



DOOMSDAY CLOCK CLOSER TO MIDNIGHT THAN EVER



Scan to review worksheet

Expemo code:
1DEL-F25B-3IHB



1

Warm up

Read the definition of doomsday below. How close do you think we were to it in these years? Put them in order from closest to doomsday (1) to furthest (6).

doomsday (n) = the last day of the world, when humankind ceases to exist

- 1947 – WWII has recently ended
- 1953 – tensions in the Cold War rise
- 1991 – the Cold War has just ended
- 2007 – North Korea conducts first nuclear bomb test
- 2015 – threat of nuclear war still exists, added to risks posed by global warming and AI
- 2024 – War in Ukraine still in progress



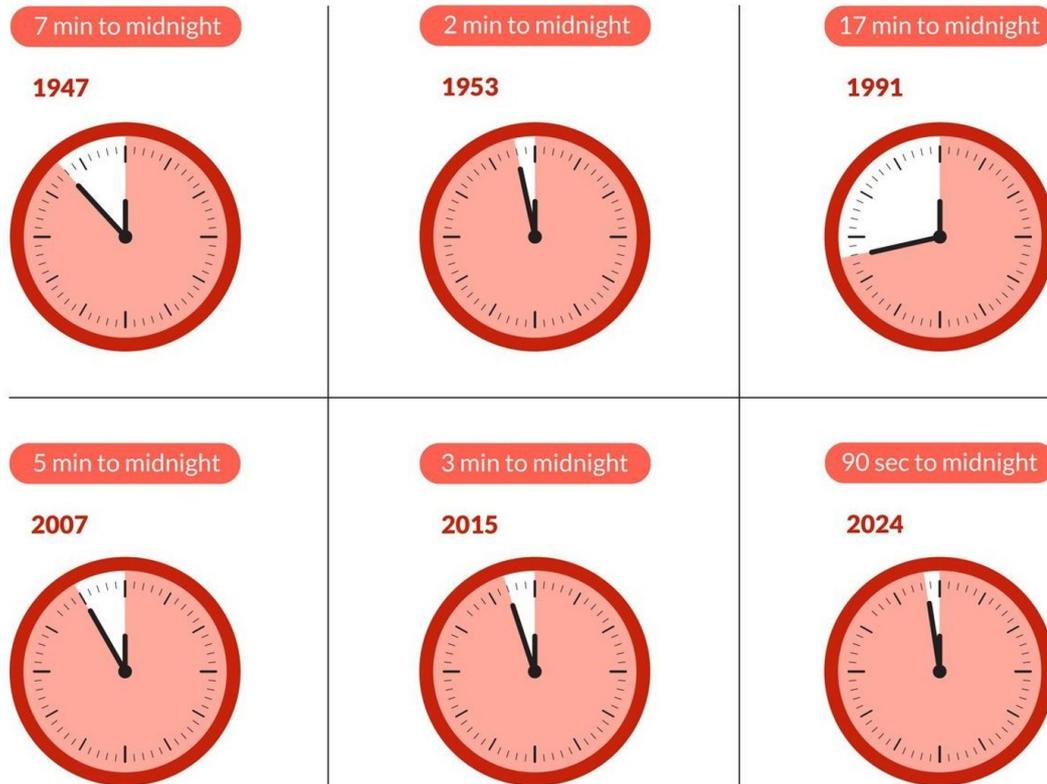


2

Listening



Part 1: Listen to the news report. How does the *Doomsday Clock* work?



Part 2: Listen to the news report again. Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?

- The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists make the decision of what time it is on the Doomsday Clock. _____
- The creators of the atomic bomb also invented the Doomsday Clock. _____
- Doomsday Clock has always considered all threats to humankind. _____
- Since the creation of the Doomsday Clock, we have never been closer to extinction. _____
- The scientists considered only the war in Ukraine to assess this year's risk. _____



3

Focus on vocabulary

Part 1: Complete the words with vowels and use the words and phrases to complete the questions.

1. c _ t _ str _ ph _ c (adj): that causes many people to suffer
2. _ nn _ hil _ t _ _ n (n): complete destruction
3. d _ ss _ t _ sf _ ct _ _ n (n): not being happy about something
4. _ rs _ n _ l (n): a collection of weapons
5. d _ v _ s _ (v): come up with
6. h _ st _ l _ ty (n): aggressive behaviour towards someone
7. _ nd _ rm _ n _ (v): make less effective
8. tr _ _ ty (n): an agreement between two or more countries

Part 2: Complete the gaps with the words from part A and answer the questions in pairs.

1. How do you feel about some countries having an _____ capable of destroying our planet?
2. What reasons do governments have to show _____ towards other countries?
3. What was the most _____ event in history?
4. What events can _____ global peace efforts?
5. Is it possible to _____ a global agreement that can prevent war altogether?
6. What is most likely to lead to the _____ of humankind?
7. Why do you think some governments choose to ignore international _____?
8. How do people often express their _____ with the actions of governments?





4

Reading for general context

Read the article about the Doomsday Clock. Were you correct in your predictions in the Warm up task?

The Doomsday Clock in history

At just 90 seconds to midnight, humankind is the closest it's ever been to extinction, according to experts at the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. Check out where the clock hands stood in other key moments in history.

1. 1947 – seven minutes to midnight

When the Doomsday Clock was created, WWII had recently ended with the catastrophic nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. J Robert Oppenheimer (about whom Hollywood has recently made a blockbuster), along with his fellow creators of the atomic bomb, wanted to make sure nothing like that would ever happen and devised this tool to warn global leaders of how close we were to annihilation.

2. 1953 – two minutes to midnight

In this year, tensions between the US and the Soviet Union were rising. It was the early years of the Cold War, which would last until 1991. On November 1st, 1952, the US tested the first thermonuclear weapon, many times more powerful than those dropped at the end of WWII. In response, the Soviets tested their own hydrogen bomb in August the next year.

3. 1991 – seventeen minutes to midnight

The Doomsday Clock went to its furthest away from midnight this year due to the end of the Cold War. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, hostilities between the two global powers decreased. The Berlin Wall fell, the Iron Curtain was lifted and other significant political events took place. An unsuccessful invasion of Afghanistan and internal dissatisfaction led to the end of the Soviet Union, giving rise to 15 independent nations.

4. 2007 – five minutes to midnight

Even though a nuclear war is still considered by most experts the main threat to humankind, in this year the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists started taking into account other global issues that could potentially result in the destruction of the planet. This change, added to North Korea conducting its first nuclear bomb test in 2006 and concerns that Iran might also be developing theirs, led the clock closer to midnight.

5. 2015 – three minutes to midnight

The modest efforts made to address climate concerns were considered insufficient by the body of scientists that control the Doomsday Clock. In addition, the United States and Russia started to modernise their nuclear arsenals, which undermined nuclear weapon treaties. The hands were brought even closer to midnight because global leaders were failing to address global risks appropriately and to ensure the preservation of humankind.

6. 2024 – 90 seconds to midnight

Despite requests for the hands to be brought even closer, the time on the Doomsday Clock remained at the same position as in 2023, which is the closest it has even been to midnight. This is largely due to the war in Ukraine, which, apart from itself being a threat to the existence of mankind, also undermines other global efforts to deal with other issues. Among the major threats identified this year are biological concerns, particularly regarding a new pandemic, the lack of significant action to deal with climate issues and the unregulated development of artificial intelligence.

sources: [bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.com), thebulletin.org



5 Reading for comprehension

Read the article again and answer the following questions.

1. How far from midnight is the Doomsday Clock today?

2. What did the creators of the Doomsday Clock also invent?

3. Who was the Doomsday Clock a warning for?

4. When was the first thermonuclear bomb tested by the Americans and the Soviets?

5. Which year did scientists believe there was the lowest risk of a Doomsday?

6. What did the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists start considering in 2007 (apart from nuclear war)?

7. What did the modernisation of American and Russian nuclear weapons weaken?

8. Where's the Doomsday Clock this year compared to last year?



6 Reading for details

Complete the missing words and phrases from the article on page three.

1. _____ lives: (para. 1) = kill people
2. the _____ years (para. 2) = the initial period
3. giving _____ to (para. 3) = causing to happen
4. taking into _____ (para. 4) = considering
5. potentially _____ in (para. 4) = possibly lead to
6. _____ efforts (para. 5) = little action
7. _____ due to (para. 6) = especially because of
8. _____ regarding (para. 6) = especially about



7

Focus on language



Complete the report with one word from the box in each gap. Then listen again and check.

at
should

been
since

its
such

on
was

According to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, we have never _____¹ closer to the end of the world. Each year, these scientists are responsible for deciding where the hands _____² be on the Doomsday Clock. This device _____³ created in 1947 by Oppenheimer and other American scientists involved in creating the atomic bomb to represent the risk levels of total global destruction – the closer to midnight, the higher the chances of the world ending. It started as a tool to warn global leaders of the risk of a nuclear war, but _____⁴ 2007, it also considers other man-made global threats such as climate change and concerns with AI. Since _____⁵ creation, the Doomsday Clock has changed 76 times, and on January 23 this year, it was decided that it currently stands _____⁶ 90 seconds to midnight, the closest it has ever been. As a comparison, in 1998, when India and Pakistan staged nuclear weapon tests, the clock stood at 9 minutes to midnight. The scientists' decision this year was based _____⁷ the ongoing war in Ukraine, biological concerns _____⁸ as the possibility of new pandemics, climate change and the development of artificial intelligence.

8

Talking point

In pairs, discuss the questions below.

1. What can members of the public do to help bring the Doomsday Clock back?
2. What is the biggest threat to humankind, in your opinion?
3. Is the Doomsday Clock useful? Why (not)?
4. Do you agree that the risk levels of annihilation have never been higher?
5. What do you think of survivalists (people who prepare for the end of the world, for example by building underground bunkers)?





9

Optional extension / homework

Part 1: In groups, discuss how you think the world will end using the cards below.

Student A

You believe humankind will cease to exist because of nuclear war.

Student B

You believe humankind will cease to exist because of climate change.
Research statistics and prepare your arguments.

Student C

You believe humankind will cease to exist because of a pandemic.
Research statistics and prepare your arguments.

Student D

You believe humankind will cease to exist because of artificial intelligence.
Research statistics and prepare your arguments.

Part 2: In pairs, choose one situation and write a short dialogue. Perform it to the other students.

1. You want to bring the hands of the clock closer to midnight compared to last year.
2. You want the hands of the clock to be further from midnight compared to last year.



Transcripts

2. Listening

Newsreader: According to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, we have never been closer to the end of the world. Each year, these scientists are responsible for deciding where the hands should be on the Doomsday Clock. This device was created in 1947 by Oppenheimer and other American scientists involved in creating the atomic bomb to represent the risk levels of total global destruction – the closer to midnight, the higher the chances of the world ending. It started as a tool to warn global leaders of the risk of a nuclear war, but since 2007, it also considers other man-made global threats such as climate change and concerns with AI.

Newsreader: Since its creation, the Doomsday Clock has changed 76 times, and on January 23 this year, it was decided that it currently stands at 90 seconds to midnight, the closest it has ever been. As a comparison, in 1998, when India and Pakistan staged nuclear weapon tests, the clock stood at 9 minutes to midnight. The scientists' decision this year was based on the ongoing war in Ukraine, biological concerns such as the possibility of new pandemics, climate change and the development of artificial intelligence.



Key

1. Warm up

5 mins.

Ask students to consider the events and think of how they represent a risk to humankind. They then order the years from the highest level of risk to the lowest. Answers may vary. Elicit some ideas, but do not confirm nor deny them at this stage because they will confirm their ideas when reading the article.

2. Listening

Part 1

5 mins.

Students listen to the news report and discuss in pairs how the clock works. Correct as a whole class. Sample answers:

The clock indicates how close we are to doomsday (the closer the hands are to midnight, the higher the risk); the position is decided each year by a board of scientists; when created, it referred only to the risk of nuclear war, but now it takes into consideration other global threats.

Part 2

5 mins.

Students read the sentences and try to remember if they are true or not. Students then listen again to the news report to confirm. Elicit correct answers, as well as why the false sentences are incorrect.

1. True (they determine the position of the hands each year)
2. True (Oppenheimer and other American scientists involved in creating the atomic bomb)
3. False (Only since 2007 – before that it only considered nuclear war)
4. True (90 seconds to midnight is the closest it's ever been.)
5. False (also the possibility of new pandemics, climate change and the development of artificial intelligence)

3. Focus on vocabulary

5 - 10 mins.

Part 1

Ask students to read the definitions and complete the words with vowels. They then complete the questions with the words and discuss the questions in pairs. Elicit some ideas as a whole class.

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1. catastrophic | 2. annihilation |
| 3. dissatisfaction | 4. arsenal |
| 5. devise | 6. hostility |
| 7. undermine | 8. treaty |

Part 2

Students then complete the gaps with the words from part A and answer the questions in pairs.

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. arsenal | 2. hostility |
| 3. catastrophic | 4. undermine |
| 5. devise | 6. annihilation |



7. treaties

8. dissatisfaction

4. Reading for general context

5 mins.

Ask students to read the article and check how accurate they were in the first task of the worksheet. Elicit which students got the most years in the correct order and why they chose that order. The correct order, according to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, would be: (1) 2014; (2) 1953; (3) 2015; (4) 2007; (5) 1947; (6) 1991.

Article sources:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-68017445><https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/timeline-and-statements/><https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-64390663><https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20220119-how-to-read-the-doomsday-clock>

5. Reading for comprehension

10 mins.

Students read the article again and answer the questions. Tell them they can write one, two or three words, but if two or three, they must come together in the article.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. ninety seconds | 2. the atomic bomb |
| 3. global leaders | 4. 1952 / the next year |
| 5. 1991 | 6. other global issues |
| 7. nuclear weapon treaties | 8. the same position |

6. Reading for details

5 - 10 mins.

Students find a word in the text to complete the phrases given. When correcting, elicit other example sentences with the phrases.

- | | |
|------------|-----------------|
| 1. claim | 2. early |
| 3. rise | 4. account |
| 5. result | 6. modest |
| 7. largely | 8. particularly |

7. Focus on language

15 mins.

Ask students to complete the extract with one word in each gap. They can rely on what they remember from listening, as well as which words fits grammatically. They then listen again and check. After correcting, you can use the extract to practise shadowing, i.e., play the extract one more time and students read out along with the speaker (not afterwards).

- | | |
|---------|-----------|
| 1. been | 2. should |
| 3. was | 4. since |
| 5. its | 6. at |
| 7. on | 8. such |



8. Talking point

5 mins.

Students discuss the questions in pairs. Elicit some ideas as a whole class.

9. Optional extension / homework

Part 1

15 mins.

Students discuss how you think the world will end using the cards. Form small groups and assign a role to each student.

Part 2

10 mins.

In pairs, students choose a situation, write a dialogue and perform it to the other students. Students then choose the best performances.