

Tony Blair makes political history (Sat 7 May, 2005)

WARM-UPS

CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics you are interested in, which do not look interesting and which look really boring:

Tony Blair / history books / elections / British politics / British democracy / Mr. Blair's decision to go to war in Iraq / economic growth / unemployment and inflation / health, education, social welfare / terrorism and immigration

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

TONY BLAIR: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with Tony Blair. Share your words with your partner / group and talk about them.

BLAIR COMPARE: How do you rate Tony Blair as a world leader? Compare him with some of the world leaders listed below, or others of your choosing:

- The leader in my country
- Nestor Kirchner (Argentina)
- Hamid Karzai (Afghanistan)
- Fidel Castro (Cuba)
- Mohammed Hosni Mubarak (Egypt)
- Gerhard Schroeder (Germany)
- Junichiro Koizumi (Japan)
- Mwai Kibaki (Kenya)
- Muammar al-Qadhafi (Libya)
- Pervez Musharraf (Pakistan)
- Vladimir Putin (Russia)
- Bashar al-Asad (Syria)
- Thabo Mbeki (South Africa)
- George W. Bush (USA)
- Lula da Silva (Brazil)
- Hu Jintao (China)
- Jacques Chirac (France)
- Alvaro Uribe (Colombia)
- Manmohan Singh (India)
- Silvio Berlusconi (Italy)
- Ariel Sharon (Israel)
- Kim Jong Il (N. Korea)
- Vicente Fox (Mexico)
- Olusegun Obasanjo (Nigeria)
- Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (Philippines)
- Chandrika Kumaratunga (Sri Lanka)
- Thaksin Chinnawat (Thailand)
- Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe)

BLAIR OPINIONS: Talk with a partner about these comments made about Tony Blair:

- a. He is the world's best leader – a man of convictions.
- b. He should never have gone to war in Iraq.
- c. What a great ambassador for his country.
- d. I have great respect for him. He dares to stand his ground.
- e. Blair is Bush's poodle, his lap dog – plain and simple.
- f. Tony Blair has the blood of thousands of innocent Muslims on his hands.
- g. A true beacon of freedom and democracy.
- h. Tony is honest to the core – that's rare in politics.
- i. Don't you mean Tony Bliar?
- j. I love watching him make speeches.

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PRE-READING

WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... of the words 'political' and 'history'.

TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. Tony Blair has decided to write political history books. T / F
- b. He is the first leader of his party ever to win three successive elections. T / F
- c. His majority in the British parliament was slashed by 100 seats. T / F
- d. British voters strongly rallied for Mr. Blair over Iraq. T / F
- e. The British economy has been vibrant for over a decade. T / F
- f. European economies have been sluggish. T / F
- g. British voters are very happy with Britain's transportation system. T / F
- h. Politicians within his own ranks say he has a rough ride ahead. T / F

SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | | |
|----|-------------|----------------|
| a. | consecutive | authority |
| b. | feat | recurrent |
| c. | somewhat | dynamic |
| d. | slashed | woeful |
| e. | mandate | slow |
| f. | vibrant | successive |
| g. | sluggish | reduced |
| h. | momentum | impetus |
| i. | perennial | accomplishment |
| j. | dire | reasonably |

PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a. | Tony Blair has rewritten | this feat |
| b. | win three | issues |
| c. | to achieve | divisive issue |
| d. | proved a | jobs market |
| e. | a deeply | consecutive elections |
| f. | Mr. Blair's success owes | much to a vibrant British economy |
| g. | European economies have been | ride |
| h. | buoyant | the British political history books |
| i. | perennial | sluggish |
| j. | he may have a rough | costly decision |

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READING:

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the correct spaces in the text.

Tony Blair makes political history

BNE: British Prime Minister Tony Blair has _____ the British political history books, as he became the first Labour (left wing) leader to win three consecutive elections. He joins Margaret Thatcher as the only British prime minister to achieve this _____ in modern times. The record-setting victory is somewhat _____ for Mr. Blair: his party suffered heavily and his majority in the British parliament was _____ by 100 seats. He will have a much-reduced _____ next term. Mr. Blair's decision to go to war in Iraq proved a costly decision. He said: "I know that Iraq has been a _____ divisive issue in this country....But I also know and believe that after this election people want to move on."

bittersweet
deeply
feat
mandate
rewritten
slashed

Mr. Blair's success _____ much to a vibrant British economy and its associated feel-good _____. Britain has enjoyed economic growth for the last 13 years, while other European economies have been _____. Mr. Blair can also boast record 40-year low levels of unemployment and inflation and a _____ jobs market. It is now his job to maintain this momentum and push ahead with his new agenda of "stability and prosperity". Voter concerns have focused on the _____ issues of health, education, social welfare and a dire transportation system. Politicians within his own _____ predict he may have a rough ride pushing through some controversial proposals related to terrorism and immigration.

factor
sluggish
ranks
buoyant
perennial
owes

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DISCUSSION

- a. Did you like this article?
- b. What did you think after reading the article?
- c. Did you learn anything new?
- d. Are you interested in politics?
- e. Would you like to enter politics?
- f. What do you think of politicians?
- g. Do you like Tony Blair?
- h. What image does he have in your country?
- i. What do you think of British politics?
- j. What image does British politics have in your country?
- k. How does Tony Blair compare against the leader of your country?
- l. Is Tony Blair a key player on the world's stage?
- m. What's your view on the Bush-Blair "special relationship"?
- n. What question would you like to ask Tony Blair?
- o. What do you think his answer to that question would be?
- p. What question would you like to ask the leader of your own country?
- q. Why would you like to ask that question?
- r. What are the most pressing political or economic issues in your country?
- s. What would you like seen done about those issues?
- t. Did you like this discussion?
- u. Teacher / Student additional questions.

HOMEWORK

- 1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.
- 2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find information on Tony Blair. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.
- 3. MY LEADER:** Write a profile of the leader of your country. Present it to your classmates in your next lesson.
- 4. LETTER TO TONY:** Write a letter to Tony Blair congratulating him on his historic third election victory. Tell him what he needs to do in the world in his next term of office. Show your classmates your letter in your next lesson.

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SPEAKING:

MY COUNTRY: In pairs, be the leaders of your country (or an imaginary country). (1) Put the key issues in the table below in order of importance. (2) Decide what to do with these key issues, which are dividing your country, by completing the right column of the table. (3) When you have finished, show your agenda to other classmates to see what they think. Have a class vote to see who would make the best politician.

KEY ISSUE	MY / OUR IDEAS
Health	
Transportation	
Sport	
Immigration	
Terrorism	
Unemployment	
Environment	
Defense	
Inflation	
Pension system	

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TEXT

GAP FILL:

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BNE: British Prime Minister Tony Blair has **rewritten** the British political history books, as he became the first Labour (left wing) leader to win three consecutive elections. He joins Margaret Thatcher as the only British prime minister to achieve this **feat** in modern times. The record-setting victory is somewhat **bittersweet** for Mr. Blair: his party suffered heavily and his majority in the British parliament was **slashed** by 100 seats. He will have a much-reduced **mandate** next term. Mr. Blair's decision to go to war in Iraq proved a costly decision. He said: "I know that Iraq has been a **deeply** divisive issue in this country....But I also know and believe that after this election people want to move on."

Mr. Blair's success **owes** much to a vibrant British economy and its associated feel-good **factor**. Britain has enjoyed economic growth for the last 13 years, while other European economies have been **sluggish**. Mr. Blair can also boast record 40-year low levels of unemployment and inflation and a **buoyant** jobs market. It is now his job to maintain this momentum and push ahead with his new agenda of "stability and prosperity". Voter concerns have focused on the **perennial** issues of health, education, social welfare and a dire transportation system. Politicians within his own **ranks** predict he may have a rough ride pushing through some controversial proposals related to terrorism and immigration.