

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

- Volunteers work here every night, serving sandwiches and hot drinks to _____.
- He is learning sign language because he is interested in working with _____.
- They held a short religious ceremony at the hospital, where everyone prayed for _____.
- As paramedics helped _____, witnesses were saying it was a miracle no one was killed.
- She works for a charity for _____, which pays for eye operations and restores sight to thousands of people around the world.
- With its enormous mansions and exclusive restaurants, this is clearly the chosen neighbourhood of _____.
- These tax cuts do nothing to help _____, who don't pay tax in any case.
- The team is playing so badly this season that only _____ still watch every game.
- Next door is a home for _____ – all the residents are over eighty.
- This documentary is not for _____, with its close-up footage of surgical procedures.
- The new factory will need up to ~~one thousand~~ _____ workers, which offers new hope to _____ in the town.
- 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:

- Why are words that describe categories of people often considered acceptable at first, but then unacceptable, for example *the insane*?
- Do expressions become 'politically incorrect' in this way in your language? Tell your partner some examples.