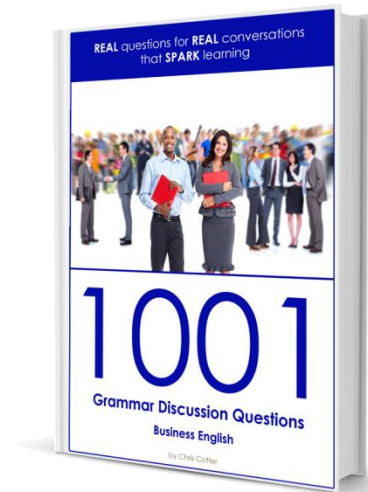
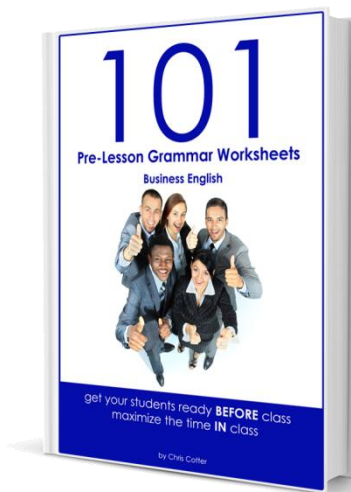
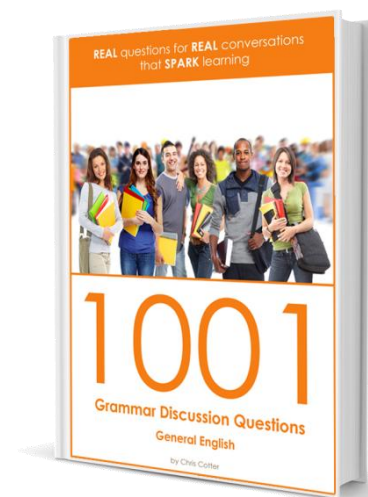
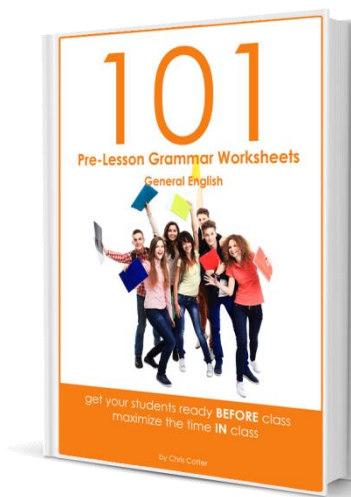
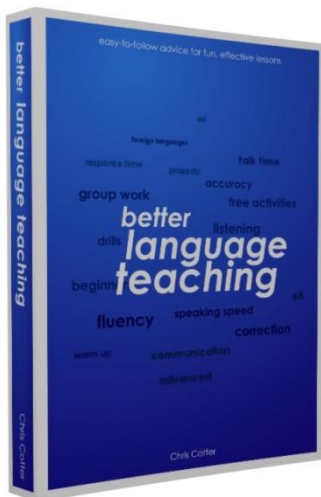


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the ARTICLE (for teachers)

Education Woes

More than one in ten high schools in the US has been labeled a "dropout factory." The distinction is far from flattering, as the nickname applies to schools in which 40% or more of the children don't graduate.

The greatest concentration of these dubious schools lies in large urban centers and areas with high poverty. The surrounding neighborhoods may experience high crime rates, drugs, and violence, and students may need additional help from social services. But officials also point out that some neighborhoods and towns just don't possess a strong tradition underscoring the importance of high school graduation. In the past, there were enough blue-collar jobs to go around.

Many of the students who attend dropout factories enter with poor literacy and math skills, which only exacerbate the search for a solution. The kids enter ninth grade with fifth grade reading skills, for example. Faced with these seemingly insurmountable obstacles, it's no small wonder that so many schools fail to give these children opportunities in the land of opportunity.

Conversely, in Japan, private high schools cater to children without the academic and social skills for traditional school. Expensive, yet easy to enroll, these institutions are degree mills. Principals and administrative staff pressure teachers to administer grades based largely on attendance. If students fail the final test or don't do homework, but attend 100% of the lessons, they can walk out with a B average. What's worse, kids can sleep, text messages, or chat with friends rather than participate in the lesson. Teachers readily admit they're in a quandary, and simply wait to be transferred elsewhere.

Additional woes on the state of education come out of England. Despite a massive program to raise reading rates, reports indicate there has been almost zero impact. Rates remain unchanged since the 1950s.

Teacher's Notes:

* Underlined words in red typeface are the answers.

the Article (for students)

Listen and fill in the missing sentences. Compare your answers with a partner, and then listen once more.

Education Woes

More than one in ten high schools in the US has been labeled a "dropout factory." The distinction is far from flattering, as the nickname applies to schools in which 40% or more of the children don't graduate.

The greatest concentration of these dubious schools lies in large urban centers and areas with high poverty.

a) _____, and students may need additional help from social services. But officials also point out that some neighborhoods and towns just don't possess a strong tradition underscoring the importance of high school graduation. In the past, there were enough blue-collar jobs to go around.

b) _____, which only exacerbate the search for a solution. The kids enter ninth grade with fifth grade reading skills, for example. Faced with these seemingly insurmountable obstacles, c) _____.

Conversely, in Japan, d) _____. Expensive, yet easy to enroll, these institutions are degree mills. Principals and administrative staff pressure teachers to administer grades based largely on attendance. e) _____, they can walk out with a B average. What's worse, kids can sleep, text messages, or chat with friends rather than participate in the lesson. Teachers readily admit they're in a quandary, and simply wait to be transferred elsewhere.

Additional woes on the state of education come out of England. Despite a massive program to raise reading rates, reports indicate there has been almost zero impact. Rates remain unchanged since the 1950s.

Notes:

STEP ONE

Speculate: What might "dropout factory" mean? Brainstorm possible answers with a partner(s) for 2 minutes. Spend another 5 minutes or less discussing the ideas together.

STEP TWO

Questions: Read as much of the article as you can in two minutes. Guess the answers to the questions below, then listen to your teacher read the article. Try to confirm your answers.

a.	More than 10% of American high schools are "dropout factories."	T / F
b.	Most dropout factories are in large cities and poor areas.	T / F
c.	According to the article, Japan has a similar problem as the US.	T / F
d.	All Japanese students chat with friends, send e-mails, and sleep in class.	T / F
e.	Reading has improved in England since the second half of the twentieth century.	T / F

STEP THREE

Fill in the Blanks: Listen to your teacher read the article again. Fill in the blanks with the missing words.

STEP FOUR

Questions: Answer the questions to check comprehension.

a.	What does "dropout factory" mean?
b.	Where are most of the dropout factories?
c.	According to the article, why do so many of the students fail to graduate?
d.	What's the problem Japan faces?
e.	According to the article, what did England try to do recently?

STEP FIVE

Discuss: Talk about the following questions in pairs/groups. Remember to support your answers!

a.	What is/was your high school like? Please explain.
b.	How important is education for success? Why do you think so?
c.	What can be done to improve education and graduation rates?
d.	Are there similar problems in your country? Are there different problems? Please explain.