

The history of Venice

ESL Worksheet | listening & third conditional
B2 | time: around 60 min



Warm-up

1. What is the most impressive city you have ever visited? What made it memorable?
2. Do you prefer visiting modern cities or places with a rich historical heritage?
3. Why do some cities become major tourist destinations while others remain relatively unknown?
4. Do you think tourism does more good than harm?
5. Do you think some historical cities will disappear because of climate change?

A bit of grammar

We use the Third Conditional to talk about:

- imaginary past situations
- alternative histories
- events that did not happen
- regrets and speculation about the past

Structure

If + Past Perfect, would have + past participle

Examples:

- If the Lombards had not invaded northern Italy, Venice might never have existed.
- If Venetian merchants had not expanded their trade networks, the city would not have become so wealthy.
- If sea levels had risen earlier, Venice might have faced serious problems centuries ago.

What Would Have Happened If...?

1. What would have happened if the Lombards had never invaded northern Italy?
2. What would Venice have looked like if people had settled inland instead of in the lagoon?
3. What would have happened if Venetians had failed to develop maritime trade?
4. What would Venice have become if glassmaking had never developed on Murano?
5. What would have happened if new trade routes had not bypassed Venice?
6. What would you have done if you had been one of the first settlers in the lagoon?
7. What would have happened if Venice had not become dependent on tourism?
8. What would Venice be like today if climate change had not accelerated?
9. What would have happened if Venice had remained one of Europe's dominant trading powers?

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Vocabulary 1

Match the words and the definitions.

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 1. refugee | A. the process of becoming less powerful |
| 2. marshy | B. known and respected for a particular quality |
| 3. maritime | C. relating to the sea |
| 4. renown | D. a person forced to leave their home |
| 5. craftsmanship | E. wet and soft land |
| 6. dominance | F. the ability to create things skilfully |
| 7. diminish | G. power or control over others |
| 8. degradation | H. to become smaller, weaker, or less important |

Vocabulary 2

Practise the new words!

1. What difficulties do refugees often face when arriving in a new country?
2. Why might marshy land be difficult to build on?
3. Which countries have a strong maritime tradition?
4. What cities are renowned for their architecture?
5. Do you appreciate traditional craftsmanship? Why?
6. Which countries have held dominance in world politics throughout history?
7. Can a city recover after its influence has diminished?
8. What forms of environmental degradation concern you most?

Before we listen

Do you know anything about the history of Venice? What do you expect to hear?



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Listening - The history of Venice

Put the sentences in the correct order.

A	To create stable foundations, thousands of wooden piles were driven deep into the muddy seabed.
B	Venetian merchants accumulated immense wealth, while the city gained renown for shipbuilding, banking, and luxury goods.
C	However, Venice's dominance gradually diminished after new oceanic trade routes shifted commercial activity away from the Mediterranean.
D	In the modern era, the city reinvented itself as a cultural and tourist destination
E	Venice is one of the world's most remarkable cities, famous for its canals, architecture, and centuries of commercial influence.
F	Venice became a major centre of trade, connecting Europe with the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic world.
G	Today, Venice attracts millions of visitors annually, but it faces mounting challenges from overtourism, environmental degradation, and rising sea levels.
H	The settlers had limited access to farmland, faced harsh living conditions, and were forced to develop innovative ways of building.
I	Over time, these settlements evolved into a prosperous maritime republic.
J	One of Venice's most celebrated industries was glassmaking. To reduce the risk of fires, glass furnaces were moved to the nearby island of Murano, which became internationally famous for its craftsmanship.
K	Preserving this unique city has become an increasingly urgent global concern.
L	The isolated location offered protection but presented enormous challenges.
M	Its origins can be traced back to the 5th and 6th centuries, when waves of refugees fled to the marshy islands of the Venetian Lagoon to escape invasions by various Germanic tribes, including the Lombards.

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Comprehension 1

Put the events in order

- A. Venice became famous for Murano glass.
- B. Venice transformed into a major trading power.
- C. Refugees escaped to the lagoon.
- D. New trade routes weakened Venice's influence.
- E. Wooden piles were used to support buildings.
- F. Tourism became one of the city's main industries.
- G. Rising sea levels became a major concern.

Comprehension 2

True or false?

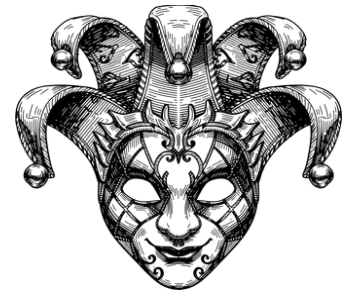
- 1. Venice was originally founded by people escaping invasions.
- 2. The settlers chose fertile farmland for their new homes.
- 3. Wooden piles were used to stabilize buildings.
- 4. Venice traded mainly with South America.
- 5. Murano became famous for glass production.
- 6. Venice's importance increased after new oceanic trade routes appeared.
- 7. Environmental problems threaten Venice today.

Comprehension 3

Complete the sentences, use the correct form of the word in brackets.

- 1. The first settlers faced many _____ conditions. (CHALLENGE)
- 2. Venice became a _____ trading centre. (PROSPER)
- 3. Murano gained international _____ for its glassmakers. (RENOWN)
- 4. Venice now struggles with environmental _____. (DEGRADE)
- 5. The lagoon provided _____ from invaders. (PROTECT)
- 6. Many historians admire the city's architectural _____. (INNOVATE)

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Back to grammar!

Create Third Conditional sentences.

Example

Lombard invasion

→ If the Lombards had not invaded northern Italy, Venice might never have been founded.

Prompts

- 1.lagoon
- 2.wooden piles
- 3.maritime trade
- 4.Murano
- 5.merchants
- 6.Mediterranean
- 7.trade routes
- 8.tourism
- 9.sea levels
- 10.overtourism

Let's talk!

Preserving Venice

- 1.Should Venice limit the number of tourists allowed to enter the city?
- 2.Who should pay for the preservation of historical cities: local governments, tourists, or international organisations?
- 3.Is it ethical to prioritise tourism over the needs of local residents?
- 4.How can cities balance economic benefits with environmental protection?

Architecture and Heritage

- 1.What architectural features make Venice unique?
- 2.Why do people value historical buildings?
- 3.Should modern architecture be allowed in historical city centres?

Global Challenges

- 1.Is climate change the greatest threat facing Venice?
- 2.Are there other cities around the world facing similar problems?
- 3.What historical sites do you think are most at risk in the coming decades?
- 4.How can technology help preserve cultural heritage?
- 5.Which historical city would you most like to see protected for future generations, and why?

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Transcript

Venice is one of the world's most remarkable cities, famous for its canals, architecture, and centuries of commercial influence. Its origins can be traced back to the 5th and 6th centuries, when waves of refugees fled to the marshy islands of the Venetian Lagoon to escape invasions by various Germanic tribes, including the Lombards. The isolated location offered protection but presented enormous challenges. The settlers had limited access to farmland, faced harsh living conditions, and were forced to develop innovative ways of building.

To create stable foundations, thousands of wooden piles were driven deep into the muddy seabed. Over time, these settlements evolved into a prosperous maritime republic. Venice became a major centre of trade, connecting Europe with the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic world. Venetian merchants accumulated immense wealth, while the city gained renown for shipbuilding, banking, and luxury goods.

One of Venice's most celebrated industries was glassmaking. To reduce the risk of fires, glass furnaces were moved to the nearby island of Murano, which became internationally famous for its craftsmanship.

However, Venice's dominance gradually diminished after new oceanic trade routes shifted commercial activity away from the Mediterranean. In the modern era, the city reinvented itself as a cultural and tourist destination. Today, Venice attracts millions of visitors annually, but it faces mounting challenges from overtourism, environmental degradation, and rising sea levels. Preserving this unique city has become an increasingly urgent global concern.

