

Leonardo DiCaprio Devotes Off-Screen Time to Saving Planet

Difficulty:

AVERAGE

Date of release:

Wednesday 23rd November 2011

Discussion activities to be done after completing this EA lesson

Today's report is about Leonardo DiCaprio. What did you learn about his early life and the film he has just made? What interests does DiCaprio have when not filming? How is he helping the environment and what has he achieved already? What is Leonardo's current environmental project?

Extension discussion topics

A. Talking about and going over the specific topic / idea / issue in listening text

Introduction = What did you learn about Leonardo DiCaprio's early life, and his movie? What are his interests outside of movies? What is Leonardo's current environmental project?

1. What did you learn about Leonardo DiCaprio's early life and his new film?

- He grew up in Los Angeles.
- When he was 7 or 8 wanted to be a marine biologist.
- His new film is called J. Edgar, which is about J. Edgar Hoover, a former head of the FBI.
- It tells the story of how J. Edgar Hoover collected information about people, famous ones and not so famous ones.
- DiCaprio bought his first hybrid car over ten years ago.

Have you ever seen any of Leonardo DiCaprio's films? *Titanic* is one of his best known films. Which ones, and what did you think of them?

2. What does DiCaprio do when not making films, and what are his achievements outside of making movies?

- He is an environmental activist.
- He uses his iconic status to make people aware of environmental issues.
- He has set up his own Foundation to support many different environmental causes.
- This Foundation has worked on preventing shark-finning, and the killing of sharks.
- It has also campaigned against disposable grocery bags.

Did you know that Leonardo DiCaprio was an environmental activist? Do you know of any other famous people who support environmental causes?

3. What is Leonardo's current environmental project?

- It is concerned with saving wild tigers.
- There are only 3,200 wild tigers left in South-East Asia.
- There are more tigers in cages in Texas, than in the wild.
- DiCaprio recently donated a million dollars to projects to save the tiger.
- He says that to save the tiger, we need to preserve its habitat.
- The wild tiger's habitat is being destroyed by palm oil producers.
- He thinks the tiger campaign is similar to that which eventually saved the panda.

Are there similar projects aimed at protecting any animals in your country? Do you think the wild tiger will eventually be saved?

B. Expanding on (one of) the topics / ideas / issues in listening text

Topic = Caring for the environment.

1. How much do you think about the environment in what you do? Write a list of five things which you do to help protect the environment. (For example you might: drive a hybrid car, wash your clothes on 30 degrees, always turn off your appliances, reuse grocery bags, cycle to work, recycle paper, cardboard, bottles, clothes, have house insulation, etc.). Compare your list to a friend's. Are there actions you could take, which you don't? If so, why is this? How important are these issues to your friends and family?
2. In your country, what things does your government do to help you to recycle so as to protect the environment? Do they do any things to make it easier for you to recycle? If so, what, and is it enough? Is this a high priority for your government? Is recycling important to most people in your country? Is there any publicity about recycling?
3. Think about where you work, or have studied. Have these businesses or schools been committed to environmental issues? If not, why not do you think? If they were, what did they do? How did they help people to take part? For example, was paper recycled, heating controlled, were people encouraged to turn PCs off, or to cycle rather than use a car?
4. Hybrid cars are becoming more common. Do you have one? If so, why or why not? Are they popular in your country? If you don't have one, have you ever ridden in one? What was it like? Do you think they will become the norm and gasoline cars will disappear? What are the disadvantages of hybrid cars?
5. What green energy initiatives are there in your country? (Consider: hydro-electric power, wind power, wave power, solar panels, etc.) Have you seen any such schemes in action? Will they become more important? Will governments invest more in such initiatives? Will technology provide us with other solutions for green energy?

C. Extending discussion of (one of) the topics / ideas / issues in listening text

Topic = Good causes.

1. DiCaprio gives his time and money to projects to help the environment. What "good causes" do you prefer over others? Do you, or do you know anyone who does, do any voluntary work to help others? Do you often give money to charity? Why / why not? What are your preferred charities? Make a list of three reasons why people give money to charity. Compare this list to a friend's.
2. DiCaprio supports environmental projects. Do you think there are other more important causes than those of the environment? If so, what are they and why? What about projects for example with: old people, those without homes and who are living on city streets, orphans, children who are very sick, people with specific illnesses, poverty in, etc.? Put these issues in their order of importance for you, and compare your order of importance with a friend's. Tell each other why you have ordered them in this way.
3. Are there any major wildlife environmental projects happening at the moment in your country? What are they, what are their aims and what are they saving? What species of wildlife, plants or animals, are becoming less numerous in your country? What should be done to preserve them? Do you think they can be preserved, or is it still too late? What is your opinion of these projects? What is the role of your government in the project?

Audioscript

In his new film *J. Edgar*, Leonardo DiCaprio stars as J. Edgar Hoover, famous for making the FBI into a world-renowned law enforcement agency and infamous for the files he kept on Americans both in and out of power.

"Is that legal?"

"Sometimes you need to bend the rules a little in order to keep your country safe."

"What's interesting in this day and age to do a film about political espionage and wiretapping. I don't think that those types of secrets that J. Edgar Hoover was able to obtain and keep would be possible in today's world. With the Internet and 'Wikileaks' that doesn't seem that those types of secrets can be kept for that long a period of time."

It's no secret, though, that DiCaprio is a committed and vocal environmental activist. More than a decade ago he inspired a Hollywood trend by becoming the first among his peers to start driving a fuel-efficient hybrid car.

"I think that every car should have that technology. It really has dramatically less emissions and, not only that, the gas mileage is unbelievable and if we have the technology to make every car like that, and we should, we'd reduce our dependence on oil, foreign and domestic."

DiCaprio says he's been fascinated by nature ever since he was a child growing up in smog-choked Los Angeles.

"I actually wanted to be a marine biologist when I was very young. That was a great passion of mine, so I suppose in the off-season when I'm not making movies, I became more and more active as an environmentalist and tried to be more vocal about issues that I felt were important."

The Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation, that he established in 1998 to promote a sustainable future, has been active in issues ranging from eliminating disposable plastic grocery bags to ending shark-finning, the brutal practice blamed for a steep decline in shark populations around the world.

"Right now, the campaign that I'm a part of is to save the last remaining wild tigers throughout Asia. There's only thirty two hundred left in the wild. There's more tigers in cages in Texas than there are tigers in the wild and we are at risk of losing this iconic species for all time."

At an Asian tiger summit in Moscow last year, DiCaprio personally donated one million dollars to a program for protecting habitat as well as wildlife.

"Throughout Asia, a lot of countries are selling off jungle and forest rights for palm oil and for paper and pulp companies, and so it's more of a land preservation effort. Because if you can unify the public behind saving an iconic species like the tiger, like they did with the panda, that means you need to protect their habitat and everything that they hunt."

DiCaprio has won acclaim for his encyclopedic knowledge of the environment and sustainability. He says he uses his movie star status to draw attention to what he considers a global concern.

"It's important to everybody. I think that the environmental movement is the biggest people's movement in the world."

DiCaprio also brings his environmental activism into the workplace, requiring his film projects to adopt "green" practices to eliminate pollution and prevent wasting resources.

Alan Silverman for the Voice of America in Hollywood.