

Drowning in money

Level 3 | Advanced

1 Key vocabulary

Fill the gaps using these words from the text:

fortune
windfall

doom
obesity

submerged
predicament

catastrophe
expatriate

1. A _____ is a large sum of money that is acquired unexpectedly or through luck.
2. A _____ is a very large sum of money.
3. A _____ is a dangerous and unpleasant situation.
4. An _____ is someone who lives outside his or her homeland.
5. If something is _____ it is completely covered in water.
6. _____ is the state of being extremely overweight.
7. A _____ is a sudden disaster.
8. _____ refers to a bad fate or destiny.

2 What do you know?

Choose the best answer in each case:

1. Where is Tuvalu?
 - a. South America
 - b. Africa
 - c. The South Pacific
2. What is Tuvalu's dotcom address?
 - a. tu
 - b. tv
 - c. ta
3. What will happen to Tuvalu as a result of global warming?
 - a. It will become a tropical paradise.
 - b. It will disappear under the sea.
 - c. It will get more tourists.
4. How much does it cost Tuvalu to be a member of the United Nations?
 - a. \$1.5 million a year.
 - b. \$15 million a year.
 - c. \$150,000 a year.

Now look in the text and check your answers.

Drowning in money

Level 3 | Advanced

Tuvalu was the world's third poorest state until an internet deal made it rich.

Daphna Baram

If you came into a fortune all of a sudden, how would you spend it? And if you knew that your world as you know it was about to disappear, what would you do with the time you had left? For the people of Tuvalu, a tiny state comprising nine islands in the South Pacific, these are crucial questions.

In 1999 Tuvalu, with its population of 11,000, was the third poorest state in the world. But suddenly salvation was found, and from an extremely unlikely direction. Tuvalu received a domain name on the internet, which was none other than the letters ".tv". A communication company from California was quick to get in touch - buying the domain for the bargain price of \$40m. For the Tuvalans, with an average annual income of about \$1,000, this was a life-changing sum. The islanders became, or at least reacted as if they had become, very rich.

This sudden wealth was accompanied by a firm forecast of doom. Due to global warming, and because the islands are only 3m above sea level, Tuvalu is likely to be the first state in the world to be submerged by rising water levels. According to scientific estimates, the islands will be severely flooded within the next 15-20 years, and by the end of the century, the islands will have disappeared from sight altogether.

Signs of the catastrophe awaiting Tuvalu are already apparent on its slender ground. Ponds of seawater appear here and there,

stretches of beaches are swallowed by the waves and the roots of trees are rotting by the ocean. Cyclones, which used to hit the area as rarely as every 15 years, now appear a few times every season, and the rains they bring cause temporary floods.

But still, the Tuvalans had their newly acquired money. With that they could buy themselves a future. Or at least borrow more time. Paul Lindsay, a documentary film-maker, took these questions with him all the way to Tuvalu, and came back with a story that seems almost too strange to be true. As the water rises, the Tuvalans are using the windfall to develop the land that is soon to disappear. Buildings are being raised, nightclubs, restaurants and hotels are being planned and built, newly bought cars are cruising on newly laid roads. The residents do not think it is strange: "Just because we are sinking, it doesn't mean we don't want to raise our standards of living," Lindsay was told by Sam Teo, Tuvalu's minister for natural resources.

Of the \$40m raised by the internet deal, \$10m was used to asphalt the islands' 19km of roads. Before 1999 there were four cars on the islands. The Tuvalans used to walk or cycle everywhere. The minister for natural resources, who was in charge of paving the roads, owns one of the two petrol stations on the main island.

The motor revolution accompanied a wave of other imported foods and goods and soon had unexpected consequences. Many Tuvalans, having given up their daily exercise, were introduced to obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes. Others discovered that the maintenance of their vehicles was far beyond their means, and that the luxury itself is hardly necessary in a

Drowning in money

Level 3 | Advanced

state that is just 26 sq km. A huge area at the centre of the tropical paradise is now covered with abandoned cars and other rubbish.

For a while vast amounts of money were spent in an attempt to raise international awareness of Tuvalu's predicament. Tuvalu joined the UN, at a cost of \$1.5m a year. The delegate to the UN is the prime minister's brother, and the Tuvalan delegation was especially active in promoting the Kyoto protocol to fight global warming. But while the political system argues about the best way to face the rising tides, the sea keeps going up, and the dollars keep drifting away.

All Tuvalans know that they are not likely to die of old age on their islands. What to

do otherwise is trickier. Mass immigration to the nearby island of Kioa, populated with expatriates, is out of the question, due to its refusal to accept any more newcomers. Australia is far from enthusiastic about letting Tuvalans in, and New Zealand agrees to accept them on the basis of an annual quota. The hope of keeping the tiny nation as one community after the flood is highly unlikely.

After the eight months he spent among the Tuvalans, Lindsay is not sentimental about white sands and turquoise waters. "There are no more paradises. Tuvalu is struggling to keep its sense of social solidarity in the face of progress. Nowadays even paradise comes at a price".

The Guardian Weekly 25-03-2005, page 18

Drowning in money

Level 3 | Advanced

3 Comprehension check

Decide whether these sentences are True or False:

1. Tuvalu became rich because it sold its domain name.
2. The amount received was the equivalent of approximately \$36,000 for every Tuvalan.
3. Tuvalu will have disappeared completely within the next 15-20 years.
4. The Tuvalans have decided to spend their new wealth by organising emigration to neighbouring islands.
5. 25% of the money was spent on roads.
6. Tuvalu is against the Kyoto protocol on global warming.
7. Australia is willing to accept refugees from Tuvalu.
8. When the islands are finally submerged it is probable that the Tuvalan community will be split up.

4 Vocabulary - collocations

Find verbs in the text that collocate with these nouns and noun phrases:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. to _____ a fortune | 5. to _____ in touch |
| 2. to _____ awareness | 6. to _____ time |
| 3. to _____ the UN | 7. to _____ land |
| 4. to _____ salvation | 8. to _____ roads (3 verbs) |

5 Vocabulary - opposites

Look in the text and find words which are the opposites to these words:

1. poverty _____
2. enormous _____
3. frequently _____
4. predictable _____
5. very small _____ (2 possibilities)
6. passive _____
7. simpler _____
8. agreement _____

Drowning in money

Level 3 | Advanced

6 Grammar focus - future perfect (predictions)

Look at this example from the text:

By the end of the century, the islands will have disappeared from sight altogether.

Notice that this tense is often used with time expressions beginning with *by*: e.g. *by the end of the month, by 2010* and so on.

Make similar sentences using these key words:

1. 2015/Tuvalans/spend/all the money
2. end of the century/Tuvala/cease/to exist
3. end of the century/the sea/flood/the islands
4. 2010/Tuvalans/pave/the whole island
5. 2050/many Tuvalans/move/to other islands
6. 2080/most of the population/leave

7 Discussion

The Tuvalans have a lot of money but their country will soon be swallowed up by the sea. Make a list of the possible options that the Tuvalans have. How should they spend their money?