Freedom for the Chilean miners!

The story of the miners in Chile captured the interest of people worldwide. Around 1,500 journalists were at the final rescue, and it was broadcast to over one billion people.

This story probably caught people’s attention because it was unusual. News is frequently negative, and positive stories are rare and usually short-lived. This story lasted for weeks and was one of hope; it was a disaster story that for once ended happily.

However, the miners’ experience was certainly not an easy one. The accident happened in early August when a tunnel collapsed in the San Jose gold and copper mine in Chile, trapping 33 workers 700 metres below ground. For 17 frightening days they waited in the small, dark and humid space (above 30°C) with very little food and drink, before contact was made with those above ground. In total they remained 69 days under ground. Fortunately, soon after the initial discovery, food, medicine, letters and supplies were passed down a tube to the trapped men.

The miners were considerably helped by modern technology during the experience. Through the 9 cm tube, people above ground sent military-style food (including hot meals), music which was regularly downloaded, even small beds and a projector screen. High tech engineering meant that they could be rescued sooner than originally thought. The rescue capsule, made by NASA (the US space agency) and Chilean navy experts, was an amazing piece of engineering – it could even separate into two in an emergency.

While trapped, the men were given video training from NASA experts on how to remain fit and healthy. One miner received distance training in medical care so he could look after the men, as some were suffering from skin, teeth or breathing problems.

However, it was the miners’ mental health which was – and still is – the biggest worry. Some suffered from anxiety and depression when trapped. Adjusting back to normal life may be difficult for some, and the media attention could make this worse. The men and their families have received expert advice on how to help. Even when underground, the miners worked hard to keep themselves mentally healthy – they had fixed daily routines, balancing work and relaxation. They were also given advice from two Australian miners who had themselves been trapped for two weeks.

This is an unbelievable story of hope and endurance. For Chile it is now a symbol of national pride. It also reminds us of the dangers that some people face on a daily basis in their work.

1 Put the following words into two categories: (A) words you know and (B) words you are not sure of.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>tunnel</th>
<th>mine</th>
<th>collapse</th>
<th>rescue</th>
<th>be trapped</th>
<th>disaster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>underground</td>
<td>tube</td>
<td>technology</td>
<td>copper</td>
<td>discovery</td>
<td>danger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A: __________________________________________________________

B: __________________________________________________________

2 Read the text and choose the four topics that are discussed from the list below.

a details of the rescue  
 b the rescuers  
 c the miners’ health  
 d the role of technology  
 e descriptions of the men  
 f the accident  
 g ‘Camp Hope’ (the camp above ground)  
 h a film of the story  
 i the popularity of the story  
 j the Chilean president
3 According to the text, what did the miner(s) receive:
1 through the narrow tube? __________
2 from the American Space Agency, NASA? __________
3 from the two Australians? __________
4 to help with medical problems? __________

4 Read the text to find out the following.
1 Why was this story so popular?
2 Why was the capsule so special?
3 When trapped, what sort of problems did the miners have with
   a their physical health?
   b their mental health?
4 Why are some still worried about the future for these men?
5 Why did the miners develop routines when trapped underground?

5 What do you think? Discuss with your partner(s).
   – In your opinion, what were the ingredients that made this story so special?
   – What do you think the future will hold for these men? Will it be positive?
   – Do you think this story would make a good film? Why / Why not?
   – If you were in this situation, which part would you have found the hardest?
   – Which three people would you have chosen to meet you at the surface? What would your
     first words be?

6 Match the verb and noun collocations from the text.

| face       | training / advice             |
| adjust     | someone’s attention           |
| receive / give | from a health problem         |
| download   | danger(s)                     |
| catch      | music                         |
| suffer     | to (normal) life              |

7 Work in groups of three to act out the following role-play.
   One person is a newspaper reporter, the other two are rescued miners (or one miner and
   one relative). Decide on your roles and then take five minutes to plan what you might say.

8 Creative writing. Complete the following creative writing task.
   Imagine you are one of the miners from the story. Write three diary extracts describing the
   experience. The first is written on the day when the tunnel initially collapsed; the second
   on day 17; the final extract describes day 69, the final rescue.

Glossary

- anxiety (noun) - a worried feeling that you have because you think that something bad
  might happen
- capsule (noun) - the part of a space-vehicle in which people travel
- expert (noun) - someone who has a particular skill or knows a lot about a particular subject
- endurance (noun) - the ability to continue doing something that is difficult or tiring
- high tech (adj) - using the most advanced technology
- mental (adj) - related to the mind, or existing in the mind: mental health
- suffer (verb) [from sth] - to have a particular illness or physical/mental problem
- supplies (noun) [plural] - things such as food, medicine and equipment that you need to
  live or to do a particular activity: the truck carried medicine and supplies into the country.

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