3 READING & VOCABULARY
the weather

a Look at the cartoon. What does it say about British weather? Would it be true about your country?



b Read the article once. At what time of year was the article written? What is an Indian summer?

c Read the article again and mark the sentences **T** (true) or **F** (false). Underline the sentence or part of the article that gives you the answer.

1 British people talk about the weather more than they used to.
2 People had mixed feelings about the hot weather.
3 Some weather experts said that the warm weather was not an Indian summer because it happened in September.
4 The older English term for Indian summers is still used in some parts of the UK.
5 Kate Fox says that the British talk about the weather because they are shy.
6 Sir John Mortimer believes that the British talk about the weather to avoid saying what they really think.

d Look at the highlighted phrases related to the weather. With a partner, say what you think they mean.

e ➤ p.156 Vocabulary Bank *Weather.*

f Do you have an expression for Indian summer in your language? Do people in your country often talk about the weather? Why (not)?

Don't know what to say? Talk about the weather!

'It is commonly observed,' wrote Dr Johnson in 1758, 'that when two Englishmen meet, their first talk is of the weather; they are in haste to tell each other, what each must already know, that it is hot or cold, bright or cloudy, windy or calm.' Not much has changed. A survey published earlier this year found that the average British person mentions the weather at least once every six hours, and that 70 per cent of us check the weather forecast every day, even when nothing unusual is happening.

Last week, as temperatures soared to 29°C – the highest recorded end-of-September temperature for 116 years – there was a sense of both delight (at the lovely hot weather) and worry (about the threat of global warming). On television and in the newspapers, experts argued earnestly over what such extreme weather meant, and if there was even a term for it. While many called it an Indian summer, the Met Office ruled that it couldn't be properly called an Indian summer, which only occurs 'as a warm spell in autumn, especially in October and November'. The BBC's main weatherman also agreed that the heat had arrived a bit too early to be described as an Indian summer.

Indian summer has different names across the globe. In Britain, until around the end of the First World War, late heatwaves were known as 'St Martin's summers' – the feast of St Martin falling on 11th November – and in much of Europe they still are. Other countries have their own names – in Russia it's an 'Old Ladies' summer'; in Bulgaria a 'Gipsy summer'; and in China a 'Tiger autumn'.

But the big difference between the British and other nationalities is that they talk about Indian summers much more. 'Britons need weather-talk to help us overcome our reserve,' explains Kate Fox, author of *Watching the English*. 'We talk about it a lot, but not because it is an intrinsically interesting topic. People use weather-talk to facilitate social interaction.'

The writer Sir John Mortimer saw a deeper reason for Britain's peculiar obsession with the weather. 'There's nothing personal about it,' he wrote. 'It gives away no secrets. Talking to our next-door neighbours over the fence, we, as a nation, are reluctant to make such uncomfortable confessions as "I can't stand your children", or "I'm passionately in love with your wife". It's far easier to say, "I think we'll be having rain over the weekend".'



Glossary
Dr Johnson a very influential 18th century writer and editor
the Met Office the UK's national weather service

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4 ONUNCIATION
vel sounds

Spelling and pronunciation
Most vowels, or combinations of vowels, can be pronounced in more than one way. If you are unsure what the vowel sound is in a new word, check with your dictionary.

a Look at the groups of words below and circle the word you think is different.

1 blow snow showers below
2 weather sweat heavy heat
3 drizzle blizzard chilly mild
4 hard warm dark garden
5 flood cool soon loose
6 fought ought drought brought
7 thunder sunny hurricane humid
8 scorching world tornado storm

b 2 34 Listen and check.

c 2 35 Listen and write five sentences. Then practise saying them.

d Talk to a partner.

- What kind of weather do you associate with the different seasons where you live?
- What's the weather like today? Have you heard the forecast for tomorrow / next weekend?
- What's your favourite weather? Does the weather affect your mood? What do you like doing when the weather is bad?
- What kind of weather do you think is the best and the worst for...?
  a camping
  b going for a walk in the mountains
  c driving
  d running a marathon
  e shopping
  f sightseeing
- Do you think global warming is affecting the climate? In what ways has climate change affected the weather in your country?

5 LISTENING & SPEAKING



a 2 36 You're going to listen to three people talking about their experiences of extreme weather in the UK. Listen once. Which speaker...?

- ☐ was both frightened and excited by the weather
- ☐ got quite stressed because of the weather
- ☐ really enjoyed themselves in spite of the bad weather

b Listen again and make notes in the chart.

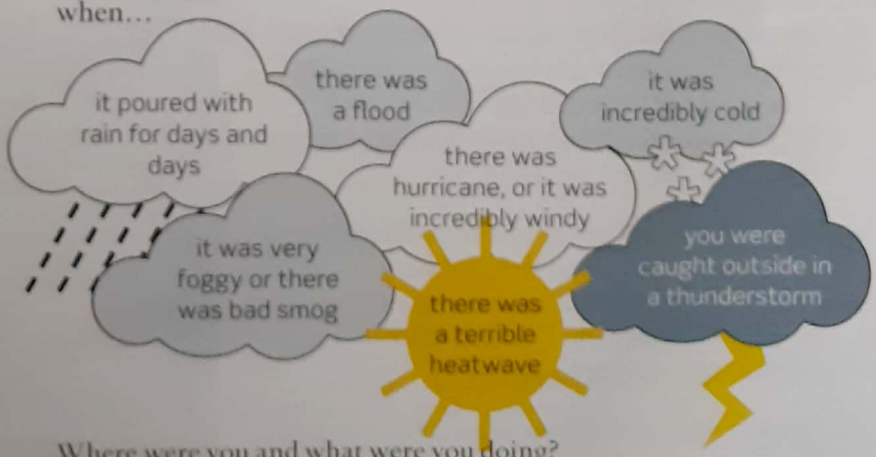
	Speaker 1	Speaker 2	Speaker 3
When did it happen?			
Where were they at the time?			
What kind of weather was it?			
What happened as a result?			

Modifiers with strong adjectives
When you are talking about extreme situations, e.g. very bad weather you can use:

1 Normal adjectives with a modifier (*very, really, extremely, incredibly, unbelievably*), e.g. *It was incredibly cold, extremely hot, unbelievably windy*, etc.
2 Strong adjectives, e.g. *It's boiling here – 40 degrees, It's freezing today*, etc.
3 Strong adjectives with *absolutely*, e.g. *It was absolutely freezing. The midday heat was absolutely scorching.*

Remember that we often use *a bit* or *rather* + adjective to express a negative idea, e.g. *It's a bit too hot. It's rather chilly today.*

c In small groups, talk about a time when you were somewhere when...



Where were you and what were you doing?
What did you do to protect yourself from the weather?
Did you ever feel scared or in danger?

6 2 37 SONG *Heatwave* ♫

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