

Reading

1 a Work in pairs and discuss the questions.

- Do you have a favourite hero or heroine from: (a) a film, (b) a story/legend, or (c) real life?
- What do you think makes these people heroic?

b Look at the film poster on page 37. Have you seen the film? If so, what did you think of it? If not, would you like to see it? Why/Why not?

2 Read the blog entry below about *Avatar* and say which topics (1–6) are mentioned.

- the writer's opinion of the film
- technology used in the film
- how much *Avatar* cost to make
- the success of *Avatar*
- future *Avatar* films
- a particular hero in *Avatar*

3 Read the blog entry again and write true (T) or false (F).

The writer says that:

- Avatar* was better than he expected.
- he is disappointed that the story is basically just about heroes and villains.
- Cameron worked on *Avatar* for several years in the late 1990s.
- part of Cameron's inspiration for *Avatar* was the film *2001: A Space Odyssey*.
- Titanic* was the first film to make over \$2 billion.
- he is irritated that 'heroes' is a theme of so many films.
- Sully is a hero because he decides to do what he thinks is right.

4 Work in small groups and discuss the questions.

- If you've seen *Avatar*, do you agree with the writer's opinion? If you haven't, has the blog entry changed your opinion about seeing the film?
- How far do you agree with the writer's description of a hero?

Film heroes

As my regular readers know, I'm a fan of film director James Cameron. His older science fiction films, *The Terminator* and *Aliens* are brilliant, and *Titanic* is a classic in the true sense of the word. As you can imagine, I had been looking forward to the release of *Avatar* for a while before it came out. Although I must admit, I thought I'd be disappointed. I had heard so much about the film before I saw it ... but until I actually saw it, I couldn't understand what all the fuss was about. I was far from disappointed though – it was fantastic! The visual impact, with all the incredible special effects, is astounding throughout the whole film. And the plot has all the classic elements of a good story: love, war, 'goodies' and 'baddies'. The film tells an old story of heroes and villains; but the new technology and the director's vision bring the film into the 21st century with a bang.

Avatar was released in December 2009, but apparently the idea had started many years before that. Cameron wrote 80 pages of script for the film in 1994. After that, however, he decided not to make the film for many years, because at that time the technology wasn't available to do what he wanted with the film. Instead, he made several documentary films in which he practised using the latest visual effects and camera technology, perfecting his techniques that he would later use in *Avatar* in such a stunning way.

Cameron says that he had been thinking about making this kind of film way before he started writing the script. In fact, since he saw the epic film *2001: A Space Odyssey* in 1968, he had wanted to make a movie that 'would blow people's minds'. The film certainly caught the public's imagination and has had massive commercial success. *Avatar* broke several box office records during its release and became the highest-grossing film of all time, surpassing *Titanic*, which had held the record for the previous 12 years, and becoming the first film to reach over \$2 billion. That's pretty impressive – to be the director of the two highest-grossing films ever!

While I was watching the film, I was thinking about the idea of a hero. I mean, not only is Cameron a bit of a hero for me, but so many films are about heroes in one way or another. In *Avatar*, the basic view of heroes and villains is very clear. In this case, the aliens are the heroes and the humans are the bad guys. It's interesting that one of the humans, Jake Sully, becomes a hero in the end too, when he realises that what he is doing is wrong. From that point on, he decides to do the right thing and help the aliens, even though this puts him in terrible danger. To my mind, the portrayal of a hero in this way adds another level to an already brilliant film.



Vocabulary | time expressions

5 Find the expressions from the box in the blog entry on page 36 and look at the sentences around them. What does each expression refer to?

- a time before
- a specific time
- a time after
- actions at the same time

until I actually saw it throughout the whole film
in December 2009 After that, he decided
at that time the technology wasn't available
since he saw the epic film during its release
for the previous 12 years While I was watching
From that point on

6 Choose the correct words in *italics*.

- While/During* the summer, we travelled around seven European countries.
- I changed schools when I was 12. *From that point on/Throughout*, I loved school.
- I moved house last week. *For/While* the previous few months, I'd lived with my parents.
- The Great Fire of London happened *at/in* 1666.
- She was chatting *throughout/since* the whole maths lesson.
- I left university last summer. *Until/After that*, I got a job working in an advertising agency.
- I met James last year. *After that/Since then*, we've been seeing each other a lot.
- China was ruled by emperors *until/while* the beginning of the 20th century.
- I had a great time when I was at university. *At that time/Throughout*, I was sharing a flat with four friends.
- While/During* I was waiting for you, I finished my book.

Grammar | Past Perfect Simple and Continuous

7 a Complete the examples (1–4) in the Active grammar box with the correct form of the verbs *start*, *think*, *look* and *hear*.

b Check your answers in the blog entry.

c Complete rules A and B with *Past Perfect Simple* and *Past Perfect Continuous*.

d Work in pairs and look again at examples 1–4. Answer the questions.

- In each example, what is the 'main event in the past' or the 'specified point of time'?
- In which example, sentence 3 or 4, does the Past Perfect Continuous refer to an activity which happened 'up to and beyond a specified time'?

Active grammar

- I _____ so much about the film before I saw it.*
- Avatar was released in 2009, but apparently, the idea _____ many years before that.*
- I _____ forward to the release of Avatar for a while before it came out.*
- He _____ about making this kind of film way before he started writing the script.*

A We use the _____ to describe what happened before the main events in the past.

B We use the _____ to describe activities that happened: over a period of time; up to a specified point in time; and up to and beyond a specified point in time.

see Reference page 47

8 Choose the correct words in *italics*.

- I was disappointed when I saw the film because I *had read/had been reading* three good reviews about it.
- I *had looked/had been looking* forward to seeing that film for ages before I finally got the DVD.
- Jurassic Park* came out in 1993. Before that, no film *had used/had been using* computer technology in that way.
- They *had worked/had been working* on improving the technology for years before they made the film.
- Before the first *Shrek* film in 2001, film-goers *hadn't seen/hadn't been seeing* such good animation.
- I *had watched/had been watching* DVDs on my computer for years before I bought a new television.
- Before you suggested going to see *Avatar*, I *had wondered/had been wondering* what to do this evening.
- I *hadn't thought/hadn't been thinking* properly about what a hero was before I saw that film.

9 a Complete the sentences.

- Throughout most of last year I _____. For the previous few months, I ...
- The best year of my whole childhood was _____. At that time, I ...
- I couldn't believe it when _____. Before that, I ...
- One of the most important things to happen to me was _____. Until then, I ...

b Work in pairs and compare your sentences. Ask and answer questions and give more details.

Speaking

10 Work in pairs. Look at the photos and discuss the questions.

- Do you think any groups of people who do particular jobs are modern-day heroes, e.g. firefighters, aid workers? Why?
- Can you think of any famous people that you think are heroic? Give reasons.



12 a You are going to talk about a hero. Choose one from the list and write notes about what you want to say. Use the ideas from the How to... box. Think about the tenses and time expressions you can use.

- a hero from a film, story or legend
- a modern-day hero (famous or not famous)

b Work in pairs. Take turns to talk about your hero.



11 a 1.17 Listen to Eben talking about a hero and answer the questions.

- Is he talking about someone from 'real life', or someone from a film/story?
- Do you agree that this person sounds like a hero? Why/Why not?

b Listen again and number the phrases in the How to... box in the order you hear them.

How to... engage your listener

Introduce what you are going to talk about in a general way	... many people have different definitions of what a hero is
Use rhetorical questions	... Now, what did he do?
Include details	... he was born in a mud brick house in the Kalahari.
Include your personal response	... I would think of people who do things that we can learn from.
Use a range of tenses and time expressions	He told me that his father had once explained to him that ...

3.2 Land of invention

Grammar articles

Can do talk about inventions and reach an agreement



Listening

1 a Work in pairs and discuss the questions.

- What can you see in the photos?
- What things do you associate with: (a) modern-day China, and (b) traditional China?
- Do you know anything that was invented in China?

b 1.18 Listen to the radio programme. Do the speakers mention any of the things you talked about?

2 Listen again. Write true (T), false (F) or not given (NG).

- China has over 3,000 years of history.
- China has been a major world economic power for centuries.
- Paper was made in China in around 1005 AD.
- The first paper was made of silk waste products.
- The wheelbarrow was invented by one person.
- The gun was developed by the Chinese in around the 10th century.
- The invention of cast iron had a huge impact on people's lives.
- Agriculture accounts for about 50% of China's economy.
- Rice, tea, cotton and fish are the major agricultural exports.
- Iron production in China is a rapidly expanding business.
- The population of Shanghai is growing by 22% a year.
- Production of industrial and consumer goods accounts for more than 50% of China's economy.

3 Work in pairs and discuss the questions.

- Have you been to China or do you live there?
- If so, how far do you think the programme gives a fair description of both ancient and modern China? How would you describe China to someone who hasn't been there?
- If not, from what you heard in the programme, in what ways do you think it is the same as, or different from, your country? Would you like to go to China? Why/Why not?

4 Read the Lifelong learning box. Work in pairs and discuss the questions.

- Generally, how easy or difficult do you find understanding spoken English? Why do you think this is?
- When you listened to the radio programme, which of the strategies in the box did you use?
- Which strategies would be useful for you to use more?
- What other strategies would you recommend?

Listening skills: understanding spoken English

! There are some useful strategies that can help you understand spoken English better.

- Think about why you are listening and try to focus only on what you need to understand.
- Listen for the words which are stressed. These usually carry the 'content' of what is being said.
- Use other clues to help with understanding (e.g. pictures and your existing knowledge of the topic).
- Be aware of 'sound/spelling' relationships. In English, many words are pronounced differently from how they are written.
- Focus on what you DO understand. Don't worry about what you DON'T understand.