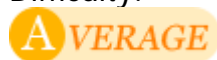


Deficit Threatens Ancient Italian Treasures

Difficulty:



Date of release:

Wednesday 7th December 2011

Discussion activities to be done after completing this EA lesson

Today's report is about some of Italy's very old and famous places such as Pompeii. What is happening to these historical sites at the moment? Why is this happening? What can be done to stop it?

Extension discussion topics

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

Introduction = What is happening to Italy's historical sites at the moment? Why is this happening? What can be done to stop it?

1. What do we learn in the report about some of Italy's historical places?
 - Pompeii was buried under volcanic ash from Mount Vesuvius in AD 79 and was found intact 300 years ago.
 - Pompeii is an important window into the ancient world.
 - A perimeter wall collapsed at the end of October.
 - Underground areas of Rome's Coliseum were flooded, and some mortar fell from the walls.
 - Parts of the Forum in Rome have also been underwater.
 - Pompeii, the Coliseum and the Uffizi in Florence; three famous sites are in a state of emergency.
 - Overall, many of Italy's ancient monuments are not being kept in a good condition.
2. Why are these places experiencing such difficulties?
 - Bad storms and torrential rain are causing flooding in Rome and damage to structures.
 - The authorities blame the recent torrential rains in Italy for causing the damage.
 - Lack of money is also being blamed for these problems by others.
 - Italy is facing an economic crisis.
 - Silvio Berlusconi cut heritage maintenance grants from forty million dollars to twenty-five million dollars.
 - Tsao Cervoli says money has been badly spent on marketing, rather than maintenance, at Pompeii.

3. What solutions are offered to the problems with these historical places?
 - The EU is offering to provide money.
 - They are offering 125,000,000 Euros for work on Pompeii.
 - The EU has an operational program for Italy named "Cultural Heritage".
 - Tsao Cervoli suggests that regular maintenance is what is needed for these ancient sites, not action every 20 or 30 years.
 - Tsao Cervoli predicts more frequent and serious damage to Italy's ancient heritage.

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

Topic = Italy.

1. What do you know about Italy? Note down an answer to these questions: What is its population? What are some of its major cities? What differences are there between the north and the south of the country? Who is the current President? What are its main economic activities? What is its currency? Compare your answers with a friend's and then check here - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy>
2. What popular Italian food dishes and ingredients, are there? (Suggested responses: pizza, pasta, olive oil, lasagna, focaccia, espresso, wines and gelato) Do you like Italian food, and if so which dishes are your favorites? Why do you like these dishes? Do you ever cook any Italian dishes, if so which ones? When did you last go to an Italian restaurant? What did you eat, and who did you go with? Why did you go? Do you ever order take-away pizza? What is your favorite pizza?
3. Have you ever visited Italy? If so, where did you go and what did you do? Who did you go with? When did you go? How long did you go for? If you have never been, would you like to? Why? What would be the most important things for you to see, and do? What would your order of importance be from the following: the beach, skiing, the mountains, the food or the famous historical sites?

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

Topic = The history of your country.

1. What was your country like in AD 79? What were the people who lived there called? What was their way of life like? What were the major problems they faced? Was it a part of the Roman Empire? Who ruled the country? Would you have liked to have been alive during this period? What might be the advantages and disadvantages of life back in AD 79 in your country, as compared to now?

2. What historical or ancient monuments or buildings are the most famous in your country? Where are they, and what do they look like? Why were they built? What do they celebrate? Are there any specific people associated with them? What condition are they in? Do people visit them? Who looks after them? Do they attract visitors from other countries? Are they known outside of your country? Have you ever visited them, if so, when and who with? If not why not?
3. *(NB. To be used with sensitivity)* What major conflicts have happened in the past in your country? What was their origin and what did they concern? What has been the outcome of these conflicts? If they were recent, do you know anyone who was involved? What part did they play?
4. Who are the three most famous people in your country's history? What are they known for and what did they achieve? Are they world famous? What is your opinion about them? Is their influence still visible today? How does your country recognize their achievements? Which one do you admire most, and least? Why? Are there any people whose achievements are not known around the world? Who are they and what have they achieved? Who is your country's most world-famous person at the moment? What is your opinion of them?
5. What achievements do you think your country is best known for? Think about areas such as music, books, plays, films, ideas, science, food, medicine, and politics. What contributions have people from your country made to the world in any of these areas? How influential have they been?

Audioscript

Archaeologists describe Pompeii as the world's most important window on the ancient world. A bustling town of the Roman Empire it was buried under meters of ash when the nearby volcano, Mount Vesuvius, erupted in AD 79.

The buried ruins were discovered by accident seventeen centuries later. Many of the villas, workshops and bathhouses were found largely intact.

But experts warn all that is now at risk thanks to Italy's economic crisis.

In late October an eight-square-meter section of a perimeter wall crumbled after heavy rain. A year earlier the famous House of the Gladiators collapsed.

Tsao Cervoli is President of Italy National Association of Archaeologists, and has worked extensively at Pompeii.

"We have received in the past few days and weeks new reports of antique structures collapsing in Pompeii. It happens every time funds become scarce."

Italy's President has called the damage "a national disgrace."

Opposition politicians blame the former government of Silvio Berlusconi for cutting heritage maintenance grants from forty million dollars to twenty-five million dollars.

The EU is offering to step in. European Commission member Johannes Hahn visited Pompeii shortly after the wall collapse.

"We have an operational program for Italy named 'Cultural Heritage,' and a certain significant part of this budget will now be used, one hundred five million euros, to start work here in Pompeii."

But archaeologist Tsao Cervoli says such intermittent funding is the wrong approach.

"What is needed is the same as for any owner of a house: regular maintenance to keep the house in good condition, not merely remembering every twenty or thirty years to intervene."

Cervoli criticizes Pompeii's authorities for spending grants on marketing not maintenance. In turn, the authorities blame recent torrential rains in Italy for causing the damage.

Those storms also damaged other famous monuments. Underground areas of Rome's Coliseum were flooded, and some mortar fell from the walls. Parts of the Forum were also underwater.

Tsao Cervoli says funding cuts and a lack of maintenance are putting countless sites at risk.

"In the last few years there have been calls for emergency aid for the three most important historical sites in Italy: Pompeii, the Coliseum and the Uffizi in Florence. Just think, if these three famous sites are in a state of emergency... then what condition* would you find all the other architectural and historic sites in Italy?"

With Italy's economy in crisis, Cervoli fears that the coming months will see even more frequent and serious damage to Italy's ancient heritage.

Henry Ridgwell for VOA News Pompeii, Italy.

* The speaker should say: *"in what condition"*