



Pre-Reading Activities

A: What Would You Do?

Discuss these situations in pairs.

1. Imagine you are 19 years old and you want to start a clothing business. You need \$1,000 to help you set it up. Who would you ask for a loan?
2. Now imagine you are 19 years old with a preschooler. You are expecting another baby. Your parents are both on welfare and your partner is in gaol. You need \$1,000 to help you start your clothing business. How easy or difficult would it be to get a loan?



Reading Activities

A: Scanning

Find these words in today's article. What is the article about? **loans, Grameen America**

“Banker to the poor” gives New York women a boost

NEW YORK Sun Apr 26, (Reuters) - Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus, known as the “banker to the poor” for making small loans in impoverished countries, is now doing business in the center of capitalism -- New York City.

In the past year the first U.S. branch of his Grameen Bank has lent \$1.5 million, ranging from a few hundred dollars to a few thousand dollars, to nearly 600 women with small business plans in the city's borough of Queens.

People around the country are struggling to repay mortgages and credit card debts, but Grameen America says its loan repayment rate is more than 99 percent.

“While other banks are collapsing, this one remains strong,” Yunus told reporters at a street fair, where about 100 Grameen America borrowers sold wares ranging from food and flowers to clothes and jewelry.

“Microcredit has been one area the crisis has not impacted. The crisis has not touched it, still it is robust as ever,” said Yunus, who started Grameen Bank in Bangladesh in 1983.

Zemia Shoffner received a loan of \$2,000 in January from Grameen America, which she used to take a baking class to expand her catering expertise and drum up more business.

“I have been running my business for about three years now and (the course) meant a lot because it makes me more marketable,” Shoffner told Reuters, noting her bad credit meant she could not get a traditional bank loan.

“This has really allowed me to live my dream. I had another job and I wasn't really happy, so now I really have the freedom to pursue my passion. It means everything,” she said.

GRAMEEN CREDIT UNION?

In Bangladesh Grameen Bank has lent nearly \$8 billion, in increments of a few dollars to a few thousand, to millions of poor borrowers -- almost all women -- to run small businesses. Bangladeshi economist Yunus and his Grameen Bank were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006.

Karen Giral, 20, who is pregnant with her second child and lives in Elmhurst, Queens, has paid off her first loan of \$600 and now has a second loan of \$1,000. She has used the money to build her business selling Avon products.

“It was a really big help because to save up that much money is ... hard,” said Giral, who heard about Grameen America from

her mother.

In addition to America, the Grameen Bank operates in Kosovo, Turkey, Zambia, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Indonesia.

Microfinance institutions around the world say they are struggling to raise funds for loans. But Grameen Bank in Bangladesh -- where 98 percent of loans are repaid -- uses deposits to finance loans.

Grameen America now operates by lending out money gathered through donations and money from payments on existing loans. The bank is applying for a U.S. credit union license to generate the deposits it needs to make more loans.

“Microcredit cannot depend on small donations. This is a business, it should be run like a business,” Yunus said.

‘FIRST STEP’

U.S. President Barack Obama recently announced the creation of a \$100 million microfinance growth fund for small lenders in the Western Hemisphere to allow them to continue making loans despite the global recession. “\$100 million is a very small amount to start. Grameen Bank in Bangladesh lends more than \$100 million a month,” said Yunus, adding that it was a welcome “first step.”

In Queens, Grameen America borrowers must have two forms of identification and a tax return to show their financial situation. They also must open up a bank account that requires them to deposit \$2 a week, on top of repaying their loan, to foster a habit of saving.

Leslie Kane, vice president of finance and strategy for Grameen America, said reducing poverty through microfinance banking is not just for developing economies.

“Many Americans say, ‘Oh we don't have poverty in the United States.’ But we do, just like every country around the world we need to focus on microcredit,” she said.

For Yoly Castillo, 37, a Colombian immigrant who lives in College Point, Queens, a \$1,000 loan from Grameen America not only helped her start a clothing business seven months ago but also inspired her to study business administration at college.

“This business has made me open up my horizons, it's amazing,” said Castillo, who also works part-time as a medical biller and pays back \$22 a week on her loan. “I never expected this of myself ... It has given me so much strength.”

B: Completing A Table

Find information about these people in the article and complete the table. If no information is given, write 'not given':

Name	Age	Amount of loan	Kind of business	Plan	Reason for needing the loan
1.	not given	\$2,000	catering business	going to baking class and getting more business	2.
Karen Giral	3.	\$1,000	selling Avon products	wants to build her business	4.
5.	37	6.	7.	studying business administration	8.

C: Answering Questions

Here is an imaginary interview with Josie, 24, who lives in Queens. She wants to start a business supplying home baking to offices. She needs \$1,000. Her friend, Yoko, has read this article.

Complete the interview using information from the article.

Yoko: Hey Josie, how's it going? Did you get the loan?

Josie: Are you kidding? Of course not. That bank just laughed at me, just like the others.

Yoko: Well I may have some good news. I was on the subway and I've just been reading an article about the _____.

Josie: Isn't that the bank that's in Bangladesh and other places? It loans money to people to start small businesses?

Yoko: Yes, but now it's here in New York! They've started a microfinance business, Grameen America, and it has a branch here in Queens.

Josie: Really? That would be so great if they would give me a loan. But they'll just laugh too!

Yoko: No, they have already lent money to nearly _____. I thought you'd be interested so I got a copy of the newspaper.

Josie: Well, what would I need to show them?

Yoko: Hang on, okay well, you need _____, and a tax return. That's because they want to see your _____. And you need to open a bank account.

Josie: What's that for?

Yoko: Well, as well as paying off your loan, you need to put in _____ to encourage you to save.

Josie: This all seems too good to be true! Where is the bank getting its money from? The air?

Yoko: No, wait a minute, oh yes, here it is. It takes money from donations and also from payments on _____.

D: Summarizing

Use the article to complete the gaps in this text about the Grameen Bank:

Grameen Bank, established by _____, was first set up in the country of _____. Grameen Bank typically loans amounts of money ranging from _____ to a few thousands to poor people, mostly _____, in order to set up _____.

The Bank now operates in _____, _____, _____, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Indonesia. Deposits in the bank are used to finance _____. In Bangladesh the Yasmeen's Bank has _____ of loans repaid. Yunus was awarded the _____ in _____.



Post-Reading Activities

You may do one or more of these.

A: Language

Read this information about the present perfect continuous.

In the **present perfect continuous**, we talk about an action that has continued over a period until NOW.

So, for instance, we can say:

*I **have been sitting** here for ages waiting for the bank manager to phone.*

(This could mean that I'm going to stop sitting here now, but not necessarily.)

We could say...

I've been sitting here for ages waiting for the bank manager to phone.. I hope I won't have to wait much longer.

Your friend comes into your apartment and their eyes are red and sore. *You say...*

You've been playing too many computer games!

Sometimes we use this verb form with **recently** and **lately**:

I've been having problems with my neighbor lately.

Lately he's been shouting insults at me whenever I've seen him.

I've been having really bad headaches recently means I have had a number of headaches.

I've had a really bad headache means that I have had one headache.

Since and **for** are often used with the present perfect continuous.

I've been working on my business plan for months now.

I have been running my business for about three years now...

The **present perfect continuous** looks at the **activity in progress**, while the present perfect simple looks at the **result**.

I've been finishing my business plan. (In this sentence it is not clear whether the action is finished.)

I've finished my business plan. What do you think? (In this sentence, it is clear that the action has finished.)

It depends on how the speaker sees the situation: i.e. whether or not they want to focus on the action going on, or the result.

State verbs (e.g. verbs like **know, love, like, own** and **want**) do not usually take the continuous:

I have loved working with clothes all my life. NOT I have been loving working with clothes all my life.

In a few cases, the meaning is the same whether you use the Simple or the Continuous:

I've studied here for two years means exactly the same as...*I've been studying here for two years.*

We often choose to use the present perfect continuous in this situation.

Use the **present perfect continuous** and an appropriate verb to complete each gap in this story about Josie.

I _____ in New York for three years after moving here from Seattle. I _____ for a new place to live, because the building where I have my apartment is being knocked down, but so far I've had no luck: either places are too expensive or I haven't liked the look of the other people in the building. My friends _____ me look and I'm going to see another place tomorrow. I hope it's better than the other ones I've seen. At the moment I work in a deli. I _____ there for about 2 months, but that's not my long term goal. My dream has always been to open a business selling baked goods to businesses in my area but I don't have the finance. I _____ to banks for small loans and _____ on doors of people who I've thought could help me but without success. In the meantime I __also_____ lots of pastries at night. My friends love visiting me. They _____ all the different things I make and _____ me what they like. I __also_____ them in the apartment block but that will finish when I find a new place to live. Anyway, I __just_____ to my friend, Yoko, and she says she's heard of a small loans company that _____ loans to women here in New York. She is coming over right now to tell me about it. I _____ up a storm baking her some different things to thank her. I'd better go and finish them before she arrives.



B: What Do You Think?

Discuss the following statements in pairs or small groups. What do they mean? What is your response?

"Many Americans say, 'Oh we don't have poverty in the United States.' But we do, just like every country around the world we need to focus on microcredit," she said.

"Microcredit cannot depend on small donations. This is a business, it should be run like a business," Yunus said.

"This business has made me open up my horizons, it's amazing," said Castillo, who also works part-time as a medical biller and pays back \$22 a week on her loan. "I never expected this of myself ... It has given me so much strength."

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C: Dialogue

Work in pairs.

Student A:

You work for a microfinance company, helping with inquiries from potential applicants for small business loans.

Student B is applying for a loan and will phone you to ask for information.

Ask Student B what they want the loan for and how much they want.

Answer Student B's questions on what they need to provide and what they need to do to apply for a loan.

Student B:

You are applying to a microfinance company for a small business loan.

Phone the company and ask about what you need to provide and do.

Tell Student A why you want the loan and how much you want.



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TEACHERS' NOTES AND ANSWER KEY

Reading Activities

B: Completing A Table - Answers

1. Zemina Shoffner, 2. has bad credit so couldn't get normal bank loan, 3. 20, 4. very hard to save up money needed, 5. Yoly Castillo, 6. \$1,000, 7. clothing business, 8. not given.

C: Answering Questions - Sample Answers

Yoko: How Josie, how's it going? Did you get the loan?

Josie: Are you kidding? Of course not. That bank just laughed at me, just like the others.

Yoko: Well I may have some good news. I was on the subway and I've just been reading an article about the Grameen Bank.

Josie: Isn't that the bank that's in Bangladesh and other places? It loans money to people to start small businesses?

Yoko: Yes, but now it's here in New York! They've started a microfinance business, Grameen America and it has a branch here in Queens.

Josie: Really? That would be so great if they would give me a loan. But they'll just laugh too!

Yoko: No, they have already lent money to nearly 600 women here in New York. I thought you'd be interested so I got a copy of the newspaper.

Josie: Well, what would I need to show them?

Yoko: Hang on, okay well, you need 2 forms of ID, and a tax return. That's because they want to see your financial situation. And you need to open a bank account.

Josie: What's that for?

Yoko: Well, as well as paying off your loan, you need to put in \$2 a week to encourage you to save.

Josie: This all seems too good to be true! Where is the bank getting its money from? The air?

Yoko: No, wait a minute, oh yes, here it is. It takes money from donations and also from payments on existing loans.

D: Summarizing - Sample Answers

Grameen Bank, established by **Muhammad Yunus**, was first set up in the country of **Bangladesh**. Grameen Bank typically loans amounts of money ranging from **a few dollars** to a few thousands to poor people, mostly **women**, in order to set up **small businesses**.

The Bank now operates in **Kosovo, Turkey, Zambia, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Indonesia**.

Deposits in the bank are used to finance **loans**. In Bangladesh the Grameen Bank has **98%** of loans repaid. Yunus was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize** in **2006**.

Post-Reading Activities

Language - Sample Answers

I've *been living* in New York for three years after moving here from Seattle. I've *been looking* for a new place to live, because the building where I have my apartment is being knocked down, but so far I've had no luck: either places are too expensive or I haven't liked the look of the other people in the building. My friends *have been helping* me look and I'm going to see another place tomorrow. I hope it's better than the other ones I've seen.

At the moment I work in a deli. I've *been working* there for about 2 months, but that's not my long term goal. My dream has always been to open a business selling baked goods to businesses in my area but I don't have the finance. I've *been applying* to banks for small loans and knocking on doors of people who I've thought could help me without success.

In the meantime I've *also been baking* lots of pastries at night. My friends love visiting me. They've *been trying* all the different things I make and telling me what they like. I've *also been selling* them in the apartment block but that will finish when I find a new place to live. Anyway, I've *just been talking* to my friend, Yoko, and she says she's heard of a small loans company that *has been giving* loans to women here in New York. She is coming over right now to tell me about it. I've *been cooking* up a storm baking her some different things to thank her. I'd better go and finish them before she arrives.

