24 Plural adjectival nouns

Activity A

Some adjectives can be used with 'the' to form a noun referring to a category of people. Complete each of the sentences with the words below. Not all the words are needed.

the blind   the deaf   the destitute   the dead   the dying   the elderly   the faithful
the homeless   the injured   the insane   the jobless   the middle aged   the old   the poor
the rich   the sick   the squeamish   the wealthy   the wicked   the wounded   the young

1 Volunteers work here every night, serving sandwiches and hot drinks to _____.

2 He is learning sign language because he is interested in working with _____.

3 They held a short religious ceremony at the hospital, where everyone prayed for
   _____.

4 As paramedics helped _____, witnesses were saying it was a miracle no one was
   killed.

5 She works for a charity for _____, which pays for eye operations and restores sight
   to thousands of people around the world.

6 With its enormous mansions and exclusive restaurants, this is clearly the chosen
   neighbourhood of _____.

7 These tax cuts do nothing to help _____, who don't pay tax in any case.

8 The team is playing so badly this season that only _____ still watch every game.

9 Next door is a home for _____—all the residents are over eighty.

10 This documentary is not for _____, with its close-up footage of surgical procedures.

11 The new factory will need up to 1,000 workers, which offers new hope to _____ in
   the town.

12 Unemployment has hit _____ especially badly, with 40% of 16 to 20-year-olds out
   of work.

Activity B

Some of the words in A have largely been replaced to varying degrees in modern English by words or expressions that sound more acceptable to the people they refer to. Match each of the current expressions below to one of the words in A.

the visually impaired   the hearing impaired   people with severe mental illness

Activity C

Discuss the questions with a partner:

1 Why are words that describe categories of people often considered acceptable at first, but
   then unacceptable, for example *the insane*?

2 Do expressions become 'politically incorrect' in this way in your language? Tell your partner
   some examples.