Phobias

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. What are some common fears that people have?
2. Do you have any fears or phobias?
3. Which fears or phobias would be the most difficult to live with? Why?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.
Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

_____	1.	irrational	a)	unable to get out
_____	2.	anxiety	b)	as stated by
_____	3.	widespread	c)	found in many places, prevalent
_____	4.	affect	d)	to experience something bad, feel pain
_____	5.	evolve	e)	things that happen in nature without human intervention
_____	6.	natural phenomena	f)	illogical, unreasonable
_____	7.	intense	g)	very strong
_____	8.	suffer	h)	to cause results or changes
_____	9.	according to	i)	to change slowly, to develop gradually over time
_____	10.	trapped	j)	stress and fear

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Quick-Fire Questions

Can you answer these questions? Each one contains a word or phrase from the Vocabulary Preview on page 1.

1. Can you think of three feelings that can be **intense**?
2. Can you think of three situations that might cause someone to behave in an **irrational** way?
3. Can you name three people from your country of origin who enjoy **widespread** popularity?
4. Can you think of three diseases that people used to **suffer** from but don't anymore?
5. Can you name three **natural phenomena**?
6. Can you think of any circumstances that could make someone feel **trapped**?
7. Can you think of three ways that stress might **affect** someone's health?
8. Can you think of three ways that being in love might **affect** your decisions?
9. Can you describe three strategies that someone could use to lower their **anxiety** before giving a presentation?
10. Can you think of three ways in which humans have **evolved**?

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Reading

PHOBIAS
How common are they?

1. A phobia is an uncontrollable and **irrational** fear of an object or situation. Phobias can cause extreme **anxiety** in some people and prevent them from participating in everyday activities.

   It is estimated that between 15 and 20% of the world's population has a phobia at some point in their lives. Many phobias are related to animals, the natural environment, medical treatment, and certain situations.

2. *Fear of animals*

   One of the most **widespread** phobias related to animals is the fear of dogs, which **affects** around one in 20 Americans. Some people develop this fear after a negative childhood experience involving a dog. Approximately 3% of people worldwide live with a phobia of snakes. Recent research suggests that humans may have **evolved** to fear snakes in order to survive. A fear of spiders is also very common. Some experts believe that this fear, known as arachnophobia, may affect up to 6% of people across the globe.

3. *Fear of the natural environment*

   Two **natural phenomena**, lightning and thunder, can be very frightening for some people, especially young children. In fact, more than six million Americans experience astraphobia, which is an **intense** fear of these two weather events. Astraphobia, however, is not the only phobia related to the natural environment. One in 50 people in the US **suffers** from aquaphobia, or the fear of water. Other people's lives are disrupted by less common environmental phobias such as the fear of sunlight and the fear of wind.

4. *Fear of medical treatment*

   According to some experts, up to 25% of Americans have an extreme fear of needles. This phobia can cause people to avoid medical treatment. In fact, studies have found that some Americans remain unvaccinated against COVID-19 because of their fear of needles. Between 5 and 10% of people worldwide have a fear of dentists, while about 4% of the world's population is afraid of blood.

5. *Fear of certain situations*

   It is believed that as many as three out of four people have a fear of public speaking, making it the most common form of situational anxiety. Agoraphobia, on the other hand, only impacts around 1% of the US population, but it can severely limit daily life. People with agoraphobia become anxious in situations in which they feel helpless or **trapped**. Some sufferers fear open spaces, some fear leaving their home, and some fear traveling on public transportation. Other situational phobias include a fear of heights, a fear of flying, and a fear of enclosed spaces.

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Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs and write your answers in your notebook.

1. What is the difference between a fear and a phobia?
2. Which three animal-related phobias does the reading discuss?
3. Which age group does astraphobia seem to affect the most?
4. Why does the reading mention COVID-19 vaccines?
5. Which is more common, the fear of public speaking or agoraphobia?

Scanning

Scan the article to find the information to complete the chart.

#	Fear/Phobia	Statistic
1	has a phobia	15–20% of the world's population
2		3% of people worldwide
3		6% of the people across the globe
4		six million Americans
5	aquaphobia	
6	needles	
7	dentists	
8	blood	
9		1% of the US population

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Rewording Facts

A. Fractions & Percentages

Match the items in Column A to items in Columns B and C with a similar meaning.

#	Column A	Column B	Column C
1.	25%	32%	just over a fifth
2.	53%	a quarter	just under a third
3.	around one in five	21%	over half
4.	about one in three	more than half	one in four

B. Paraphrasing

Look back at the chart on page 4. What are the different ways the writer describes Americans and people around the world?

How could you say the phrase in bold in a different way?
Discuss your ideas with a partner.

"...**between 15 and 20% of the world's population has** a phobia at some point in their lives."

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Rewording Facts cont.

C. Writing

Rewrite each sentence. Try to rephrase the information in **bold**.

1. Arachnophobia may affect **up to 6% of people around the world**.

2. Aquaphobia affects **around one in 50 people in the US**.

3. **Up to 25% of Americans** may have a fear of needles.

4. A phobia of blood affects **around 4% of the world's population**.

5. Agoraphobia affects **around 1% of the US population**.

Discussion

1. Which information in the reading did you find the most interesting? The most surprising? The most predictable? Why?
2. How would you try to cure a phobia? Do you think that all phobias can be cured?
3. What do you think life would be like for someone with aquaphobia? Astraphobia? Agoraphobia?
4. What do you think is the worst phobia to suffer from? Why?
5. According to the reading, between 5 and 10% of people worldwide have a fear of dentists. Do you think this might have an impact on the way dentists are trained? If so, how?
6. To what extent might our lifestyle choices lead us to develop fears or phobias?

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Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students read about some common fears and phobias that people in the US and around the world have. They learn vocabulary, scan an article for facts and statistics, and discuss possible cures for phobias.

LEVEL: High Int

TIME: 1.5–2 hours

TAGS: discussion, phobia, fear, scan, scanning, statistics, agoraphobia, fractions, percentages, paraphrase

Pre-Reading

A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Have students work in small groups or as a class. Answers will vary.

B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

1. f	3. c	5. i	7. g	9. b
2. j	4. h	6. e	8. d	10. a

Quick-Fire Questions

These questions are a fun way to reinforce new vocabulary. Have students work in pairs or small groups. After they read the questions, have students call out answers as they think of them.

Reading (and/or Listening)

Read individually, in small groups, or as a class. You can also play the listening as your students read along. Help your students with vocabulary and expressions that they are unfamiliar with.

Comprehension

1. A phobia is an extreme and intense fear. A phobia is also uncontrollable and irrational.
2. The reading discusses the fear of dogs, snakes, and spiders.
3. Astraphobia seems to affect children the most.
4. The reading mentions COVID-19 vaccines to illustrate how phobias can cause people to avoid medical treatment. Some people have chosen not to be vaccinated against COVID-19 because they have a fear of needles.
5. The fear of public speaking is more common than agoraphobia.

Scanning

#	Fear/Phobia	Statistic
1	has a phobia	15–20% of the world's population
2	snakes	3% of people worldwide
3	spiders	6% of people across the globe
4	astraphobia	six million Americans
5	aquaphobia	one in 50 people in the US
6	needles	25% of Americans
7	dentists	5–10% of people worldwide
8	blood	4% of the world's population
9	agoraphobia	1% of the US population

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Answer Key cont.

Rewording Facts

A. FRACTIONS & PERCENTAGES

1. 25% / a quarter / one in four
2. 53% / more than half / over half
3. around one in five / 21% / just over a fifth
4. about one in three / 32% / just under a third

B. PARAPHRASING

Americans = people in the US, the US population
people around the world = people worldwide, the world's population, people across the globe

C. WRITING

Answers may vary. Possible answers:

1. Arachnophobia may affect more than one in 20 people worldwide.
2. Aquaphobia affects around 2% of Americans.
3. As many as a quarter of people in the US may have a fear of needles.
4. A phobia of blood affects nearly 4% of people across the globe.
5. One in every 100 Americans suffers from agoraphobia.

Discussion

Answers will vary.
Can be done individually or in small groups or pairs.

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the word *Traveling.* Most other English-speaking countries spell this word this way: *Travelling.* Make it a challenge for your students to find this word in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spelling.

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