



Dear Colleague:

Happy New Year! New Year brings a new column in *Easy English NEWS*: Richard Lederer, well-known English language mavin and humorist will be writing a column on the fascinating craziness of the English language. More gifts: Check my website for the latest freebies made for you and your classes. I've been making cloze tests for *Easy English NEWS*, plus a what-word-doesn't-belong test to go along with each issue. These are getting posted the first of the month, or before. out. They're free, just print them out and reproduce as many as you like for your classes.

### The 112th Congress (pages 1 and 9)

**Objectives:** Students will be able to name the two major political parties, tell what a majority is, which party has the majority in the Senate and which in the House of Representatives, and how that might make it difficult to make laws. Students will be able to tell several matters the 112th Congress will have to deal with.

During the rest of the term, if appropriate to your students' abilities and grade levels, bring in news items to give reports on legislation about the economy, taxes, immigration, health care, Afghanistan, etc., Ask students to bring in such articles from English or native language newspapers. Focus on the kinds of legislation that make a difference in the students' lives and world, such as immigration, payroll taxes, cuts in services, job formation plans, etc.

### "You're under arrest!" (pages 1, 10, and 11)

People can be arrested for a wide variety of reasons, including mistaken identity.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to tell what happens after an arrest, and what to do if they or anyone in their families is arrested. They will be able to tell that resisting arrest is a crime, even if it is a wrongful arrest. They'll understand that crimes fall into three degrees of severity—petty offences, misdemeanors and felonies.

Here is a partial list of types of crimes:  
**Petty offenses:** such things as minor traffic tickets, parking violations, unleashed

dogs, littering, etc. The usual punishment is a fine. **Misdemeanors:** (varies by state) selling cigarettes to people under 18; resisting arrest; false reporting to authorities; illegally selling medicine, guns, etc.; vandalism, trespass; possession of illegal drugs; ignoring a summons for jury duty; reckless driving, disorderly conduct, public intoxication, battery (an attack with no weapon, that doesn't result in serious injury); sexual harassment, etc. The punishment may be a fine and up to six months in jail.

**Felonies:** robbery, murder, arson, treason, drug dealing, terrorism, aggravated assault (attack with a weapon, or any attack that results in serious injury such as broken bones); etc. A felony can be punished by *more* than a year in jail. Judges may go easy on people in a first offence, and very harsh in a second. Some states have a "three strikes law", meaning a mandatory long sentence in jail, even if the third offence is minor. Point out that a felony conviction can make it impossible to become a citizen and may lead to deportation.

Have students understand their "Miranda rights," that is, the right to remain silent, and to have a lawyer present when police are questioning. Invite a police officer to your classroom to explain what to do if arrested in your area. Visit a local court with your class to observe the procedures.

### Events in January (pages 2 and 3)

**Calendar:** Elicit from your students any special days celebrated in their country in January. Also, ask who has a birthday, anniversary, or other celebration in January. What school events will take place in January? Have students write these directly on the calendar.

Ask students questions such as *How did you spend New Year's Day? What plans do you have for the year 2011? What do you want to do or accomplish by June? By September? By next December? By 2015?* Write a few of the students' goals on the board. Discuss New Year's resolutions. Give examples of your own resolutions and encourage students to think of ways they want to improve themselves. Anthony Robbins has a motto that is great for all of us: *CANI*, which stands for *Constant and*

*Never-ending Improvement.* What is their reaction to that? Brainstorm ways people can get support for their new habits: pair up with a friend; make charts to measure progress; read books on the topic; join a group.

**Mummer's Parade, Polar Bear Clubs**  
Ask if any students have seen any of these American New Year's Day traditions in the news. Other traditions include the Rose Parade in Pasadena California and the Rose Bowl Football game. Watch a Youtube.com video of the Mummies parade. Mummies used to be actors, back in ancient Roman days, but today's mummies are just into the sport of getting ready for the parade with fabulous costumes and skits.

**Calendars** It's usually below our awareness that the division of time into weeks, months, and years are arbitrary and not universal. Have students from a culture that uses a non-western calendar explain how it works, tell when their holidays fall and how they know when it's their birthday. *When is a "weekend?" Why? Why is there a Leap Year? How does it help world trade and commerce to have one calendar that all nations agree to?*

To give students a taste of the challenge of making a calendar, have them work in pairs or small groups to come up with an alternative calendar—decide the divisions of the year, beginning day of the year, holidays, days of rest, when to put in an extra day for Leap Year, etc.

### Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to state who Martin Luther King, Jr., is, what Junior means in a man's name, what goals he had, and how the Montgomery bus boycott began and ended.

Find out what your students already know about MLK, ask questions such as: *What was segregation? What was (is) the Ku Klux Klan? Who was Rosa Parks? What was the Montgomery Bus Boycott? Why was King's work dangerous? Point out that King brought the ideas of non-violence from Mohandas Ghandi, who learned them from the American, Henry David Thoreau in his essay *Civil Disobedience.* What can we learn about courage, non-violence, and effectiveness from King?*

The monument for Martin Luther King Jr., is under construction now. Students can see this at the website: [www.mlkmemorial.org/](http://www.mlkmemorial.org/) Ask questions such as *Why is the U.S. building a monument to a man who was never a president?* Show a DVD of the “I have a dream” speech from 1963, or ask students to watch it at <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/> where you’ll also find the full text. Advanced students may take the challenge of practicing, and then reciting a paragraph or two of the more emotional climactic parts of the speech. Point out that without Dr. King’s influence and use of non-violence, the U.S. might have had a second Civil War.

### The State of the Union (page 3)

The State of the Union address is a good opportunity for students to see the interior of the House of Representatives, all of Congress and the people they hear about in the news: President, Vice President, Supreme Court justices, members of the President’s Cabinet. The speech will be repeated several times on C-Span later the same day. Ask them to listen for Obama’s mentioning of the war in Afghanistan, unemployment, immigration, the national debt. Later, ask them to read the speech in translation from one of their own

language’s websites.

### This is your page (page 4)

As usual, these stories can take us anywhere...*Tell us how to cook something...What are your feelings about donating organs if you are killed in an accident? What’s healthy about walking rather than riding? How far apart do people from your home country stand when they are in a line? Who are your kin folk, and do any of them live in the U.S.? What do you do when a stranger knocks at your door?*

### The strange case of the English language (page 5)

I’ve enjoyed Richard Lederer’s books so much over the years and was thrilled when he agreed to write for *Easy English NEWS*. As with Dr. Ali, I select, reorganize, and simplify his work. After reading and enjoying the article, ask students to keep notes on other strange things they hear and read in English that surprise them. Lederer is a collector of goofs in English, so if you get any good guffaws, send them on to

him through his website [www.verbivore.com](http://www.verbivore.com)

### America the Beautiful— Yosemite National Park (Page 6)

Locate Yosemite National Park on a wall map. Show a DVD of this magnificent park and its inspiring beauty. Ask students questions such as: *What makes this park so beautiful? Would you like to go there? What would you like to do there? Have you ever been to any national park? Do you have national parks in your home country? Tell about it.* Have them tell about their experiences, bring in photos, etc.

### Heroes and History Mark Twain (page 7)

**Objectives:** Students will be able to tell five interesting facts about Mark Twain: how he got his name, his two most famous books, and why he became famous around the world. Ask if students have ever read *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in their own language. Print out a few pages from the novel at <http://www.gutenberg.org> (search for **Mark Twain**, then **Tom Sawyer**) and duplicate them for the class to read. Explain that the conversations are the way Twain heard people speaking as he was growing up along the Mississippi. It’s not that their speaking is wrong or ungrammatical, it’s that their dialect of English follows a different set of grammar rules.

The word that is so offensive in Huckleberry Finn, of course, is the N-word, which is now the most taboo word among white people in the U.S. Words have histories, so while the word was used in every day speech among less educated people in the 1870s right through the 1950s and 60s, it calls up the dehumanizing attitude and the torture done to black people, and still can cause pain when uttered by a white person. A good thing to refer to it as the “N-word” rather than say it in your classroom. We don’t want students to take the word lightly, and your example of not speaking this word will help.

### Dr. Ali: Water, a great medicine

Ask students how much water (plus soup, fruit and vegetable juice, herbal tea, but not counting coffee, beer, wine, or soda) they drink each day. Ask what keeps them from drinking more than they do? Point out that dehydration may be misinterpreted as hunger, and contribute to obesity. Remind students that Dr. Ali’s column is for information, and they should always

check with their own medical advisor before changing any habits or taking in any different quantities of food. There are rare cases of people badly affected by too much water washing out electrolytes, so replacement of minerals (as Dr. Ali includes in his information) is important when drinking large quantities of plain water. His suggestions for overhydrating with juices, herbal teas and water are sure to cause conflict with personal habits and school policies about how often a person can leave the classroom for the bathroom.

### Funny Stuff (page 8)

Explain the structure of a riddle, and have students tell any riddles from their own language. Many riddles in English depend on plays on words, and do not translate well, and so are funny in one language only. Find more riddles at <http://www.riddles.com/index.php>

### Crossword Puzzle (Page 9)

It can’t hurt to do the puzzle in groups from time to time, allowing students to help each other, and have a social team effort. Have students see how many words they can put into the puzzle on their own without resorting to peeking at the answers.

## ANSWERS

- |                                 |                       |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. b                            | 16. F (the president) |
| 2. b                            | 17. F (writer)        |
| 3. a                            | 18. T                 |
| 4. d                            | 19. T                 |
| 5. d                            | 20. F (water)         |
| 6. a                            | 21. D (felony)        |
| 7. c                            | 22. I (astronomer)    |
| 8. b                            | 23. E (pond)          |
| 9. a                            | 24. J (optimal)       |
| 10. d                           | 25. F (blessing)      |
| 11. T                           | 26. A (bankrupt)      |
| 12. F (moon)                    | 27. G (character)     |
| 13. T                           | 28. B (ban)           |
| 14. F (Martin Luther King, Jr.) | 29. C (chronic)       |
| 15. F (Washington, DC)          | 30. H (compromise)    |

## January 2011 Quiz I

Choose the best answer. Write its letter on the line.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The 112th Congress was elected
- a) on January 3, 2011.
  - b) on November 2, 2010.
  - c) on Election Day, two years ago.
  - d) on Election Day, four years ago.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The political party that now has the majority in the House of Representatives is
- a) the Democrats
  - b) the Republicans
  - c) the Independents
  - d) no party now has a majority.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The new Speaker of the House will be
- a) a Republican.
  - b) a Democrat.
  - c) a woman.
  - d) a black person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. If something happens to both the president and vice president, who would become president?
- a) Joe Biden.
  - b) Barack Obama.
  - c) Hillary Clinton.
  - d) John Boehner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The State of the Union Address
- a) is given by the Speaker of the House
  - b) is given by a governor of a state.
  - c) is given by the Senate majority leader
  - d) is given by the President.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. When a person is “booked” he or she,
- a) is entered in a police station’s record book.
  - b) gets a library card.
  - c) becomes an author.
  - d) has too much homework.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The penalty for a misdemeanor is
- a) a small fine.
  - b) more than a year in jail.
  - c) a fine or up to six months in jail.
  - d) life in jail.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. A person accused of a felony
- a) is guilty until the government proves him or her innocent.
  - b) is innocent until the government proves him or her guilty.
  - c) cannot get out of jail on bail.
  - d) can get a suspended sentence.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. An arrested person has the right to
- a) remain silent.
  - b) resist arrest if he or she is innocent.
  - c) be free until the day of the trial.
  - d) have money for bail.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. An arrested person who cannot afford a lawyer,
- a) must act as his or her own lawyer.
  - b) must plead guilty.
  - c) should resist arrest.
  - d) will get a lawyer at government expense.

**II. From Here and There**

**True or False?** Write “T” for true, and “F” for false. If the sentence is *false*, write a word to replace the underlined word to make the sentence true.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Americans often make resolutions on New Year’s Day.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. A lunar calendar is based on the changes of the sun each month.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. The calendar in use around the world today for business purposes is the Gregorian calendar.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. John Boehner led the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. A memorial to Martin Luther King, Jr. is being built in Montgomery, Alabama.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. The “state of the union address” is a speech given by Martin Luther King, Jr.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Mark Twain was America’s most famous president. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. The name Mark Twain came from words for two fathoms deep.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. Yosemite National Park has the highest waterfall in the United States.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. Dr. Ali says that coffee is the simplest, safest, and most effective way to help cells heal.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**III.**

Write the letter of the word that will make the sentence true.

**Word List**

- |             |               |
|-------------|---------------|
| A. bankrupt | F. blessing   |
| B. ban      | G. character  |
| C. chronic  | H. compromise |
| D. felony   | I. astronomer |
| E. pond     | J. optimal    |
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a more serious crime than a misdemeanor.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 22. A person who studies the stars is called an \_\_\_\_\_.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 23. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a small body of water with many forms of life in it.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 24. When you have enough, but not too much of something, you have an \_\_\_\_\_ amount.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 25. A \_\_\_\_\_ is something wonderful that we have.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 26. When a person cannot pay his or her debts and bills, the person may become \_\_\_\_\_.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 27. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a person in a story.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 28. A library can \_\_\_\_\_ a book and not have it for people to read.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 29. An illness that lasts a long time is a \_\_\_\_\_ illness.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 30. When two people with different ideas want to do something together, they have to \_\_\_\_\_.