

Wild weather

What is 'extreme' weather? Why are people talking about it these days? 'Extreme' weather is an unusual weather event such as rainfall, a drought or a heat wave in the wrong place or at the wrong time. In theory, they are very rare. But the media showed such extreme weather events not so long ago. Take just some news stories from 2019: bushfires in the Amazonia and Australia that caused unprecedented damage in their rainforests and forests respectively, a cyclone that hit Mozambique and several heavy storms in many parts of the world.



The effects of these phenomena are dramatic and lethal. Extreme rainfall events have

So, what is happening to our weather? Are these extreme events part of a natural cycle? Or are they caused by human activity and its effects on the Earth's climate? Peter Miller says it's probably a mixture of both of these things. On the one hand, the most important influences on weather events are natural cycles in the climate. Two of the most famous weather cycles, El Niño and La Niña, originate in the Pacific Ocean. The heat from the warm ocean rises high into the atmosphere and affects weather all around the world. On the other hand, the temperature of the Earth's oceans is slowly but steadily going up. And this is a result of human activity. We are producing greenhouse gases that trap heat in the Earth's atmosphere. This heat warms up the atmosphere, land and oceans. Warmer oceans produce more water vapour – think of heating a pan of water in your kitchen. Turn up the heat, it produces steam more quickly. Satellite data tells us that the water vapour in the atmosphere has gone up by four percent in 25 years. This warm, wet air turns into the rain, storms, hurricanes and typhoons that we are increasingly experiencing.

Climate scientist Michael Oppenheimer says that we need to face the reality of climate change. And we also need to act now to save lives and money in the future.

caused flooding and landslides which killed hundreds of people. Meanwhile, Australia, Pakistan and East Africa have been suffering from severe droughts. And then there are unexpected heat waves, such as in 2019 in Europe. That summer, at least 30,000 deaths were said to be heat-related.

Adapted from National Geographic Learning.

Reading comprehension:

1 The article says extreme weather is ...

- a becoming more common.
- b not a natural occurrence.
- c hard for scientists to understand.

2 According to the article, extreme weather is a problem because ...

- a we can't predict it.
- b it affects places where lots of people live.
- c it's often very destructive.

3 The causes of extreme weather can be...

- a satellites above the Earth.
- b water vapour in the atmosphere.
- c very hot summers.

Read the article again and choose the correct option.

4 What happened after the extreme rains?

- a There were unexpected waves.
- b There were many deaths.
- c Millions of people were affected.

5 What caused many deaths in Europe?

- a a period of hot weather
- b floods that followed a bad summer
- c a long drought

6 Which of these things is the basis of normal weather patterns?

- a greenhouse gases.
- b human activity.
- c El Niño and La Niña.

7 Where does atmospheric water vapour come from?

- a the land
- b the ocean
- c greenhouse gases

8 We can use satellites to ...

- a change where storms will happen.
- b trap greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.
- c measure changes in atmospheric water vapour.

9 According to Michael Oppenheimer ...

- a we don't understand extreme weather events.
- b we can limit the effects of extreme weather.
- c we can stop climate change.

Vocabulary:

Keywords box:

atmosphere /'atmosfia/

climate /'klaimet/

drought /draut/: a long period when there is no rain and people do not have enough water.

flood /flad/: covered in water.

heat wave /'hi:t weiv/: a period of days during which the weather is much hotter than usual.

landslide /landslaid/: a mass of rock and earth moving suddenly and quickly down a steep slope.

steam /sti:m/: the hot gas that is produced when water boils.

steady /stedi/: happening in a smooth, gradual, and regular way, not suddenly or unexpectedly.

typhoon /taifu:n/: a violent wind that has a circular movement, found in the West Pacific Ocean.

Complete the sentences with words from the *Keywords* box.

- 1 We had a _____ last year – the temperature was 35°C for 22 days.
- 2 A _____ crossed the Philippines in 2013 and it killed thousands of people.
- 3 Last year it rained for a week and there was a _____ of two metres in my town.
- 4 Greece has a Mediterranean _____ – the summers are hot but the winters are not very cold.
- 5 The Earth's _____ is 20 percent oxygen.
- 6 A large part of the coast fell into the sea in the _____ .

Grammar practice

A) Complete the questions by adding one word in the correct place. Find the answers to the questions in the article.

- 1 What 'extreme' weather?
- 2 Why people talking about extreme weather these days?
- 3 extreme events part of a natural cycle?
- 4 is happening to the weather?
- 5 What we need to do, according to Michael Oppenheimer?

B) Write questions for these answers.

- 1 Yes, it's very hot in Sydney today.
- 2 No, it doesn't rain much in the summer.
- 3 Yes, it sometimes snows in winter here.
- 4 Hurricanes usually happen from June to November.
- 5 A typhoon is a type of hurricane in the east.

ANSWERS:

Reading comprehension:

- 1- a
- 2- c
- 3- b
- 4- b
- 5- a
- 6- c
- 7- b
- 8 -c
- 9- b

Vocabulary:

- 1- heat wave
- 2- typhoon
- 3- flood
- 4- climate
- 5- atmosphere
- 6- landslide

Grammar practice:

A)

- 1- What **is** extreme weather? It's an unusual weather event like a rainfall, drought or heat wave.
- 2- Why **are** people talking about extreme weather these days? Because of the media and because many of these events happened at once in different countries.
- 3- **Are** extreme events part of a natural cycle? No, they aren't (they happen "in the wrong place or at the wrong time"; they are "a mixture of natural cycles and human activity")
- 4- **What** is happening to the weather? It's changing. Temperatures are going up and we're experiencing storms, hurricanes and other phenomena more and more often.
- 5- What **do** we need to do, according to Michael Oppenheimer? We need to face the reality of climate change and act upon it.

B)

- 1- Is it hot in Sydney today?
- 2- Does it rain much in the summer?
- 3- Does it snow in winter here?
- 4- When do hurricanes usually happen?
- 5- What is a typhoon?

