

Miss Universe pageant angers Thais

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Today's contents

The Article	2
Warm-ups	3
Before Reading / Listening	4
While Reading / Listening	5
After Reading	6
Language Exercises	7
Discussion	8
Speaking	9
Listening Gap Fill	10
Homework	11
Answers	12

THE ARTICLE

Miss Universe pageant angers Thais

BNE: The Miss Universe 2005 contest has stirred up controversy in deeply Buddhist Thailand. Video footage and photographs showing bikini-clad contestants in front of sacred Buddhist monuments have angered Thai Buddhist leaders. Sparking the biggest protest was a photo shoot in front of the historical Wat Arun, or Temple of the Dawn, on the banks of Bangkok's Chao Phaya River. The promotional event drew sharp criticism from religious groups, which lambasted the event for its blatant commercialism. Preecha Kanthiya, director-general of the Culture Ministry's department for religious affairs, said if organizers want to promote Thai culture, "they should ask the contestants to wear Thai traditional costumes".

In an attempt to quell the anger many in the host nation feel, organizers of the beauty extravaganza quickly agreed to cut from its publicity videos all images of the contestants posing in front of monuments of religious importance. In another damage-limitation exercise, Thailand's Prime Minister asked Thais to understand the photo shoot was an unfortunate faux pas. He said: "I think the contestants did not intend to insult Thai culture. They just wanted to shoot pictures of beautiful places, but did not realize that the temple is sacred for Thais." The edited video will be aired on May 31, when the winner from the 81 contestants will be chosen.

WARM-UPS

1. HEADLINE: In pairs / groups, make a newspaper headline that includes the words "pageant", "Thai culture", "angry" and "bikini". Talk about this headline and make a story from it. Change partners and "swap" your headlines and stories. See how close your story was to the article in this lesson.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics are most interesting and which are most boring.

Beauty contests / Buddhism / Thailand / bikinis / photographs / dawn / religious monuments / traditional dress / beautiful places

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

3. THAILAND: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with Thailand. Share your words with your partner / group and talk about them.

4. MISS UNIVERSE: Which of the points below are most important when judging a beauty contest?

- Looks
- Figure
- Smile
- Intelligence
- Warmth of personality
- Bikini style
- Hair
- Skin condition
- Personal ambitions
- Personal hopes for the world

5. TWO-MINUTE PAGEANT DEBATES: Face another student and engage in these fun 2-minute debates. Your teacher will time you and tell you to change partners.

- a. It should be "Ms." and not "Miss" Universe. vs. "Miss" is the traditional word.
- b. Married women should be allowed to enter the contest. vs. It's for single ladies only.
- c. Wearing skimpy bikinis in public in a deeply religious country is bad. vs. Hey, it's 2005.
- d. Beauty pageants are totally pointless. vs. What's wrong with celebrating beauty?
- e. Beauty contests are unfair. Only model look-alikes can enter. vs. Life is unfair.
- f. Miss Universe is a racist contest. White women usually win. vs. It's open to all races.
- g. Beauty pageants are sexist and degrading to women. vs. Women enter them freely.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

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

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. The Miss Universe pageant will not be held in Thailand. | T / F |
| b. Bikini-clad contestants posed for photos in front of holy monuments. | T / F |
| c. A Bangkok bank is under fire for blatant commercialism. | T / F |
| d. Buddhist officials want contestants to wear Thai costumes. | T / F |
| e. Pageant organizers have refused to edit their video footage. | T / F |
| f. Thailand's Prime Minister has asked the pageant to leave Thailand. | T / F |
| g. The Thai Prime Minister said an unfortunate mishap occurred. | T / F |
| h. The uncut controversial video will be aired on May 31. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| a. stirred up | triggering |
| b. footage | televised |
| c. sparking | barefaced |
| d. lambasted | appease |
| e. blatant | berated |
| f. quell | edit |
| g. extravaganza | created |
| h. cut | blunder |
| i. faux pas | pictures |
| j. aired | spectacular |

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

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| a. stirred | sharp criticism from |
| b. video | the anger |
| c. Sparking | footage |
| d. drew | to insult Thai culture |
| e. blatant | mishap |
| f. an attempt to quell | up controversy |
| g. host | commercialism |
| h. damage-limitation | nation |
| i. unfortunate | the biggest protest |
| j. did not intend | exercise |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

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

BNE: The Miss Universe 2005 contest has _____ up controversy in deeply Buddhist Thailand. Video footage and photographs showing bikini-_____ contestants in front of sacred Buddhist monuments have angered Thai Buddhist leaders. _____ the biggest protest was a photo shoot in front of the historical Wat Arun, or Temple of the Dawn, on the _____ of Bangkok's Chao Phaya River. The promotional event _____ sharp criticism from religious groups, which lambasted the event for its _____ commercialism. Preecha Kanthiya, director-general of the Culture Ministry's department for religious _____, said if organizers want to _____ Thai culture, "they should ask the contestants to wear Thai traditional costumes".

sparking
affairs
promote
clad
drew
stirred
blatant
banks

In an attempt to _____ the anger many in the _____ nation feel, organizers of the beauty extravaganza quickly agreed to cut from its publicity videos all images of the contestants _____ in front of monuments of religious importance. In another damage-_____ exercise, Thailand's Prime Minister asked Thais to understand the photo shoot was an unfortunate _____ pas. He said: "I think the contestants did not intend to insult Thai culture. They just wanted to shoot pictures of beautiful places, but did not _____ that the temple is sacred for Thais." The _____ video will be _____ on May 31, when the winner from the 81 contestants will be chosen.

host
edited
quell
aired
limitation
posing
realize
faux

AFTER READING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'miss' and 'universe'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare and talk about your answers to this exercise. After you agree, check your answers against the text. Research some of the words that are new to you.

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT BEAUTY CONTEST SURVEY: In pairs / groups write down questions about beauty contests.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make a mini-presentation to another group / the class on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- stirred
- clad
- banks
- sharp
- Culture Ministry
- promote
- quell
- publicity
- posing
- faux pas
- beautiful places
- aired

LANGUAGE

TEXT TEMPLATE:

1. In pairs / groups, fill in the spaces below to create a completely new news story.

BNE: _____ stirred up controversy in deeply
_____. Video footage and photographs showing
_____ have angered
_____. Sparking the biggest protest was
_____.
The _____ drew sharp criticism from _____,
which lambasted _____ for its blatant
_____. Spokesperson
_____ said if _____ had wanted to
_____, "they should _____".

In an attempt to quell _____ feel,
_____ quickly agreed to
_____.

In another damage-limitation exercise, _____ asked
_____ to understand _____. He said:
"I think _____ did not intend to _____. They just
wanted _____, but did not realize that
_____."

2. Show your text to another partner / group. Offer suggestions for correction.
3. Make a note of any unknown vocabulary your partner has.
4. Talk about which story was best.

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What was your first reaction to the headline of this article?
- b. Are you interested in beauty contests?
- c. Do you ever watch beauty contests on TV?
- d. Do you think beauty contests are sexist or demeaning to women?
- e. Do you think the pageants should be more politically correct and use "Ms." Instead of "Miss"?
- f. What are the important factors in determining who is the most beautiful woman in a beauty pageant?
- g. Who do you think is the most handsome man in the world?
- h. What do you think a contest like Miss Universe achieves?
- i. Should the contestants have worn traditional Thai dress instead of bikinis?
- j. Have you ever committed a cultural faux pas?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading the article?
- b. Do you like to know who the winner was of a beauty pageant?
- c. What do you think of the controversy in Thailand?
- d. Do you think Thai people are over-reacting to the video showing young women in bikinis?
- e. Should event organizers be more careful in considering and respecting a country's culture?
- f. Who do you think is the most beautiful woman in the world?
- g. What would be the important factors in determining who is the most handsome man in a "Mr. Universe" contest?
- h. Do you want to be more beautiful / handsome?
- i. What physical characteristic would you like to change?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

FAUX PAS: This expression comes from French. It means "false step". It refers to incorrect acts of behavior, usually when someone is in a different cultural setting. Look at the following faux pas below.

1. In pairs / groups, speculate as to why each of these faux pas are considered cultural no-nos.

2. What would you think if any of these happened to you in your country? The country/countries in which the act is a faux pas is in brackets / parentheses.

- a. Someone shook hands using their right hand. (Some African countries)
- b. Eating with your left hand. (Middle Eastern countries)
- c. Displaying the soles of your feet. (Thailand)
- d. Passing food to another person from chopsticks to chopsticks. (Japan)
- e. Not finishing all of the food on your plate. (Finland)
- f. Finishing all of the food on your plate. (China)
- g. Bringing a bottle of wine when you go to someone's house for dinner. (France)
- h. Not offering a cup of tea to visitors. (UK)
- i. Telling someone you think they are older than they really are. (USA)
- j. Wearing your shoes in someone's house. (Japan)

3. After you have finished, change partners and compare what you spoke about with your previous partner(s).

4. Create a guide of correct etiquette for your own country. (In pairs if you have a partner of the same nationality.)

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

The Miss Universe 2005 contest has _____ in deeply Buddhist Thailand. _____ and photographs showing bikini-clad contestants in front of sacred Buddhist monuments have angered Thai Buddhist leaders. Sparking the biggest protest was a photo shoot in front of the historical Wat Arun, or Temple of the Dawn, on the banks of Bangkok's Chao Phaya River. The promotional event _____ religious groups, which _____ for its blatant commercialism. Preecha Kanthiya, director-general of the Culture Ministry's department for religious affairs, said if organizers want to promote Thai culture, "they should ask the contestants to wear Thai traditional costumes".

In an attempt to _____ many in the host nation feel, organizers of the beauty extravaganza quickly agreed to cut from its publicity videos all images of the contestants posing in front of monuments of religious importance. In another _____, Thailand's Prime Minister asked Thais to understand the photo shoot was an _____. He said: "I think the contestants did not intend to insult Thai culture. They just wanted to shoot pictures of beautiful places, but did not realize that the temple is sacred for Thais." The edited video _____ May 31, when the winner from the 81 contestants will be chosen.

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 the Miss Universe pageant. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. FAUX PAS: Write a guide for visitors to your country about the social etiquette required of them. Be sure to list the biggest faux pas, or social no-nos. Explain the reasons why these things are faux pas. Show your guide to your classmates in the next lesson.

4. LETTER: You are completely outraged by the bikini-clad contestants posing in front of sacred monuments. Write a letter to the organizers of the Miss Universe contest telling them your views and the actions you suggest they take. Show your letter to your classmates in the next lesson. Compare the things you wrote about.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. F d. T e. F f. F g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| a. stirred up | created |
| b. footage | pictures |
| c. sparking | triggering |
| d. lambasted | berated |
| e. blatant | barefaced |
| f. quell | appease |
| g. extravaganza | spectacular |
| h. cut | edit |
| i. faux pas | blunder |
| j. aired | televised |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| a. stirred | up controversy |
| b. video | footage |
| c. Sparking | the biggest protest |
| d. drew | sharp criticism from |
| e. blatant | commercialism |
| f. an attempt to quell | the anger |
| g. host | nation |
| h. damage-limitation | exercise |
| i. unfortunate | mishap |
| j. did not intend | to insult Thai culture |

GAP FILL:

BNE: The Miss Universe 2005 contest has **stirred** up controversy in deeply Buddhist Thailand. Video footage and photographs showing bikini-**clad** contestants in front of sacred Buddhist monuments have angered Thai Buddhist leaders. **Sparking** the biggest protest was a photo shoot in front of the historical Wat Arun, or Temple of the Dawn, on the **banks** of Bangkok's Chao Phaya River. The promotional event **drew** sharp criticism from religious groups, which lambasted the event for its **blatant** commercialism. Preecha Kanthiya, director-general of the Culture Ministry's department for religious **affairs**, said if organizers want to **promote** Thai culture, "they should ask the contestants to wear Thai traditional costumes".

In an attempt to **quell** the anger many in the **host** nation feel, organizers of the beauty extravaganza quickly agreed to cut from its publicity videos all images of the contestants **posing** in front of monuments of religious importance. In another damage-**limitation** exercise, Thailand's Prime Minister asked Thais to understand the photo shoot was an unfortunate **faux pas**. He said: "I think the contestants did not intend to insult Thai culture. They just wanted to shoot pictures of beautiful places, but did not **realize** that the temple is sacred for Thais." The **edited** video will be **aired** on May 31, when the winner from the 81 contestants will be chosen.