Ghent's Veggie Day turns the city green

LEVEL A2/B1



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I. WARM-UP

1. How often do you eat meals without meat or fish?
2. What is your favourite vegetable dish?
3. Do schools or offices in your area offer veggie options?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

flexitarian
a person who usually eats plant-based food but sometimes eats meat or fish

nonprofit
an organisation that works for a social goal, not to make money for owners

policy
a plan or rule made by a government or organisation

caterer
a person or company that cooks and serves food for groups

lentil
a small round bean used in soups and stews

hybrid
a mix of two things; here, part meat and part plant protein

panel
a group of people who check or judge something together

feedback
opinions or comments that help improve something

III. READING

Ghent in Belgium is famous for plant-based food. Since 2009 the city has run Veggie Day every Thursday, asking people to skip meat and fish. The change spread to nurseries, care homes, work canteens and restaurants. A strong local movement and the nonprofit ProVeg Belgium helped convince leaders.

Vanessa Debruyne says the policy got businesses involved. Deputy mayor Hafsa El-Bazioui says Ghent now prioritises plant protein. In 2014 only 13% of residents called themselves flexitarian; this year 83% did. School caterers also make hybrid dishes, replacing at least half the meat with beans or lentils.

A taste panel tests meals and uses feedback to improve recipes. Since 2018 the carbon footprint of school meals has fallen by 38%. Flanders aims for a 40:60 animal-to-plant ratio by 2030; Ghent has already reached it.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: "Veggie Thursdays and vegan surprises! How...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What happens in Ghent every Thursday?
2. Which nonprofit is mentioned in the story?
3. Which deputy mayor is named in the article?
4. How did school meals change to cut meat?
5. What share of residents were flexitarian in 2014 and this year?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Would Veggie Day work in your city? Why or why not?
2. What plant proteins do you like to cook with?
3. How can schools make healthy food tasty for children?
4. Should governments set food targets like the one in Flanders? Why?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Past continuous

Use the past continuous for actions in progress at a past time. Form: was/were + verb-ing.

"On Thursday, people **were skipping** *meat in Ghent."*
"At lunch, pupils **were eating** *plant-based dishes."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the past continuous (was/were + verb-ing).

1. On Thursday at noon, pupils (choose) ___ veggie options when the bell rang. _____
2. While a chef (prepare) ___ a hybrid dish, a visitor arrived. _____
3. When the bell rang, caterers (test) ___ new recipes. _____
4. On Thursday, visitors (taste) ___ plant dishes when staff spoke. _____
5. As the panel tasted meals, members (give) ___ feedback. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.



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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12 minutes reading, 10 minutes comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 10 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach flexitarian, nonprofit, hybrid and lentil with quick visuals or realia if possible.
- Run a first reading for gist, then a second for detail. Pair-check answers before brief whole-class feedback. Note: Diet can be personal; allow students to answer about the news rather than their own habits.
- Differentiation: Stronger students summarise the numbers; others match vocabulary to meanings first, then scan the text to find each word in context.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Take a show of hands, then pair a supporter with a sceptic to swap reasons.
2. Elicit examples (beans, lentils, tofu) from the text first, then add local ideas.
3. Collect quick ideas on the board (taste, price, colour), then rank them in pairs.
4. Set up a mini-debate: one side for targets, one side for choice; swap sides after 2 minutes.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Writing: In pairs, write a 60-word school menu blurb for Veggie Day, highlighting two hybrid dishes.

Survey: Students survey five classmates on flexitarian habits and present one chart with the results.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Past continuous

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What happens in Ghent every Thursday?
   Veggie Day encourages people to avoid meat and fish.
2. Which nonprofit is mentioned in the story?
   ProVeg Belgium.
3. Which deputy mayor is named in the article?
   Hafsa El-Bazioui.
4. How did school meals change to cut meat?
   Caterers make hybrid dishes, replacing at least half the meat with plants.
5. What share of residents were flexitarian in 2014 and this year?
   13% in 2014 and 83% this year.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use the past continuous for actions in progress at a past time. Form: was/were + verb-ing. (Examples constructed.)

> *"On Thursday, people* **were skipping** *meat in Ghent."*
> *"At lunch, pupils* **were eating** *plant-based dishes."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the past continuous (was/were + verb-ing).

1. On Thursday at noon, pupils ___ veggie options when the bell rang. **were choosing**
2. While a chef ___ a hybrid dish, a visitor arrived. **was preparing**
3. When the bell rang, caterers ___ new recipes. **were testing**
4. On Thursday, visitors ___ plant dishes when staff spoke. **were tasting**
5. As the panel tasted meals, members ___ feedback. **were giving**