs. Write the first clause of a 2nd conditional on a strip of paper. You can make this as silly or funny as you like, e.g. ‘If I had a monkey...’

iii. Give your strip of paper to another pair.

iv. Now complete the sentence you’ve received.
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Task 7 C1

Look at the paragraph: **So disappearing bees aren’t a new problem, then?**

Put these events in the order they occurred:

a) epidemic on Isle of Wight
b) 5.9 million maintained colonies
c) first case recorded in USA
d) possible extinction of bee in the USA.

Now write a short history of the disappearing bee problem. This should:

- be no more than 100 words
- concentrate on what has happened rather than why
- include exact time references
- use the original words for factual information only (dates, names, places, figures etc.).

Task 8 B2 / C1

Vocabulary revision

Some vocabulary related to bees can also be used in general English. We talk about a ................................................................................................................ of activity, for example, or the ........................................................................ around a place or organisation. And a woman who dominates a group is sometimes called a ........................................................................................................ bee.

In the 1960s there was even a hairstyle called the ..........................................

We also use the verb ‘to ...........................................’ to describe an unpleasant surprise. You can say someone is ........................................... into action or ............................................................ by criticism.

Another word with unpleasant associations for some people is .............................................. This can just mean ‘a group of people living in the same place’ but it can also mean ‘a country controlled by another country’.

**beehive**    **stung**    **queen**    **colony**    **sting**    **buzz**

Task 9 B1, B2, C1, C2

Role-play (small groups)

You are at a press conference. One person is a bee expert and the others are journalists asking questions about CCD.
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Teacher’s notes and key

Lesson aims

- skimming, scanning and close reading
- summarising a short section of detailed text
- introducing words associated with bees: colony, hive, sting, beekeeper etc.
- using capitals with proper nouns, abbreviations and acronyms
- countries, continents, regions, nationalities, languages

Level: B1, B2, C1, C2
The article contains detailed and complex information but it is presented in an accessible way. Less advanced readers should be able to understand the main points.

Timing: Before you read: 3-8 minutes;
task 1: 10-15 minutes;
task 2: 5-10 minutes;
task 3: 10 -15 minutes;
task 4: 5 -10 minutes;
task 5: 5-8 minutes;
task 6: 10 -15 minutes;
task 7: 3 minutes and homework;
task 8: 5-8 minutes;
task 9: 5-8 minutes;
Total: 1 hour to 1 hour 20 minutes, depending on level of group.
Tasks 5,6 and/or 7 can be omitted if time is short.

Key
Before you read:
Any four from words from the following:
strange, sad, fate, losing, alarming, disastrous

Task 2
a) nationalities, countries/continents: American, the USA, America, Canada, South America, Asia, Europe, Croatia, Taiwan
b) medical conditions/syndromes: CCD, Aids, Israeli Acute Paralysis Virus
c) organisations: Apiary Inspectors of America, US Department of Agriculture, Pennsylvania State University
d) ship: Mary Celeste

Task 4

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Task 5

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<td>possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian honey</td>
<td>impossible (false)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pesticides</td>
<td>probable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>varroa mite</td>
<td>possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mobile phones</td>
<td>unlikely</td>
</tr>
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<td>possible</td>
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Task 6

a) past simple   b) conditional   c) improbable

Task 7

This is a challenging task and perhaps could be set as homework. You could scaffold some important elements of this by further breaking down the elements needed. Below is one possible answer but many others are possible:

Large numbers of bee have disappeared at different times and places since the first recorded case in the USA in 1868. In 1904 an epidemic, which began in the Isle of Wight, destroyed 90% of UK colonies.

The latest loss concerns scientists because it comes after a long-term decline in the bee population. There were 5.9 million maintained colonies in the US in 1947. Today there are only 2.44 million. On current trends the bee will be extinct by 2035.

Task 8

Some vocabulary related to bees can also be used in general English. We talk about a hive of activity, for example, or the buzz around a place or organisation. And a woman who dominates a group is sometimes called a queen bee.

In the 1960s there was even a hairstyle called the beehive.

We also use the verb 'to sting' to describe an unpleasant surprise. You can say someone is stung into action or stung by criticism. Another word with unpleasant associations for some people is colony. This can just mean ‘a group of people living in the same place’ but it can also mean ‘a country controlled by another country’.

Resource produced in conjunction with www.eslreading.org.