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## TRANSCRIPT

[Luke]

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Hello listeners and welcome back to Luke's English Podcast. This is a podcast for learners of English all around the world.

If you are a learner of English and you are around the world, then welcome.

This is one of the last episodes of Luke's English Podcast for 2025. Could even be the final episode of the year, in fact.

I'm not sure. We will see. Anyway, goodbye 2025, hello 2026, happy new year, best wishes, seasons greetings, and all those things.

Today on the podcast, for the fourth year running, it is time for the annual World News Quiz with Stephen from the Simple English News Daily Podcast. That's the Send7 podcast, which you may well listen to. This is going to be a quiz about events that were in the news this year.

My guest Stephen is going to be the quiz master. He's prepared the questions. I will be answering the questions, but you can play along with me, listeners.

Will you know the answers? Will I know the answers? Will you be able to understand the questions?

Will I be able to understand the questions? Can I beat my performance from last year, which hopefully won't be difficult? And perhaps most importantly, can you beat me?

Can you score more points than me in the quiz this time? That is what's coming up in the episode today.

Let's say hello to Stephen, though, first.

Hello, Stephen.

[Stephen]

Hi, Luke. That was a fantastic introduction. I loved it.

Yeah, it's great to be back. Great to be back on Luke's English Podcasts, the OG of English podcasts. It's great to be back for the 2025 World News Quiz.

I'm excited to get going and see if you can beat your score from last year.

[Luke]

Hopefully, I will. We'll remind everyone of the score. Well, beating last year's score shouldn't be too difficult, but we will see if I can beat my average score.

Stephen, just remind us about your podcast, first of all, if you would.

[Stephen]

Absolutely. Simple English News Daily. It's a seven minute long daily news show.

It's every day, Monday to Friday. In seven minutes, we go around the world. Somebody described it once as a helicopter tour of the world.

I love that description. It's not mine. Thank you if you're the person who said that.

[Luke]

Is it possible to fly around the world in a helicopter? Just wondering.

[Stephen]

Maybe if you had loads and loads of refuelling stops, you had lots of other helicopters to keep refuelling you the whole time, and supplies to last you for a year or something. It might be possible.

[Luke]

How long would it take?

Anyway, this is a side question.

[Stephen]

It is a side question to the question of what it is. Anyway, in seven minutes, we say a couple of stories of what's happening in Europe, a couple of stories of what's happening in Africa, a couple of stories of what's happening in Asia and Oceania, a couple of stories of what's happening in the Americas.

We try and make you feel like you know what is happening on that day, everywhere in the world. And it's designed for people who are learning English. So everything is a little bit slower than it would be in the BBC News or something like that.

Said in slightly more simple terms, kind of upper intermediate style of English. And yeah, Simple English News Daily, also known as SEND7, which just in case anybody hasn't realised yet, stands for Simple English News Daily in 7 minutes. And yeah, you can find it in your favourite podcast app, or however you are listening to Luke's English Podcast right now.

[Luke]

Okay, very good. Another question for you before we begin.

Are you drinking your mate tea as usual?.

[Stephen]

It's become a bit of a tradition that whenever I'm doing the world news quiz, I get out the mate. Yeah, that's right.

[Luke]

As usual, Stephen is drinking from his cup of mate through the metal straw. That's an Argentinian thing, right? Steele.

[Stephen]

Yeah, it is. Yeah, yeah. This is actually the bottom half of a gourd, which is like a kind of, it's from the pumpkin family.

It's more similar to, what do we call it here? Butternut squash. And you can actually get mates that are made from both sides of them.

But this mate is made from the bigger half. I've got another one, which is the thinner half on the top. If you can imagine a butternut squash coming up like that.

Mate, of course, all of the yerba, the green stuff that goes inside, I think it's only made in Argentina. Sorry if I'm wrong about that. Maybe there's a little bit made in Brazil or something.

So it's all imported. So hey, there you go. That's my air miles.

[Luke]

That's the good stuff, isn't it, right? That is the good stuff.

The proper Argentinian yerba mate. It's a kind of tea. And apparently it's very good for you and keeps you going.

So shout out to all of the other mate drinking lepsters out there.  
Team yerba mate. That's right.

Get in the comments section, everyone. Okay. So, right.

Look, we need to get into the quiz. But before we do that, I do need to say a few things. Listeners, everyone, hello.

I just need to say a few things before we start the quiz. Just a few words. I think Stephen, actually, at this point is happy to let me speak for him as well here.

Is that okay by you, Stephen? I think you know what I'm going to talk about briefly now.

[Stephen]

Yeah, yeah. So last year we decided to make a little notification at the beginning, and I think you're about to do that. So yeah, I agree.

I agree with everything you're about to say. Okay.

[Luke]

Right, so here we go. So my podcast, listeners, as you know, is intended to be an entertaining show for learners of English around the world. And generally, I do try to keep the tone of these episodes quite lighthearted and humorous.

You've probably noticed that. I mean, it can be serious sometimes, and obviously I am serious about helping everyone with their English. But generally, I try to keep the tone quite light, and there are jokes and things like that.

And that is the spirit in which we're doing this episode today, a fun news quiz to end the year. But of course, 2025 has seen plenty of very troubling events in many places around the world. Of course, we have seen and continue to see some very harrowing and disturbing stories happening in many places, and for many reasons.

We see and read about these stories in the news all the time. Stephen talks about them all year round on his podcast. And Stephen and I have decided, though, not to include questions in the quiz this year that deal specifically with stories of that nature, because we feel it just wouldn't really be appropriate considering the tone of the episode, right?

Which, as I said, is supposed to be quite lighthearted, really. So we won't be covering those sorts of things in this quiz. But we don't want to ignore serious issues, and we would like to mention some of them now before we start the quiz properly.

It's important to acknowledge and mention these things, and to remember people who've suffered and continue to suffer terrible hardships as a result of so many tragic, disastrous, and appalling events this year. Mainly here, I'm things like the various wars and armed conflicts, natural disasters and climate events, accidents, and infrastructure failures, and more. All of which have led to catastrophic impacts being experienced by many people.

So the way I'm going to do this is exactly what I did last year, and that is simply to read the first three paragraphs from the Wikipedia page for the year 2025. I've chosen this Wikipedia page because it gives us a pretty clear overview of the year's major news events.

This is not going to include absolutely everything, and it will only take a few minutes.

But it does cover a lot of some of the most serious major events that happened in 2025. So let me just open up Wikipedia. So again, the first three paragraphs of the Wikipedia page for 2025.

Here we go. 2025 is the current year, and is a common year starting on Wednesday of the Gregorian calendar, the 2025th year of the Common Era and Anno Domini designations, the 25th year of the third millennium, and the 21st century, and the sixth year of the 2020s decade. The year has seen an escalation of major armed conflicts, including the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which began peace negotiations involving Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump, although they have not yet yielded any specific agreements on the issue.

And in fact, this year saw an increase in long-range missile and drone strikes. Also, the Gaza war, including a famine and humanitarian crisis, as well as the Sudanese civil war. Also, they both continued throughout the year.

Internal crises in Armenia, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, France, Georgia, Germany, Haiti, Peru, Somalia, and South Korea continued into this year, with the latter leading to President Yoonsouk Yul's arrest and removal from office. The year has also seen a wave of protests, predominantly led by Generation Z, or is that Generation Zed in British English, Gen Z? With some, like those in Nepal and Madagascar, resulting in the overthrow of governments.



Several brief conflicts out of long-standing tensions emerged mid-year, India and Pakistan in May, Iran, Israel in June, and Cambodia, Thailand in July, in which a leaked phone call involving Thai Prime Minister Patangan Shinawatra... No, that's not right.

[Stephen]  
Patangan Shinawatra.

[Luke]  
Say it again, please.

[Stephen]  
Patangan Shinawatra, I think.

[Luke]  
Thank you, Stephen, that's why he's here. Patangan Shinawatra and Cambodian Senate President Hun Sen resulted in the removal of the former. In economics and business, the return of Donald Trump to the US presidency ushered in a series of tariffs levied by America on the rest of the world, significantly disrupting global trade, in addition to reinvigorating the China-United States trade war.

The technology sector was additionally hit with the release of DeepSeek's Chatbot, a Chinese large-language model which competes with ChatGPT. Aviation and aerospace also saw accidents this year, including when Air India Flight 171 crashed in Ahmedabad, India. Several advances in space exploration were made as well, including the first crewed polar orbit spaceflight, and the first successful landing of a spacecraft on the Moon by a private company.

So there you go, that's just the first three paragraphs from the Wikipedia page for 2025. The page then goes on to list more details in chronological order about the various other significant events that happened throughout the year. Of course, when we think of many of the stories that are mentioned there, we are reminded of the suffering of ordinary people, including in many cases children.

We read these things and we feel a sense of despair. But there are some things that we can do. One of those things is to support humanitarian aid workers who do their best to access people who are suffering, and simply help them as much as possible with medical assistance, food, clothing, and other forms of support.

One organisation doing work like this is Doctors Without Borders, or in French, Médecins Sans Frontières, MSF. What they do is focus on bringing medical care to people affected by conflict, disasters, epidemics, and social exclusion. Doctors Without Borders is an independent organisation, and it acts with complete impartiality.

This means that they provide help to people irrespective of nationality, race, political or religious ideology, or any other distinction. This is why they are called Doctors Without Borders. They offer help to everyone.

This independence of action is rooted in its funding, which was 99.7% privately funded in 2024. I guess we just don't have the figures for 2025 yet because they're not available. But anyway, 99.7% privately funded in 2024. This is why our support is so important, because this direct method of financial backing is what helps them stay independent. Our direct support for Doctors

Without Borders through donations allows them to continue to operate with no associations with governments or other political entities, allowing them to focus only on providing help to those who need it, and ensuring that the vast majority of the funds donated to them goes directly to people in need. Last year, for example, 89% of their funding was allocated directly to social missions.

That's obviously not 100%, but it's very high, which is rare for this kind of charity work. So please consider donating to Doctors Without Borders or MSF in order to help people around the world who are in need. Just go to [doctorswithoutborders.org](https://doctorswithoutborders.org) and click donate. Alternatively, you can find it just by searching on Google or whatever for MSF, and that will take you to the right place as well. And you'll find a link in the description of this episode. So that's just what I wanted to say at the beginning of the episode.

Now it's time to turn our attention to the quiz, which Stephen has prepared. Stephen, what's in store for me today?

[Stephen]

Well, just like last year, and I should say, excellent start by the way. That was really important what you said there. But yeah, just the same as we have done for the last few years, there are 20 questions.

So I would recommend, if you're walking along or something like that, maybe it's a bit more difficult, but if you're at home, maybe just get a piece of paper or something and try and keep track of your score. So if you get one right, you can give yourself a little tick, put something out of one, something out of two. And after every question, I'm going to try to remember this year to say how

much Luke has got so far, how many points Luke has got so far, going from one to 20.

I think you said that you've actually found what you've got for the last few years, right? Did you want to say that? Yes.

[Luke]

I've checked and I've seen my previous scores. So this is the current state of things. In 2022, when we first did this, I got 15 out of 20, which I considered to be a respectable score of 75%.

By the way, I've worked out. I've kind of come up with a grading system. So essentially, 60% is the pass mark as far as I'm concerned, right?

Anything less than 60% is a fail. I don't know what happens if you fail or pass this exam. I don't know.

You get basically fired out into space. You're not allowed to live on Earth anymore. That's the way it is.

If you get less than 60%, then you will be shot out into space for not knowing what's going on on Earth.

[Stephen]

-But you must have got less than 60% on one of them. I'm sorry to say this, but I'm sure there has been one year that you've got less than 60%.

[Luke]

First year, I got 75%, which gave me a B. So 60% to 69% is a C. 70% to 79% is a B.

80% to 89% is an A. 90% to 100%, that's an A star. Anything less than that in your 50s is an F, basically.

Something like that. It's a vague system. First year, I got 15 out of 20.

2023, I actually improved. I got 16 out of 20 and beat my previous year, it seems. But then last year, I dropped the ball and I got only 8.5 out of 20. I consider that to be dropping below the general dignity level of 50%, and into the F range. That is certainly less than the 60% pass mark. I was fired out into space.

I managed to use the Princess Leia technique from Star Wars Episode...what is it? I can't remember. Star Wars Episode 8?

The controversial Princess Leia forced space flight technique, where she manages to fly back from space using the force, even though she's frozen. Anyway, people who are familiar with the Star Wars franchise will know what I'm talking about. Other people will just think I've lost my mind.

Can I do that? My average score over the last three years is 13.166666667, which basically rounds up to 66%. I want to try and beat 66%, my average.

If I get worse than 8.5%, I'll be fired back out into space again, and I'll have to find my way back. Hopefully, I will pass. Hopefully, I'll get at least 12, but let's see.

The main thing, listeners, are you able to beat me? Will you get more questions right than I am? I think we really need to start the quiz now.

Everyone's like, come on, for crying out loud! When's it going to start?

[Stephen]

. Okay. As usual, you're going to leave a little break so that you don't say your own answer straight away, so that there's some breathing room, thinking room for the listener to jot down their answer, or just think their answer.

[Luke]

If you don't mind, listeners, I'm going to try to say my answers out loud. I'm going to say out my thinking. I'm going to think out loud, so I will ramble a little bit while thinking before I actually arrive at the answer.

I'm going to get a piece of paper for myself as well, if you don't mind.

[Stephen]

Okay. There you go. That's your time to grab some paper, everyone, if you're doing so.

Okay.

[Luke]

We've all got pens and paper ready. Okay. Let's do this.

[Stephen]

Okay. Here we go. So, we're starting in January, as the year does start, and we're starting in the United States.

Donald Trump became President for a second time in January, and he roped in his friend, the richest person in the world, Elon Musk, to run a new government agency. The aim of this government agency was to save the United States government lots of money. What was the name of that new government agency?

[Luke]

Right. Okay. I think I know the answer.

I'm relieved that I'm going to start the quiz in a good way. So, listeners, do you know the name of the government agency that Elon Musk set up? It's also kind of like a meme reference.

A reference to a meme, isn't it? Of that dog, that dog that everyone on the internet loves so much, which has got its own funny name. So, it's an acronym, isn't it, listeners?

Do you remember the acronym? It's Department of Governmental Efficiency. Is it Department of Government Efficiency, or Department of Governmental?

I think I'm going to say the Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE for short.

[Stephen]

Well done, Luke. You have got one out of one. Excellent.

Nice one. Excellent. There we go.

That's the first one done. Yes. DOGE, the Department of Government Efficiency.

That's right. It was set up by Elon Musk under the orders of President Trump early this year with the aim of saving lots of money. Musk said originally that he was hoping to cut \$2 trillion, find \$2 trillion worth of savings.

He didn't manage to do that. It's really difficult to find how much he did actually manage to save in the end. But the IRS, who is the Government Revenue Service, they're the people who collect taxes and things like that.

They actually made a report saying that the overall effect of DOGE was actually probably going to cost the US a bit of money, because the savings that it made were relatively small, but there was actually going to be a lot of revenue lost in the form of cuts. You didn't hear it from me, but that's what the IRS said, the tax people.

[Luke]

Revenue in the form of cuts? You mean tax cuts?

[Stephen]

Yes, I think so. The amount that they get in tax cuts would be cut, or something like that, but the IRS said that the overall effect of DOGE would actually be slightly negative rather than positive, which is a bit weird.

[Luke]

Oh God. Yeah, okay. Interesting.



Yes.

[Stephen]

One out of one, Luke. Brilliant start. 100% so far.

Okay, we're sticking in January. If you were... the Wikipedia entry might have helped you with this one, but anyway, I didn't know that.

Anyway, number two, also in January, a Chinese artificial intelligence chatbot surprised the industry with how good it was, and AI tech stocks lost billions of dollars, although they've come back since then, but what was the name of the Chinese AI chatbot, or the company which creates it, which has the same name? What is the name of that chatbot, the Chinese AI chatbot, which surprised the world, or the company which creates it, but it's the same name?

[Luke]

So listeners, of course you may well already know the answer, but if you were listening carefully I said it in my little rambling monologue intro earlier. Yeah, so this is a chatbot that searches in a very profound way for information. It's a large language model.

It's a rival to ChatGPT and other large language generative AI models, including Google Gemini and stuff. It's DeepSeek. DeepSeek is the name of it.

[Stephen]

That is absolutely right. Two out of two. Wow, you're flying, Luke.

[Luke]

Can't believe it.

[Stephen]

Two out of two.

[Luke]

Takeoff has been reasonably successful so far. Let's see if I can keep this trajectory going and blast up into the upper levels of the quizmasphere. Quizmasphere?

That's the atmosphere of a quiz. I don't know what I'm talking about there, but I just made up a new word. Merry quizmas as well, yeah.

[Stephen]

Okay, right. Let's move along. Number three.

This is the last United States based question, just in case anybody's thinking, why is he sticking there? No, we're going around the world in a minute. Throughout January, there were massive wildfires which destroyed homes and businesses in a coastal city in the United States, destroying over 18,000 homes and buildings and causing an estimated \$50 billion worth of damage.

Which city were the fires mostly based around?

[Luke]

Right. California city, listeners. You must have seen this in the newspapers.

In the newspapers. Are there still newspapers? I don't know.

[Stephen]

Oh, I buy all of the newspapers that are sold. Yeah, I'm the only person that still reads physical newspapers, Luke. Yes.

They're still going. They're still going, yeah. They're keeping me afloat.

[Luke]

To be fair, when I do go back to the UK, I'll make a point in the supermarket of stopping by the newspapers and just having a good look at them. Just getting my fill of British newspaper headlines.

[Stephen]

That's mostly what they exist for these days, is just for people like you to walk past the newspaper section, look at the front covers and then walk off.

[Luke]

There's always a picture of Kate Middleton on one of them somewhere. The Daily Express. Yes, usually.

That's their main stock in trade, isn't it? It's just publishing pictures of Kate. Anyway, we're getting distracted from the question, which is, wildfires in which coastal city on the west coast of the United States?

It's in California. My cousin lives there. It's Los Angeles.

[Stephen]

That is absolutely right. It is Los Angeles. Well done, Luke.

Well done. You're making it quite difficult for people to compete against you so far because you got three out of three. Maybe some people who are listening have got three out of three as well.

To say something else about those Los Angeles fires, these are some of the people who lost their homes in those fires. Mel Gibson, Jeff Bridges, Billy Crystal, Paris Hilton, Anthony Hopkins, Eugene Levy, Adam Brody. Loads of really big names.

One thing that really struck me with those fires was that you just think, if it can happen to them, it can happen to anybody. It really makes you put your life into perspective of all of the objects that you own and things like that.

[Luke]

Often in the case of natural disasters, it's the poor people or the communities with no money that are affected. You can just see that climate catastrophes like this just affect everyone. I guess maybe except the super rich, like the 0.01% who are so rich that they can have a couple of properties in Malibu burned to the ground and they're not that badly affected by it. It's terrifying stuff. My cousin lives in Los Angeles. Luckily, their home didn't burn, but they had to evacuate.

They had to escape the city with parts of it on fire. Lots of smoke everywhere in the air. It must be very frightening.

Yeah.

[Stephen]

The area that was burned was huge. So many homes and so many areas where everything was gone, which was just so surprising about it. As you say, rich people basically out on the streets.

Not on the streets, but having to take shelter somewhere, which is such a rare thing to see. But he was alright, your cousin?

[Luke]

Thankfully, him and his family were absolutely fine. His home, yes, was saved from the fire. They were just between two of the fires in an area just between.

Luckily, it didn't spread in that direction, but it must have been terrifying for them and his kids. He's got little kids. Horrible.

Absolutely.

[Stephen]

Question number four. We're jumping all the way ahead to April now, but on the 28th of April, why did people have to be evacuated from trains in Spain and Portugal?

[Luke]

Trains? Only trains? Well, I know that, again, we're still in the area of climate related catastrophes here, I think.

Unless I'm barking up the wrong tree, I know that there were some environmental disasters in Spain. If I'm right, it also included Portugal, parts of it. I suppose people must have been evacuated from a number of things, if I'm thinking about floods.

Surely floods would make people evacuated from their homes as well, but I can imagine how could a flood make people evacuated from a train? If the flood waters came in so quickly, the train got stranded, or even surrounded by water. Trains?

Multiple, plural trains? I think it's the floods. I'm going to say floods or flooding, but I'm not quite sure how.

To be honest, I don't know all the ins and outs of the story, but I'm going to go with the answer of flooding.

[Stephen]

It's not right. No, we've got one wrong. We've got one wrong.

Dropped from 100% to 75% in one swell swoop. No, I'm afraid not. It was not floods.

Although you're quite right that there were a lot of fires as well in Spain, it wasn't that either, actually. On the 28th of April in particular, hang over a little bit on the next day, but on the 28th of April there was almost complete power cuts in Spain and Portugal just for that day. It affected virtually everything on the whole Iberian Peninsula.

You had people who had to be evacuated from the underground metro stations, metro trains, overground trains, which is why I stuck to the trains idea to make it a little bit more complicated. Of course, you didn't have traffic lights working, so you had to have people in the streets, police in the streets navigating all of the traffic and things like that. Do you know what?

In preparation for this question, I was trying to find what the cause of the power cuts were. It just still doesn't seem to be a fully understood thing. It seems to be a bit of a random event.

Something went wrong in one particular place, and it had a bit of a domino effect of a surge in power going to the next one, which knocked that one off, which surged the power to the next one and knocked that one off. It eventually spread to the whole of Spain and Portugal and a little bit of the southeast of France as well. The answer to question four is simply power cuts.

If you said something like a drop in electricity, power cuts, electricity cuts, something like that, blackouts, that will get you the point. For you to be beating Luke right now, you need to have got number four. There you go.

Power cuts, something like that. Did you miss that, Luke? Did you not know that that happened?

[Luke]

Well, I suppose this explains the dip in podcast listening statistics for the 28th of April in the Iberian Peninsula, which you can't have missed, Stephen, when looking at your podcast stats. It's like, hmm, what happened here on just zero for this particular day? I'm joking there.

I didn't notice. I wasn't aware of that. Having said that, I did hear about a massive power outage in that area.

I just hadn't quite placed it on that particular date. You say that they still don't know exactly what caused it. I think there's only one possible answer then.

It must be aliens. That's the only logical conclusion.

[Stephen]

It's the only reasonable thing to assume.

[Luke]

Yeah, I think so. Aliens trying to stop us from realising the truth that the Earth is flat. I think that's what's going on there, obviously.

[Stephen]

That's what it is. Speaking of aliens, question five. Also in April, an all-female space flight took place using Jeff Bezos's private space company, Blue Origin.

Which pop star was on board? If it's possessive, it's Jeff Bezos. Jeff Bezos's private space company, Blue Origin.

Which pop star was on board?

[Luke]

Now I do know this. To be honest, I feel like they've made fools of themselves a little bit, because she came down and then she did this video on Instagram or something where she was talking about how, I did this for the world. I did this for everyone in the world.

You mean you took an incredibly expensive flight into space that burned up however many kilos or tonnes of rocket fuel, pouring all of the emissions into the atmosphere, polluting it all for the world's population so that you could go up and see the Earth from the edge of space. Not even full space, I think. Then she told us that she did it for us.



How was that for us? I don't understand. So it annoyed me.

That's why I remember that it was Katy Perry. .

[Stephen]

Yeah, it was Katy Perry. You have nailed this question, and you've also nailed the main criticism that people had of her when she came down from that. Yeah, exactly right.

It seemed to be much more negative than positive, the audience reaction to her going up into space, singing on the way and singing on the way back. It did count as space though, because she went above a certain barrier, which I can't remember the name of now, which means that they did go into space. But yeah, that's right.

It was with Jeff Bezos's company, with his wife that I can't remember the name of, and a few others. I should know these things, right? But hey, I don't.

Yeah, well done. Well done. It is Katy Perry.

There you go. So you've got four out of five so far, Lew. You're doing very well.

Is that 80%? It is 80%. Yeah, four out of five, 80%.

Yeah, nice. Okay. Let's see if we can keep that up.

Number six. So another thing that happened on the 28th of April, apart from the Iberian Peninsula power collapse. Also on the 28th of April, Canada had a general election.

Liberal leader Justin Trudeau had resigned a couple of months before, because his Liberal Party was way below the Conservative Party in the polls. However, somehow the Liberals did come back and win that election. What is the name of the leader that took over from Justin Trudeau and is today Canada's Prime Minister?

[Luke]

See, this is just one where I'm not going to be able to speculate my way towards the answer. This is a, you know the person's name or you don't know the person's name. Frankly, listeners, I do not know the person's name.

What's the name of the Canadian Prime Minister? Still the Prime Minister now, right?

[Stephen]

Still today, yeah.

[Luke]

Okay. So this is definitely something I should know. The Prime Minister of one of the Western world's major nations.

One of the major nations in the world. I don't know, Stephen. I don't know.

I've lost a point.

[Stephen]

Damn it! Ah, you have. You have lost a point.

And I suppose if I tell you that he was formerly the Governor of the Bank of England, that's probably not going to help, is it?

[Luke]

Governor of the Bank of England? Yes.

[Stephen]

And Canada as well. But yeah, at separate times.

[Luke]

Ah, no. That's not helping me.

[Stephen]

It's not going to help. It's not going to help. Okay.

His name is Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada. Mark Carney. Mark Carney.

Yeah, yeah. The thing that was so surprising about this was the way that it happened. There was this real dip in support for Justin Trudeau.

Justin Trudeau was Prime Minister of Canada for about 10 years or something. And he became really unpopular at the end of last year and the beginning of this year. And so he stepped aside and Mark Carney came in and took his place as the leader of the Liberal Party.

But the Conservative Party was so far ahead in the polls. And then within the space of two months, between say February and April, they just lost it completely. And the Liberals came back.

It was something like, you know, they went from almost half of the people wanting to vote for them down to 20% or 30% or something like that. And the Liberals did the opposite and actually ended up winning. And there's a few different factors that this could be attributed to.

But one of the main ones, go ahead.

[Luke]

I was going to say, if you can let me speculate on the factors. Please do, yeah. So you're saying that Conservatives were way ahead and then February into March into April comes along and suddenly their polling dips dramatically.

Is it that the Conservatives do very well when it's cold and when the weather warms up and the snow melts, everyone's like, you know what? I'm a bit more comfortable. I think I'm going to vote Liberal.

Is that the reason? Is there a correlation between snowfall and support for the Conservative Party in Canada? That's the only thing I can think of based on my basic knowledge.

But you're going to tell us what the other factors could be.

[Stephen]

I was not expecting you to say that. I've got to say, I thought you were about to say one of the couple of ideas that genuinely are. But no, that is not one of them.

Although maybe you should become a political analyst and start mixing the climate and political voting in there.

[Luke]

Climate's driving everything, Stephen.

[Stephen]

It is. It is in a way.

[Luke]

Maybe not quite as directly as that.

[Stephen]

What you were talking about was slightly more weather rather than climate. If it's just a day-to-day, I'm a bit warmer today, maybe I can vote Liberal. Anyway, that was not it.

No, I thought so. There were a few things. One thing is just having a fresh face.

But part of it was probably, most analysts seem to agree, that it was the way that Donald Trump was talking about Canada becoming the 51st state and putting tariffs on Canada and things like that. There was this backlash, this kind of revival of Canadian nationalism, which actually benefited the party which was, well, Liberal. The side which was not supported by Donald Trump, who Donald Trump wanted the Conservatives to win.

And the Conservative leader, Polliaire, he found it quite difficult to distance himself from Trump. Also, he needed the votes of people who did like Trump and that kind of idea. So there was this kind of way of seeing it where you could actually say that Trump actually helped the Liberals to win that election, in a way, by driving this nationalism which actually helped the Liberals.

In fact, I don't want to plug my podcast too much because I already did that at the beginning of this episode. But you've had Brie on here before, haven't you?

[Luke]

Malcolm Rees Yes, we have. We talked about raising kids to be bilingual.

[Stephen]

Jason Vale Ah, lovely.

[Luke]

Malcolm Rees Brie Acy.

[Stephen]

Jason Vale Yeah, Brie Acy. She was on Simple English News Daily a few weeks ago, and we spoke about this. It's a really, really good analysis.

She can describe it much better than I just have, of what happened. It was really interesting to see this rise in Canadian nationalism, which Brie said she hadn't seen in Canada during her lifetime. It was kind of caused by this.

There you go.

[Luke]

Malcolm Rees I should have guessed that, because obviously Trump coming in had profound effects on everyone in terms of nations in the world. But certainly on Canada, because obviously next door neighbours, but also that they said that Canada was the

51st state, and making all of these very aggressive statements. Also talking about Greenland, talking about occupying Greenland.

So naturally, of course, the Canadians look at that and they think, well, obviously we used to see him as some sort of clown, but he's a lot more empowered these days. Maybe he's actually serious, considering some of the things that he's done. We need to take that quite seriously.

Naturally, that caused a rather rapid move against the Conservatives, who as you say, were kind of backed by Trump. You can imagine how the Canadians would essentially run screaming from that option towards something a lot more Canada-orientated. Yeah.

[Stephen]

James Ruhfus Yeah, yeah. That's it. Anyway, okay, so that was number six.

You've got four out of six, so we're down to 66.66666%, I think.

[Luke]

Malcolm Rees Yes, yes, that's right. I'm just hovering above the pass mark here, but I'm still safe at the moment. We've got 14 questions yet to come.

[Stephen]

James Ruhfus That's right.

[Luke]

Malcolm Rees Everything to play for.

[Stephen]

James Ruhfus Everything to play for. Number seven, which Asian city overtook Tokyo to become the most populous city in the world, according to the United Nations? The United Nations did a new...they slightly changed their way of counting and did a new survey. They have declared that the most populous city in the world is not Tokyo anymore. It's another city which is in Asia. Which city is that?

[Luke]

Malcolm Rees Right. Again, let me just talk around the question a little bit while the listeners think. Yes, Tokyo is certainly massive.

I've lived near there and have been up skyscrapers in the centre of Tokyo. You look out from the top of a very tall building in the centre of Tokyo, and all you can see is just built up area, concrete if you like, until the horizon in some directions. You don't start to see greenery, you just don't see any.

It's just city all the way to the horizon, and you're standing at the top of a very tall building. It's quite unbelievable how the metropolis stretches out and incorporates other cities and towns. It's just unbelievable.

But no longer, apparently, the most populous city in the world then. I know because I read about this. I did a bit of homework.

I was reading that Wikipedia article. It's Jakarta in Indonesia, the capital of Indonesia. It is Jakarta which is now, apparently, the most populous city in the world according to the UN.

That's right, isn't it?



[Stephen]

That is right. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well done.

Well done, Luke. It is Jakarta. Yeah, that's right.

The capital city of Indonesia. Yeah, Jakarta is now the most populous city in the world according to this new United Nations data. In fact, Tokyo isn't even second anymore according to this.

Second now is Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, and third is Tokyo.

[Luke]

Oh, wow.

[Stephen]

But there you go. They're all in Asia, are the top three. Yeah, that's it.

Well done. Nice homework doing there, Luke. You've got five out of seven.

[Luke]

Yeah, I'm doing okay. I'm doing okay. Listeners, how are you getting on?

Are you keeping score? If you are, there'll be someone out there with seven. Some clever person.

A listener to Send7 has got seven, and the listener's got seven. You see seven. It's Send7.

I've got seven points. We love the number seven. Let's see if you can get to eight, though.

It's not the Send8 podcast, is it? No.

[Stephen]

It's not. It's not. Okay, on the 8th of May, Pope Leo was chosen as the new pope after the death of Pope Francis.

Which of these is not true about Pope Leo? Which of these is not true about Pope Leo?

[Luke]

Listeners, he's going to give some options.

[Stephen]

There's four options. Four options. One of these is not true.

You've got to choose what's not true. He is the first pope from the United States. He is the first pope to hold Peruvian nationality.

He is the first pope born in the Americas. Or he is the first pope with modern English as a first language. Or second, if you could include an old version of English.

I'm going to say all of those again because it's quite complicated, especially if you've not got a pen and paper in front of you. I'm going to read all of those again. Which one of these is not true about Pope Leo?

I'll say it in ABCD. A. He is the first pope from the United States.

B. He is the first pope to hold Peruvian nationality. C.

He is the first pope born in the Americas. Or D. He is the first pope with modern English as a first language.

Or second, if you include old English.

[Luke]

Oh, okay. Because there have been some old popes who had old English as a first language.

[Stephen]

Yeah, a thousand years ago.

[Luke]

Potentially, potentially. So that last option is the first pope who speaks modern English as his first language?

[Stephen]

Yes. Yes.

[Luke]

Okay. I thought you were going to add another. I thought it was going to be, he's the first pope who can fly.

He's the first pope who's got superpowers. So, let's see. Let's see.

He was born in the United States, listeners. He was born in the United States. Born in the USA.

He was. So he was born in the USA, right? We know this.

First American pope from the US. But he's got Peruvian roots. I guess his parents are Peruvian, so I guess he has a Peruvian passport, Peruvian nationality, as well as being from the US.

And he's got to speak modern American English. So it has to be the fact that he's...you said first pope born in the Americas. When you say the Americas, though, that includes the United States.

So that is true. So how can...

[Stephen]

So we're looking for the one which is not true.

[Luke]

Exactly. So if he was born in the USA, then he is also born in the Americas, because that's the same. USA is in the Americas.

[Stephen]

Shall I read them all again, just so you can clarify this? Here we go. They all start with, he is the first.

[Luke]

Oh, first!

[Stephen]

Right, so it's three. He is the first pope born in the United States. B is, he is the first pope to hold Peruvian nationality.

C is, he is the first pope born in the Americas. And D is, he is the first pope with modern English as a first language.

[Luke]

I think he's first pope from the US, first pope with Peruvian nationality, but not first pope from the Americas, because of course, we've had other popes from the Americas. Of course we have. The previous pope was Argentinian, wasn't he?

[Stephen]

So your answer is... My answer is C.

[Luke]

He's not the first pope to have been born in the Americas. We've had other American popes.

[Stephen]

Yeah, yeah, that's absolutely right. Yeah, that's good. Well done.

Nice working out there, Luke. Yeah, that's true. Okay.

He is the first pope from the United States. He is the first pope to hold Peruvian nationality. Although I don't think what you said there about his heritage was quite right.

I think it's... No? No, I don't think so.

I think he, um, uh, is...

[Luke]

Sorry, sorry, uh, sorry Catholics. Sorry, I just want to say sorry to the Catholics. Sorry.

[Stephen]

That's okay. They forgive you. They're very forgiving people.

They are. Yeah, they will forgive you. Um, he, he, I think he actually got the Peruvian nationality just because he, uh, worked, um, as a priest, bishop, whatever in the, in Peru for a long time, 10 years or 20 years or something like that.

And he got his Peruvian nationality like that. I think he's just, um, you know, United States, uh, born and bred, I believe. Um, but also the last one, he is the first pope with modern English as a first language.

That is true. And the reason I said, second, if you include old English is because there was a Pope from England, uh, something like a thousand years ago or something, but it wasn't, it probably, I'm not sure whether that would have even been the same kind of English that we, uh, that we know and love and teach today. So I don't think so.

So that's why, um, he, he is the first Pope with modern English as a first language, but he is not, as you quite rightly said, option C, he is not the first Pope born in the Americas because Pope Francis, who died this, this year, the previous Pope, he was the first Pope born in the Americas. He was born in Argentina and, uh, yeah, he is, he was Argentinian. So yeah, he was the first Pope born in the Americas.

So that was the correct answer. Sorry if that was a bit complicated, everybody to, uh, to, to do from home, but yeah, if you got that one, right, it's, he is, he is the first Pope born in the Americas. That's not true.

He was not the first Pope born in the Americas.

[Luke]

Okay. Very good. Very good.

Very good. Yes. Um, yes.

Yeah. All right. Six out of six out, six out of eight, six out of eight, six out of eight.

My percentage is, is improving.

[Stephen]

Yeah.

[Luke]

I don't know what, uh, what's the six hour. Oh, come on. I should be able to work out a percent.

So three quarters again, 75%, 75% again. All right. We're doing okay.

Let's keep moving forwards. We are approaching the halfway mark here.

[Stephen]

And we're halfway through the year as well, cause we're in July now.

[Luke]

So Switzerland held the women's Euro football championship, which teams were in the final Switzerland held the women's Euro football championship, which teams were in the final of the

women's Euros. Okay. I'm going to be, I'm quite ashamed of myself because the information doesn't jump immediately into my head, which obviously means that I'm a terrible misogynistic, uh, sexist, um, unreconstituted male.

Um, but, uh, I think it's the lionesses. I think England were in there. I think England were in the final.

He says studying Stephen's face for clues, trying not to move my face. He's trying, he's trying to keep a poker face here, not to give anything away. I think I'm, I think England are in there, but I don't know who the other team is.

It wasn't Spain again. It wasn't England versus Spain again. Was it?

I don't think it was. Um, I'm ashamed to say Stephen that I don't know the answer. I should guess the other team, um, Germany.

[Stephen]

Oh, Luke, it was England and Spain. You said it's not Spain. I'm sorry to all the women, all the girls.

[Luke]

I'm so sorry.

[Stephen]

Why was that the first one? The first one that you chose and said not, I mean, you actually said it.

[Luke]



It was the world cup, wasn't it before England versus Spain, but they met each other again. Of course they did.

[Stephen]

It was the double up.

[Luke]

Yeah. Yeah. How did I miss that?

I'm sorry, everybody.

[Stephen]

Yeah. Yeah. Um, yeah, that's right.

Um, and, and Spain were the world champions and England were the European champions from four years before. And, uh, England beat Spain in the final. So England actually won the Euros again, uh, on penalties albeit, but yeah, there you go.

[Luke]

So, um, even more reason to be ashamed that I didn't know that that wasn't on my radar.

[Stephen]

You didn't know it, know it, but you did say England involved.

[Luke]

So I guess the problem is I'm going to give my excuses now is that I jumped off Twitter at some point, I think maybe earlier this year, you know, after it became X, I just left. And that's because I was being exposed to all sorts of horrible posts on there that I wasn't interested in, but previously I've got a lot of my news and memes

and viral clips and stuff on Twitter. And that would have definitely included a lot of stuff about the England women's football team, otherwise known as the lionesses winning the Euros.

[Stephen]

I'll give you another excuse for free. You don't live in England, you live in France. So it's just not going to be quite as, quite as big as it is here.

[Luke]

Yeah, sure. That's right. You just walk down the street in England and, you know, yeah, you can't fail to see these things in the newspapers and all that stuff.

But, yeah, these are excuses though, Stephen.

[Stephen]

Yes, they are. Anyway, you didn't get that one right. You got six out of nine.

Six out of nine. Okay.

[Luke]

Hanging in there with, what is that? 67 point something percent, I think. So question 10, here we go.

Let's get another point. Let's try and drag my dignity back here.

[Stephen]

Okay. Yeah. You didn't get one from your country of origin, but let's see if you can get one from the other side of the world entirely.

In Australia, after months of a highly watched court case, a woman, Erin Patterson, was found guilty of killing three of her in-laws and the attempted murder of her estranged husband. The case received so much interest that many podcasts were made about it, and her sentencing was the first to be broadcast live. How is Patterson accused of killing her in-laws?

[Luke]

So that's her in-laws. That's her mother-in-law and father-in-law. That's the parents of her husband, I assume.

Unless it's her wife, but I think it's probably her husband. So her husband's her mother-in-law, father-in-law, she killed them, or she was accused of?

[Stephen]

She was found guilty.

[Luke]

She was found guilty. Okay.

[Stephen]

It's a bit of a Cluedo question, because I am asking you, how?

[Luke]

How did she do it? I'm not going to list all the possible ways she could have done it.

[Stephen]

With a candlestick in the library or something like that. How did she do it?

[Luke]

Like the game Cluedo. How did she kill her in-laws? Don't know the story, Stephen.

I don't know the answer. So let's see, listeners. Okay.

What would be the most likely way? Can I ask you just a question? Just a little bit.

Just give me a little clue. So was the killing a pivotal part of why the case was interesting?

[Stephen]

Yes, absolutely. The reason that it was such a big story, and it made international headlines, and the reason that it was...I honestly thought that you were going to know this one. The reason that it was so widely reported around the world was specifically because of how she was accused of killing her in-laws, and she was found guilty of killing her in-laws.

It was the method, which is the interesting thing about this story. Yeah.

[Luke]

So what is it? I've got no idea. So I'm just going to say that she poisoned them somehow, I reckon.

I think she's poisoned them. She's made them...I don't know. What's a typical Australian dish?

Well, it's a barbecue, of course, but you wouldn't poison someone with a barbecue. Not on purpose, anyway. You might do it by accident.

I don't know. I think she's made them a cake, poisoned it, they've eaten it, and then they've died. Then she became famous.

I'm wrong. I'm obviously wrong. Go on.

What's the answer?

[Stephen]

Do you know what? I can't give you that because you're not right enough, but you are correct that it's poisoning, but you didn't say the key word. The key word is this.

Mushrooms. Mushrooms? Mushrooms, yeah.

That is it. Wild mushrooms. Exactly right.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. So what she is accused of is of deliberately putting poisonous mushrooms into a...I think it was a Beef Wellington, or Mushroom Wellington, or something. Anyway, a particular dish that she cooked for the in-laws, the relatives of her estranged husband.

Her husband actually didn't come to the dinner, although he was invited, which was part of it. Three of the in-laws died, and another one was severely injured and was in hospital. She only ate a tiny little bit, was in hospital for a little bit, but then came out.

She is accused of, and was found guilty of, deliberately putting these poisonous mushrooms into this meal. But her case was based around her saying that it was an accident, that she had gone into the forest and picked some mushrooms. She thought that they were safe, and she's used that kind of mushrooms before, but that she put those deadly mushrooms in this food by accident.

Anyway, it was massive in Australia, and I think it was quite widely reported around the world as well. I'm sure if Send7 listeners were listening at the time, they would know the answer to this. We reported on it a few times.

The case took a few months and was broadcast in Australia, almost like a bit of a show. Eventually, she was found guilty in the end a few months ago.

[Luke]

Yeah. . Wow.

One of those televised court proceedings, which obviously becomes completely compelling as you see witnesses being cross-examined and giving their statements. You see evidence being presented, and then you no doubt see the defendant being questioned, being cross-examined by the prosecution legal team. I can imagine how fascinating that would be.

Again, I didn't catch any of that. I think the year has flown by so quickly, and I haven't been keeping up with these things. I feel like I could easily slip here and not score any more points, depending on the...

[Stephen]

I'm sure that's not true.

[Luke]

We will see. That's a fascinating story. Her defence is that it was an accident, but I wonder what kind of mushrooms they were.

If they were obviously poisonous mushrooms, and definitely nothing similar to the sorts of mushrooms that she would normally cook, then she would have no case, right? I wonder what the details were of that. Wow.

What a way to do it. What a... If indeed she is guilty, then that is a really kind of...

What's the word for it? Meticulously planned and quite cold-blooded thing. It's like something out of a Roald Dahl short story, or something like that.

[Stephen]

-That's right. Apart from English learning podcasts, another extremely popular form of podcast is true crime podcasts. I can't remember how many shows, but quite a few podcast series that were made just about this case.

Hey, if you've got some time over Christmas and New Year, maybe you could listen to one of those.

[Luke]

-Yeah, The Mushroom Murders. Hello, listeners. The Mushroom Murders.

That does sound fascinating, doesn't it? Yes. Anyway, hello.

We are halfway through the quiz at this point. How are you doing? I hope you're enjoying this.

Are you keeping score? Any idea what score you've got so far? I really enjoy these world news quizzes, but it is, I have to say, quite embarrassing if I get any of the questions wrong.

But let's see what's going to happen. Let's see. I know, obviously, because this is Luke from the future, so I know what's happened.

But, oh, it gets very dramatic from now on. I wonder what you prefer. What do you prefer?

When I get a lot of the answers right, or do you prefer it when I get a lot of answers wrong? I think maybe people enjoy it more when I get things wrong, and that's judging by reactions to last year's episode when I got loads of questions wrong, and everyone seemed to be enjoying that. But I just wanted to interrupt here to give you a reminder.

There is a PDF for this episode, as usual, with a full transcript of everything. So if you want to check what you've heard, you can read everything in the PDF. That can be a good way to check what you're hearing, to record certain phrases if you want, you can copy paste them, and generally to consolidate your learning from this episode, you can check out the PDF.

The link is in the description. Also, on the website page for this episode, you'll find all of Stephen's questions listed with answers given below as well. And that could be useful for you if you feel like you didn't understand any of the questions in the episode.



You can always check them out there and sort of think about them in your own time. The answers are given as well. So this is the last free episode of 2025.

If you're listening to this in 2026, then hello, happy new year. Premium subscribers will get one more episode before the end of the year, and it's a really useful one. It's a pronunciation episode with some tongue twisters that focus on common problems that learners of English have with fluent English speech.

For example, if you feel like it's hard to understand everything that Stephen and I say in an episode like this, or the ones with Amber and Paul, if you find it hard to follow fluent English speech, it's probably because of the way we naturally connect our words when we speak or the way that certain words don't get pronounced fully. These are normal features of fluent English connected speech. And these tongue twisters that I've come up with are designed to help you with that, to understand fluent speech and also to produce it yourself.

So that's P74 for premium subscribers arriving on the last day of 2025, January the 31st. So that will be the last episode of Luke's English Podcast, but that one's a premium one. Otherwise, if you're just a free subscriber, this is the last episode of 2025.

Remember, you can get 20% off Luke's English Podcast premium, and that lasts for a full 12 month cycle. But hurry, hurry, hurry, because that offer ends at midnight on the 31st of January. So your chance to get 20% off for 12 months ends on the 31st of January, 2026.

And you can also offer Luke's English Podcast premium as a gift to a loved one, and you get 20% off that as well. Okay, right then. So let's get back into the quiz with the second half, and here we go.

[Stephen]

Okay, right. We're halfway through. Number 11.

Here we go. Oh, so you've got 6 out of 10, by the way. That's an easy one to do.

60%. Number 11. In Sweden, something surprising happened to a 113-year-old church in August.

What was it? In Sweden, something surprising happened to a 113-year-old church.

[Luke]

God actually came and visited? Oh, I did it again. They'll forgive me, won't they, the Christians?

I was baptised. It was just a joke. So what happened to a 103-year-old church in Sweden?

113-year-old church in Sweden, what happened to a 113-year-old church in Sweden? He says, desperately trying to guess while not knowing the answer. A 113-year-old church in Sweden, something happened to it.

Well, it fell over. It floated into the air. What are the possibilities?

What things happen to churches? Got struck by lightning twice, which is quite common for a church. They're quite tall.

Oh, visited by an important person. Oh, I'm not sure. It got repainted.

It's going to be a lot more interesting than that. I've got no idea at all, Stephen. I'm terribly sorry, everybody.

But maybe you know, listeners. Maybe you're laughing in enjoyment with glee because you've got one right and I'm about to get one wrong. What's the answer, Stephen?

[Stephen]

The answer is it was picked up and moved five kilometres. The entire church was picked up off of the floor and it was moved five kilometres. There are these fantastic pictures and images of all of the town coming out and watching.

There's this special, massive trolley which has been made to move this church. It was actually made of wood, but it's still a proper church. It's massive.

They moved it five kilometres away. There was a mine that was very close to it or something like that. It was bad for the land or something.

So they actually moved the entire church. There you go. That's what it is.

It had 224 wheels, the trolley. They had to take down all of the signs and lights and things like that around the roads because it went over both sections of a road. They had to take down everything that was around the road to be able to move it down.

Yeah, some really amazing pictures. But you didn't see it.

[Luke]

. No. But you know what?

Having said that, I definitely remember hearing about a church being moved now. It's all part of the blur of emails and little bits of news and all the myriad bits of information that fly into my eyes during my crazy, busy days. There's a vague memory of a church in Sweden moving down the road.

But damn. No, it wasn't at the forefront of my mind. So damn it.

I've slipped down to below the pass mark.

[Stephen]

Yeah, you are below the pass mark now. Six out of 11. My math isn't good enough to divide things by 11.

[Luke]

It's less than 6%.

[Stephen]

It's 5.5, isn't it?

[Luke]

It's 5.5?

[Stephen]

Sorry, what am I talking about? Around 55%. Not exactly.

Anyway, let's make it better with this. We're going to Argentina now. So, in September, a painting which was stolen by the Nazis during World War II was discovered in Argentina.

How did a Dutch newspaper discover the painting?

[Luke]

They saw it with their eyes. Oh god, it's another one I don't know the answer to. You can't give me any kind of clue.

[Stephen]

It's horrible when you don't know the answer.

[Luke]

Yes, it is. Can I make an appeal to you, Stephen? Can you give me some sort of clue?

[Stephen]

Okay, well, you were right that they saw it with their eyes, but how? It was in someone's house.

[Luke]

Okay, so a Dutch newspaper discovered the painting somehow. It was in someone's house. Well, I suppose they went to that person's house to cover a story, and while they were there, the reporter saw it and went, hold on a minute, I recognise that from the days of Nazi Germany.

Unlikely. Or some other way that they would have somehow gained access to the house, either physically by a person going in there, or somehow seeing it through a window, or maybe a video conference call happened, or they just used special alien X-ray

technology to look through the walls and into the basement. No clue whatsoever.

I think maybe the occupants of the house were featured in some sort of story, and there was the picture in the background, and someone noticed it and went, hold on a minute, that's my grandad's painting that the Nazis stole. I don't know.

[Stephen]

, do you know what? I think if I'd have let you kept on rambling for another five minutes, you would have eventually got there. But no, it's none of the things that you've said so far.

It was that the house was put up for sale on a real estate agency's website, and they left the painting, this stolen painting, on the wall in those photos. And so there it is above a sofa. It's just in the real estate agency's images of the house for sale, and this Dutch newspaper, which they did already suspect that it had been stolen by this person who moved to Argentina, and it was there in that house.

I mean, that person obviously died a long time ago, but it was their children who had it in their house. They suspected that it was there, and they tried to investigate a few years before, but the family wouldn't let them in and stuff like that. But eventually, when they went to sell their house, they were silly enough to leave the painting up on the wall.

And then this Dutch newspaper got in contact with the Argentinian authorities, and the Argentinian authorities did actually get the painting back in the end. So it's been taken back. But anyway, the

real answer is it was in the pictures of a real estate listing when the house was put up for sale.

A very difficult question, that. I mean, you've got to be somebody who really pays attention to the news to have heard that story.

[Luke]

Just one question. Do you know if the painting, you say it was owned by the Nazis? I mean, they stole it from a Dutch person, no doubt.

Okay, so it was part of a Nazi hall, and then it ended up there. I guess maybe this Dutch newspaper was interested in this story because they were trying to recover the painting and give it back to its rightful owner. So maybe it's like a Rembrandt or something similar, something like that.

[Stephen]

Yeah, I can't remember. It's not a Rembrandt, but it's another name. I'm not sure what's happened to it in the end, but I think the idea was to try and get it back to the family of the people that it was taken from 80 years ago.

.

[Luke]

So let's just put ourselves in the shoes of the people selling the house, right? Where they've got this priceless painting, and they're trying to raise the value of their house as much as possible. They're going around taking photos.

You know when you take photos of a house that you're about to sell, you try and make the photos make the house look as good as possible. Maybe there was a decision at some point where they were like, should we leave the painting on the wall, or should we not leave the painting on the wall? It just doesn't look right without the painting.

It doesn't look very nice without the painting. Plus, yeah, the painting really adds value to this room, but what if that Dutch newspaper sees it? They're not going to see it.

Why would they be trying to buy a house in Argentina? Okay, leave the painting in then. Snap, snap, snap.

They put it up on the internet, and of course, uh-uh, they should have taken it off the wall. Big mistake. Now what?

They're in jail? I don't know what's happened to them.

[Stephen]

I think they just had to give it up. Essentially, it was their father that stole it, who was the Nazi. A lot of Nazis moved to Argentina after the war, and during the war, and things like that, to escape retribution in Europe.

.

[Luke]

There you go, being soft on the Nazis again. In the statutes of limitations, or something similar, would mean that the children of that person wouldn't necessarily be responsible.



[Stephen]

I don't think so.

[Luke]

I got the question completely wrong, and as a result...

[Stephen]

50%. Now I'm afraid to say 6 out of 12. There's still eight opportunities for you to get that back up into a positive position.

Anyway, we're going back to the church theme, because you love the church questions.

[Luke]

I love churches.

[Stephen]

You do. Okay, here we go. October now.

A church in Spain's second largest city of Barcelona became the tallest church in the world this year, over 140 years after its construction was started. What is the name of that church? I'm just going to say that again.

A church in Spain's second largest city, Barcelona, became the tallest church in the world this year, over 140 years after its construction was started. They started building it 140 years ago, and they're still building it today. It became, this year, the tallest church in the world.

What is the name of that church?

[Luke]

This certainly seems very familiar, Stephen. If I'm on the right lines there, maybe I've got the answer. They started building it 140 years ago, and they finally...

Did you say they'd finished it, or they just added more? It's never going to be finished, this particular church.

[Stephen]

I think at the moment they've got another 20 years on the clock, or something like that. But they kind of always seem to have... I'm sure when I visited there for the first time 20 years ago, they said it was going to be done in 2025 or something.

They seem to keep on pushing the date. Anyway, it's been going for 140 years, and it's still not done. But the thing that happened this year was when they were putting up the central tower, it crossed into becoming the tallest church in the world.

[Luke]

Anyway, what's it called? It's the Sagrada, or however you pronounce it. You'll do that better than me.

Sagrada Familia.

[Stephen]

Yeah, the Sagrada Familia. Yeah, that's right. Well done, Luke.

Well done. The Sagrada Familia reached 163 metres when part of its central tower was lifted into place, which passes the Ulm-Minster church in Germany, which was the tallest church in the world before then. Well done, Luke.

Sagrada Familia has taken you to 7 out of 13. You're in positive territory again.

[Luke]

Sagrada Familia. I love the name, Familia, because when you stand in front of it, you go, I feel like I've seen that before. It just seems so familiar.

[Stephen]

Yeah, exactly. Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's right.

Just to confirm Spanish and or Catalan listeners, he does know that the word familia means family. He's just having a joke about familiarity.

[Luke]

I'm just trying to make a bad dad joke, a pun on the word familia. Familiar in English means, oh, I feel like I've seen it before.

[Stephen]

Yeah. Familiar. I think you can say familiar in Spanish.

You can, really? Yeah. Yes, it was familiar.

I think so, yeah. Familiar. But of course, you wouldn't say it like that.

You'd say familiar, I think. I think. Tell me if I'm wrong.

Tell me if I'm wrong in the comments. Okay. Number 14.

What is the name that has been given to a series of protests around the world in 2025? The name was actually first used in Bangladesh in 2024, and the same name has been given particularly to anti-government protests in Nepal, Indonesia, the Philippines, Madagascar, Peru, and some other countries. What is the name that has been given to that series of protests around the world in 2025?

[Luke]

I've been reading about this, and I can't remember the name. Terrible scenes, especially in Bangladesh, with the reaction to the protest by the government. I know that it's been serious.

A lot of the protests have been very serious, but I cannot, for the life of me, remember the name of the movement. Stephen is covering his face with his hands out of pure disappointment and awkward shame at the fact that he's just watching me disintegrate in front of his very eyes, as yet another answer is going to be lost here. Another point is going to be lost.

Again, I'm going to appeal to your better nature here, Stephen, and ask you to dangle a clue in front of me, if you can.

[Stephen]

Oh, I could give you a pretty massive clue, but I'm not sure I want to. Oh, dearie, dearie, dear. Don't then.

[Luke]

Just let me die there.

[Stephen]

I'm going to give you a clue, but you're going to lose half a point for this. You're going to get half a point if I tell you this. You've already said it today.

I've already said it? Yes. It was in the entry that you read earlier.

[Luke]

All right. I can't go back and check. That's cheating.

Oh, that is cheating. I can't remember, Stephen. It was Gen Z.

It's a Gen Z. Oh, it's the Gen Z protests. That's it.

Yeah, of course. That's it. Yeah.

Yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, Luke.

[Stephen]

Oh, dearie, dearie, dear.

[Luke]

Do I get half a point? Yeah, you can have half a point. Seven and a half out of 14.

[Stephen]

Yeah, seven and a half out of 14. There you go. Still in slightly positive territory.

Seven and a half. And if anybody else was listening and didn't get it before I gave that clue of the fact that Luke had already said it before, you can have half a point as well if you've got it after that. Yes, Gen Z, Gen Z, depending on if you're English or American.

Yeah, that's right. So they started off in Bangladesh in 2024 with the protests that removed their Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. And then it's kind of, well, maybe there would have been lots of protests in other places anyway.

Whether or not they've actually been inspired by each other is a bit subjective. But yeah, there was protests in Nepal and in Madagascar. They also overthrew their government.

So that's Bangladesh, Nepal and Madagascar. They all overthrew their governments and got new ones. Morocco, Mexico, Peru, Philippines and Indonesia, they're still kind of going on in all of those countries.

Yeah, and it seems to be that the general kind of theme of the protests is unemployment and a lack of opportunity and authoritarianism in some of those countries, especially in Bangladesh. Yeah, so there you go. But Gen Z.

Or Gen Z, yeah.

[Luke]

. In the UK, do people really say Gen Z? I mean, generally, around the world, it's Gen Z, isn't it?

Even though in British English, that letter is pronounced Zed. Bregman.

[Stephen]

Yeah, that's true. We don't say Gen Zed, really. It's a bit strange as two British people to not comment on the fact that we're saying something completely American when we say Z.

[Luke]

. Yeah, we can't say it without feeling just a little bit sick in the pit of our stomach. But yeah, we do say Gen Z, in the same way that the rapper Jay-Z is still called Jay-Z in America.

We don't call him Jay-Zed in Britain. Bregman. Never thought about that.

. No. So we also say Gen Z.

Okay, right. A half a point, which... Bregman.

Seven and a half. Seven and a half out of 14. That half point does feel even a little bit pathetic, but I'm going to take it.

I'm having it. Right, we're into the last section here. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 16.

Six more questions. I had to count on my fingers, listeners. Right, moving on.

[Stephen]

Let's go. . All right.

Close to home, I think this one should be okay. Actually, I don't want to say too much. Bregman.

I've got every available finger is crossed. In Paris, thieves stole eight priceless pieces of the crown jewels from the Louvre in October. How did the thieves get into the building?

[Luke]

. Right. I know the answer to this, unsurprisingly perhaps.

What they did is they used what's called, I guess, a furniture lift. If you spend any time in Paris, you see these. They must be all around the world, but definitely in Paris, because it can be difficult to access apartments on upper floors.

Doorways are small, stairways are small. What people do is they get an electronic lift that extends a big arm up towards the window with a platform and that's how you lift furniture in and out of apartments on upper floors. They got one of those.

In the morning, when the museum was open, the robbers dressed in reflective vests, yellow and orange vests, and balaclavas on their heads. They took the furniture lift to, I think it was a first floor window, where they then used saws to cut through the window. They popped inside, took them less than four minutes, threatened some staff, grabbed a bunch of crown jewels, and then back on the lift again.

Down they went and their accomplices were waiting on scooters and they raced off through the streets and dropped something on the way. They got something like eight out of the nine things they were trying to steal. There you go.

Does that cover the answer? I hope so.



[Stephen]

-It does. It does indeed. You sound like you've been reporting on this story for a major newspaper or television broadcast or something.

[Luke]

Hall-I was there at the time.

[Stephen]

This is the furniture lift here that the thieves use on their way to work. -Just for the listeners who are saying, like, hang on a minute, I didn't say it in that much detail as Luke did. Don't worry.

The only thing you have to say is either they went in through the window or they went on a ladder or something like that. That's it. That's fine.

Window, ladder, you've got it.

[Luke]

Hall-Do I not get a bonus half point for that? No, it's all right. I'm joking.

Never mind.

[Stephen]

-Yeah, no, that's brilliant. Yeah, you really knew a lot about that question. I suppose in your backyard, it was massive news, I suppose.

[Luke]

Hall-Yes, it was. Yeah, it was, of course. The thing is that we all saw how easy it was, how lax the security was, how you could just basically get up onto that floor, cut the window open, go in, take you less than five minutes.

You can order a coffee in a French cafe and wait longer than it took them to get these priceless jewels. We've all walked past the Louvre and had a look at it and just wondered at the priceless things on the inside. But then ever since this happened, all of us Parisians have been like, why didn't I do that?

Why didn't I think of that? It was so easy. I should have done that.

[Stephen]

-Yeah, yeah. Well, I wonder if they've actually improved their security since then, because it really was incredible to see just how easy it seemed. Hall-Yeah.

[Luke]

Obviously, it's a tragedy for France. It's a huge tragedy. These are extremely important cultural artefacts that have been probably permanently lost, maybe destroyed.

That's obviously very, very sad. But yeah, the big thing is that the security was just so poor.

[Stephen]

-Yeah. Also, there's the fact that they can't sell them for what they're actually worth, these things. It's not like there's going to be some buyers who are going to go, oh yeah, I'll buy some crown jewels for 100 million euros or something like that.

So the only thing that they could probably do with them is actually melt them down, take the gold, take the jewels, sell off the jewels in individual bits or something, which is going to be a tiny, tiny fraction of what they would have been worth when they were still together as the crown jewels. So it's incredible even that they would want to steal something that valuable in order to get a relatively small amount in payback.

[Luke]

Hall-Yeah, absolutely. That's part of the tragedy of it, is that we can be almost certain that those items have been destroyed in some way. They'll never come back.

The crown that was apparently dropped is repairable and will go back in the museum. But anyway, shocking lack of security.

[Stephen]

Yes. -That's it. Let's hope it improves.

Although I did hear actually that there was a water leak in the Egyptian section of the Louvre a couple of weeks ago, and that damaged some items there as well. But anyway, lots of things to look at at the Louvre. Anyway, moving on.

Number 16. So just to be clear, you've got eight and a half out of 15 now.

[Luke]

You're being lucrative. Hall-Taking off my overshirt here to get serious. Look how serious I am now, taking off a layer of clothing.

Okay.

[Stephen]

-Number 16. In October, Maria Corina Machado was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and this is a quote, for her tireless work promoting democratic rights for the people of blank, and for her struggle to achieve a just and peaceful transition to democracy. That was in the words of the Norwegian Nobel Prize Committee.

What country is she from?

[Luke]

Hall-Okay. The name again, please?

[Stephen]

-Maria Corina Machado. Hall-Right.

[Luke]

Spanish name, right? Okay, listeners. I've got the answer.

I've got the answer locked and loaded. I'm just easing you into it, listeners. Giving you a chance.

[Stephen]

-Give them some time to think about, say, a possible country for Maria Corina Machado.

[Luke]

Hall-What was the Nobel Prize awarded for, again?

[Stephen]

-Peace. The big one. It's the big one.

The Nobel Peace Prize. Yeah, yeah. She won it, and it was for her tireless work promoting democratic rights for the people of blank, and for her struggle to achieve a just and peaceful transition to democracy.

[Luke]

Hall-Spanish speaking country, fighting for democratic rights, right? Well, it's Venezuela.

[Stephen]

-Yes, it is. It is Venezuela. Well done, Luke.

Well done. It is indeed Venezuela. Yeah, they have...well, I'm sure it's not too controversial for me to say that they've not been a democracy for, well, quite a long time now. She has been fighting for the democracy in that country. Maria Corina Machado from Venezuela. Yeah, she actually just last week, even though this was announced about a month ago or something, she actually managed to get out of Venezuela and go to Norway.

Weirdly, she arrived just a little bit too late for the awards ceremony, and then she gave a speech the next day. I mean, there's probably an answer out there somewhere, but I was just thinking, like, she's the star of the show. Why didn't you just postpone it for a day so that she could actually be there?

But, anyway, that's the story. -That's those Norwegians. Very punctual.

Hall-Spanish speaking country, fighting for democracy. No patience. Yeah, apparently.

[Luke]

-Meanwhile, the South Americans, you know, got a bit more of a relaxed approach to time.

[Stephen]

Yeah, they would have said, mañana, mañana.

[Luke]

-Well, I don't know. It must have been difficult to get out of Venezuela, though.

[Stephen]

I don't know how she did it. I suppose nobody does. That's why she was able to get out, but she did.

And she said, also, that she's going to take the award back to Venezuela, somehow, as well, which would be very impressive, if it's true.

[Luke]

Hall-Good luck to her.

[Stephen]

-Yeah. All right, you got nine and a half out of 16.

[Luke]

Hall-Okay.

[Stephen]

-Double digits, if you can get this one right.

[Luke]

Hall-Yeah.

[Stephen]

-All right, number 17. Which of these countries has had their first ever female leader since October 2025? Japan, Thailand, Taiwan, or Malaysia?

Which of these countries has had their first ever female leader since October 2025? Japan, Thailand, Taiwan, Malaysia.

[Luke]

Hall-Just one of those countries?

[Stephen]

-Correct.

[Luke]

Hall-Okay.

[Stephen]

Well, this is one of those... -One of them has had their first ever female leader since October 2025. Hall-Okay.

[Luke]

This is just one of those, you know it, you don't know it, right, listeners? So there's no point in giving you that much time to think. I know the answer.

[Stephen]

-Well, I suppose they can make a one in four guess if they know that it's either Japan, Thailand, Taiwan, or Malaysia. Hall-Go on, listeners.

[Luke]

Make your one in four guess if you don't know. Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, Malaysia. It's Japan, listeners.

It's Japan.

[Stephen]

-That's absolutely right, Luke. Well done. We crossed the 10 point mark, crossed into the double digits.

Yeah, it is Japan. Hall-Okay. -That's right.

Hall-Her name again, do you remember? -I've actually just forgotten it right now. Is it Sanae Takahichi?

[Luke]

Hall-Sanae.

[Stephen]

-Sanae Takahichi. Whoops. Hall-Yeah.

-Should know these things. Sanae Takahichi, that's right. So she is...amazingly, Japan didn't have any elected female prime minister before then, and she has been prime minister since October. Thailand has already had two, of which you said the name of one of them earlier on doing a Wikipedia thing. Don't worry, I'm not going to make you say that.

[Luke]

Hall-It was difficult. Say it again. Sorry, I found it difficult.



[Stephen]

-Pai Thong Tharn Shinawatra. I'm probably saying it terribly. I don't speak Thai, but Pai Thong Tharn Shinawatra.

She was the Thai prime minister, the second one. I think her auntie was the first one, maybe 10 years ago or something. But anyway, Taiwan has had one, Tsai Ing-wen, who just finished her prime ministership just earlier this year, I think.

And Malaysia has not had a female leader ever before. So come on, Malaysia, get your act together. Japan is the correct answer to question 17.

[Luke]

Okay, Takaichi-san, well done. Congratulations. How do you say that?

Omedetou gozaimasu. Omedetou gozaimasu. I think that's what you'd say.

[Stephen]

I'm going to have to trust you on that one, Luke.

[Luke]

Japanese is very rusty.

[Stephen]

Anyway... Did it used to be good? Did you used to speak quite a bit of Japanese?

[Luke]

There was maybe one Saturday night in 2002 where my Japanese was actually pretty good. But the quality of my Japanese went up in correlation with the amount of Japanese whisky that I drank. And so there was probably one sort of peak where I got quite drunk on a Saturday night in my local bar, surrounded by Japanese friends playing darts.

And I think I was probably able to carry on talking somehow in Japanese for that evening.

[Stephen]  
Linguistic whisky?

[Luke]  
Yes, that's right. Linguistic whisky. That's a good idea for a brand.

Introducing new linguistic whisky. Specially designed to raise your linguistic fluency. But don't drink too much.

Always drink responsibly.

[Stephen]  
Great. Well, I'd like to hear you trying to speak Japanese sometime under the influence of not too much linguistic whisky. That's for another time, I guess.

All right. November now. 18.

Yes. Question 18. Not necessarily in November, but I've written it down for November.

You've got 10 and a half, haven't you?

[Luke]

I've got 10 and a half out of 17. 10 and a half.

[Stephen]

Yeah. Okay, great. Now question 18.

Here we go. What is the name... Luke.

Sorry. Yay! What is the name of the brand of collectible dolls, which originated in Hong Kong, that look like cuddly monsters, which became particularly popular all over the world in 2025?

What is the name of this brand of collectible dolls, which originated in Hong Kong, that look like cuddly monsters and became particularly popular all over the world in 2025? I don't know.

[Luke]

I don't know. I don't know, but you know I'm going to kick myself, because I do know. You know?

I do know, but I don't know if that's possible. I think we know what that means. My wife's talked about it.

I've heard people talking about them. Apparently my brain didn't consider it to be important enough to retain in my working memory. Don't blame me too much.

And so, I'm afraid I'm unable to give an answer. It's monster lols, or something like that. Monster vampire hunter dolls.

I don't know.

[Stephen]  
It's Labubu.

[Luke]  
Labubu? That's new to me.

[Stephen]  
Okay, good. You weren't going to get that. I was never going to get that.

Alright, fine. Labubu is the name of these dolls. Yeah, I must say, I branched out a little bit to be able to get this answer as well.

I probably wouldn't have known that one before writing these questions. I've heard of these dolls. They were around and they were doing really well on social media and things like that.

But I just don't spend that much time on social media these days, so these little things could pass me by. But Labubu have sold a ridiculously large amount in 2025 all around the world and been associated with some celebrities and other people like that. So yeah, there you go.

Labubu is the answer to question 18. That's the name of these collectible dolls. So your daughter obviously didn't want any Labubus this year?

[Luke]  
No, she hasn't. As far as I can tell, she hasn't come across Labubu dolls and she hasn't asked for any. She's into various different crazes at the time.

Anyone with kids who are around the age of my daughter, who is going to be eight in a couple of weeks, the current thing is K-pop Demon Hunters. Have you heard about that, Stephen?

[Stephen]

I've heard the name. Are they dolls as well, or something like that?

[Luke]

They will be. I don't know if the merchandising has quite caught up with the craze yet, but it's an animated film on Netflix. I guess it's not exclusively on Netflix.

Probably in different parts of the world, it's available in other places. But certainly in France, probably Europe, it's on Netflix. It's a Korean production, I think.

I can't be sure, but it's these three girls. They're in a band and they also fight demons. There's music as well.

There's songs. The songs are actually...they could be a lot worse, considering I have to hear them again and again, and again and again and again. I've managed to survive, okay.

Actually, I think a couple of the songs are genuinely really good songs.

[Stephen]

It sounds like a really good idea for a series, actually. If you take the kind of things that were popular when we were kids, like Power Rangers and Pokemon and stuff like that, and then you inject a

little bit of what's really popular today of K-pop into it, then it's that kind of mishmash of those things together. I can see why.

Why didn't I think of it? That's a brilliant idea.

[Luke]

Right, exactly. The film itself is very well made. The animation is just flawless and it's got an amazingly cool look.

The characters are really well defined and the songs are well written. All in all, it's a smash hit. All the kids are going completely crazy over it.

Brilliant.

[Stephen]

Okay, great. I'm afraid to say it's still 10.5 out of 18. Still got a couple more to go.

Maybe you can pull yourself up with this one. Here we go. Number 19.

We're in December now. Number 19. This month, Australia has become the first country in the world to introduce one specific new rule about social media.

What exactly is the new rule?

[Luke]

So, I thought you were going to mention something else relating to Australia, which is one of those stories that's just breaking at the

moment. That's just in my mind. It's a very tragic story, but that's not what this question is about.

This question is about a rule that Australia has introduced relating to social media. I think it's relating to age-related or age-connected limits on social media use. That might be enough, listeners, to get me the point, but maybe I need to be more specific.

[Stephen]

I did say, what exactly is the new rule?

[Luke]

Okay, alright. He's going to be firm about this one, everyone. There is a social network, I think.

In Australia, you have to be a certain age to be able to use it. I'm going to go Instagram. I'm going Instagram with this one.

I think that you have to be a certain age.

[Stephen]

Oh no, it's not the right answer. It's not that, actually. When I was saying, to be more exact, I was talking about it in a different way.

[Luke]

Okay, you want the age. 16 years old. I think that basically, you've got to be 16 if you want to have a profile on social media in Australia.

That's my final answer. I hope that it's the correct one.

[Stephen]

Yeah, it is. That is the correct answer. Well done.

It is 16. I hope I don't seem like I was giving you too much of a hint there, but I think I kind of threw you off when I was saying, be more exact, when really, you already did say it was restrictions on social media. Yeah, and it is.

It is 16. So essentially now, you have to be 16 in order to use most of the common social media platforms that we know about. Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and a couple of others.

And also, most of the top video streaming services as well, like YouTube and Twitch and Kik, which is an Australian one. But yeah, that's right. It is 16.

So you got that right, Luke. You cannot be under 16 on social media anymore. There you go.

You've got 11 and a half. What do you think? Do you approve of that new rule?

[Luke]

Yeah, I do. Yeah. I can't really think of a reason to disagree with it unless you're 15 and you really want to go on Twitch or TikTok.

But I think that the data is pretty clear that it's not very good for young people's brains. So it's wise to say, sorry, you're going to have to wait until your brain is a bit more developed before you can start using this. Even 16 seems a bit young, but it would be hard to resist the general culture which is so strong towards everyone being on social media.



But being on social media is not a basic human right, is it? Yet. They argue that WiFi and internet connection is a basic human right, although it's not really.

Not in the same way as the other things, but certainly you can argue that more strongly than having a social profile. We can't live without mobiles. I don't know if children can.

We can't live without the internet. Certainly children need access to that for their homework and stuff, but social media accounts, no. I don't think they really, really need it.

They might use it to stay in touch with each other, but they can use other things for that, can't they? WhatsApp and email. Do kids email each other?

I don't know.

[Stephen]

They should do. It's fun. I love a bit of email.

I think that they still can use WhatsApp, but not Snapchat. I'm not sure. I think Snapchat's kind of like WhatsApp, but with more features and things, isn't it?

Deleting messages and stuff. I think that's gone for them, but they still can use WhatsApp, I believe. I think generally, most people agree with you that this is quite a sensible thing to do.

There seem to be more and more little bans and things coming on around the world. I think that's going to be a bit of a theme in 2026, actually, is having more and more countries joining in with this kind

of idea, because there seems to be quite a consensus that it's too far-reaching at the moment and children shouldn't be on these platforms. There's more and more countries who are banning phones in schools, which is another thing which I think most people would agree makes sense.

Watch this space, but I think in 2026, it's just going to be more and more of that. Are we ready for the last one?

[Luke]

. I just wanted to say that I've got 11.5 out of 19. Remember, my pass mark is 60%, so I have to get this question right if I'm to pass the test.

[Stephen]

Oh yeah.

[Luke]

That's true, yeah. I'm below my overall average. I've beaten last year's pitiful score of 8.5, but will I actually pass and retain my dignity?

I might be embarrassed. It all comes down to this. Here we go.

[Stephen]

Here we go. It all comes down to this. Number 20.

It was finalised in 2025 that on the first day of 2026, there will be a new country using the Euro. Which country will become the 21st member of the Eurozone on the 1st of January?

[Luke]

Because I know that a couple of countries joined the Schengen Agreement this year, which means frictionless movements between borders. But no, that's not the Eurozone. This is using the Eurozone.

So it's got to be...

[Stephen]

A country which currently does not use the Euro, which is going to be using the Euro in a few days time.

[Luke]

Do you have to be part of the European Union to use the Euro? I feel like maybe you don't. I wonder.

[Stephen]

I know I shouldn't, but I'm going to fill in that question a little bit. You do in order to do it properly, but there are a couple of countries that are using the Euro unilaterally, so they don't actually have a proper agreement, who are not part of the European Union who are using it. But I think that's Montenegro, I think, and Kosovo.

I might be wrong about that. You can tell me how wrong I am in the comments. But anyway, I'm just going to tell you that this country is in the European Union.

It's an official agreement that they're going to become the 21st country to use the Euro. Why don't you count all the countries that you know that do use the Euro?

[Luke]

No, I can't do that. What I can do, though, is sort of think to myself, well, it's not going to be one of the original founding nations, because I think there were, what, 12 original founding nations, I believe? It's not going to be one of them.

I think the UK was the only founding nation that didn't sign up to the Euro, so I'm just guessing here. I think that it'll be one of the more recent additions to the European Union, but a recent addition that felt that it didn't really want to be in the Euro zone. What is this country?

Why? Why didn't you want to join the Euro initially? If you wanted to be in the European Union, why not go the whole hog and join the Euro as well?

As a British person, I vaguely understand, but that's Britain. Other places, you'd imagine they'd be well up for it. Oh dear, this is terrible.

I just don't know. A sort of vaguely peripheral European Union member that had, for some reason, chosen to stick with its original currency. Is it a Baltic state?

I just don't know. I don't know the answer, and I don't want to dig myself deeper by making a stupid guess.

[Stephen]

Yeah, make a stupid guess. I mean, there's not that many countries to choose from.

[Luke]

Croatia. Croatia.

[Stephen]

Is that your final answer?

[Luke]

That's my final answer, but I'm almost certain that it's wrong and it makes me look foolish, even more than I already looked.

[Stephen]

Honestly, Luke. I'm going to tell you, you're wrong, but I think that's quite a respectful answer. They joined the Euro.

They already used the Euro in Croatia, but I can't remember when, but it's quite recently, I think. That's quite a respectful answer. I'll tell you what.

Can I give you a clue and maybe give you a half point?

[Luke]

Oh, you're going to throw me a bone with a half point, even after I've made my answer, dragging me up to the past mark if I get it right. Maybe. Maybe.

Well, I'll gladly accept, of course, if you're offering. You are the quiz master.

[Stephen]

Okay. I'm just trying to think of a good clue in this way. Okay.

How about it is it's quite far East. It's got, it's on the Black Sea.

[Luke]

Hmm. It wouldn't be Bulgaria. I don't even know if they're on the Black Sea.

Hmm. What is there? I might edit out all this silence so we can just relax a little bit.

I'll just sit here for the next 25 minutes as the sun goes down. I just don't know. And I feel like certain listeners are just screaming into their headphones if that's possible.

Can you scream into headphones? Take the headphones off and just put the headphones back on. I'm sorry.

I don't know. I need to end this pain. Just put me out of my misery.

Just say the first thing that just came to your head. Bulgaria was the thing.

[Stephen]

Yes. It's Bulgaria. It is Bulgaria.

[Luke]

Yes.

[Stephen]

Oh, man. That was a real scraping the half point there. Blimey.

[Luke]

The drama, the tension. It was unbearable, wasn't it? That.

[Stephen]

Absolutely.

[Luke]

But I did it.

[Stephen]

Yeah. I was really trying to pull you up for the half point, and you were not trying to come up, but you got there eventually. Yes.

Yes. Okay. It is Bulgaria.

Bulgaria is leaving behind the... I think it's called the LEV. Sorry if I've got that wrong.

I think it's the LEV. Yeah, yeah.

[Luke]

The LEV, of course. Yeah, the LEV.

[Stephen]

That's correct, Stephen. They are taking the Euro on the first day of January, and they're going to be country number 21. The other countries in the Eurozone...

I don't know. I've written this down. It's Austria.

[Luke]

Australia. Always happens, doesn't it? They're in the Eurovision song contest.

[Stephen]

They are in Eurovision, so they could be, couldn't they? They could be. But no, it's Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland,

France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and soon-to-be Bulgaria, as well.

There you go. Country 21. And you got half a point, Luke.

Your final score is 12 points. And do you know what? There may be somebody who didn't get Bulgaria at the beginning of that question who managed to also get half a point after I suggested that it was east and it was on the Black Sea, which you did know.

You wanted to tell yourself you didn't know.

[Luke]

It was the first thing that came to my mind. I was like, Bulgaria. You said it immediately.

The Bulgarians. It can't be Bulgaria. That's ridiculous.

But it was Bulgaria. I just want to give a shout out to my Bulgarian listeners. If you are listening from Bulgaria, hello to you.

And thank you so much for agreeing to become part of the Eurozone. Because you mean not only will you reap the economic benefits of that decision, but also I didn't fail the world news quiz of 2025. Thank you to you and your people.

Well done.

[Stephen]

Very generous of them. Yeah.



[Luke]

Thanks for doing that.

[Stephen]

Excellent. 12 out of 20. How does that stack up against your previous scores then?

So, better than last year, but not as good as the previous year.

[Luke]

Out of the four times we've done this, this is the third worst or third best. Third best. Second worst.

Second worst performance. So, there you go. How does this stack up for you in terms of difficulty level as the writer of the quiz, in your opinion?

[Stephen]

It's difficult. It is difficult because I want it to be truly things that have come up in the news that you might know that you might not know. So, I need to try and get that balance of...

I don't want you to get 20 out of 20. It'd be a bit boring, wouldn't it? I don't want you to get zero out of 20 because that'd just be horrible, wouldn't it?

That'd be terrible. It'd make you suffer for a couple of hours. Yeah, no.

No, thanks. And also, I've got to think of things which are... Because you've got listeners all around the world, really, don't you?

So, I want to make it things that could genuinely have got through to people all around the world. I think even though it was in your backyard, the Louvre getting robbed probably made the news all around the world. I thought that the mushroom case made the news all around the world, but apparently not in Paris.

The Bulgaria joining the Euro, I'm sure that's big news in Bulgaria. Not sure how big it is outside of Europe, but it's there. So, I want to try and make a mix of things that I think are going to be both interesting and also that medium kind of difficulty that is going to leave a big range of scores.

So, I'm sure there are some people that would get 19. If you got 20 out of 20, that's just really, really impressive. I mean, that would be absolutely incredible.

But if you got anywhere north of 14, 15, that would be also very, very, very impressive because it's such a global set of questions that I've come up with for this. I've had some from North America, some from South America, some from Europe and Asia. I'm trying to think if I had anything from Africa.

Maybe I didn't. I mentioned them in the Gen Z.

[Luke]

Antarctica. I think the penguins of Antarctica are going to feel very hard done by.

I'm going to get emails, like badly typed emails from the penguins, penguin community. Stephen, that was brilliant. Thank you very much.

I think you judged it really, really well because it was a nail biting finish. You must have judged it just right because it wasn't too easy. It wasn't too difficult.

So, it was just expertly judged. Thank you very much for putting the time in to make the quiz and to be the quiz master today, and for taking the time also to record this typically long world quiz episode here. We've been going for coming up to two hours, so I think it's probably time to just call it a day now.

Merry Christmas to you, Stephen, and to everyone else.

[Stephen]

Merry Christmas to you. Merry Christmas to you. Merry Christmas to everybody who is listening, and Happy New Year.

[Luke]

Happy New Year indeed. Also, congratulations to Stephen this year because you became a dad, didn't you, earlier this year. So, congratulations for that, despite the fact that you haven't slept a proper night.

You haven't had a proper night's sleep for about eight months.

[Stephen]

Yeah, it's true. I haven't slept properly for eight months, but it's worth it to see his shiny face every day.

[Luke]

That's nice. Okay. Thank you very much, listeners.

I'll speak to you next time. If this is the last episode of the year, I'm not sure because I'm potentially doing another one, but we will see. But anyway, I'll still wish you all the very best for the end of 2025.

Let's look forward to 2026 with hope and high expectations. No doubt it will disappoint us, but we'll do our best. Okay, Stephen.

Nice one, mate. Thanks a lot. Look forward to doing this again next time.

Absolutely. Me too.

Right then, everybody.

That is the end of the World News Quiz 2025, the last episode of 2025. Unless you are a Premium subscriber, of course, because you will also get P74, which is called 10 Tongue Twisters for Perfect Pronunciation Practice. [Teacherluke.co.uk/premium](https://www.teacherluke.co.uk/premium) if you're interested in that. And of course, 20% off until the end of January. Thank you very much to Stephen again for creating the quiz this year for the fourth year running. Check out his podcast, by the way, Send7, also known as Simple English News Daily in seven minutes.

Just search for Send7 Podcast wherever you get your podcasts. And it's just a good way to keep up with the news. Every day, a short news report in clear English appropriate for learners of English.

That's good. If you are already a Send7 listener, I wonder how you got on in the quiz. Did you get a better score than me?

In fact, if you're not a Send7 listener, did you get a better score than me? Let us know in the comments section whether you beat me or not. If you did beat me, legitimately, if you got more points than me, then feel free to gloat in the comments section.

“Aha, Luke, I got 13.5. So ha ha in your face.” Feel free to do that if you want, equally if you failed miserably. And you want to just make me feel a bit better.

You could say “don't worry, Luke, I got virtually no questions right. So don't feel too bad about yourself.” I don't know.

Hopefully, though, it was an interesting experience listening to it. And you picked up a few little bits of English along the way. Remember, full transcript in the PDF available in the show notes.

Right then. So that's it for this episode. Finally, I just want to wish all the very best to all the citizens of LEPland.

Happy New Year. Seasons greetings. Have a great one.

Thanks for listening to Luke's English Podcast in 2025. Thanks for your comments and messages, including all those people who shared their Spotify wrapped, also their Pocket Cast listening statistics for 2025. And all the other things that people have sent to me and written to me this year.

Sorry if I was unable to reply to any of you. But please know that I have read your messages. And I love receiving correspondence from Lepsters.

It really does sort of help to keep me engaged and keep me enthusiastic about this. I love doing Luke's English Podcast. I hope that you love listening to it too.

And you can look forward to more and more episodes in 2026. But that's it for this one. Have a good morning, afternoon, evening, or night, end of year celebration, New Year's Eve, New Year's Day.

And I will speak to you again in the future, future, future. Until then, I will just say good bye. Bye.

Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye.

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