South Africa to replant five baobabs

LEVEL A2/B1


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I. WARM-UP

1. Have you ever seen a very old tree? Where?
2. Why are trees important in your town or country?
3. What problems can happen when people move big plants?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

baobab
a very large African tree that stores water in its thick trunk

export
to send goods to another country to sell or use

permit
an official paper that says you are allowed to do something

reserve
a protected natural area for wildlife or plants

warehouse
a big building where goods are stored

intercept
to stop something before it reaches its destination

replant
to put a plant back into the ground in a new place

recover
to get better after damage or illness

III. READING

Environmentalists in South Africa are racing to replant five baobab trees after a company dug them up and tried to export them to Georgia. The 20-tonne trees arrived at the Timbavati reserve in north-eastern South Africa. Teams will replant them and support them with cables so they can recover.

The baobabs were intercepted in July and left at a warehouse in Durban because they had been moved without the correct permits. Sarah Venter from the Baobab Foundation is leading the rescue. She says the trees have a good chance if they are replanted quickly, before spring growth in November.

The trees are thought to be 200–300 years old and can live far longer. After planting, they will be stabilised and protected by electric fences to stop damage from elephants.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: "Race to replant five South African baobabs...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where will the baobabs be replanted?
2. Why were the trees intercepted in Durban?
3. Who is leading the work to replant the trees?
4. Which country were the trees being sent to?
5. How old are the trees thought to be?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Is it right to export very old trees? Why or why not?
2. How should countries protect special trees like baobabs?
3. What risks do you see when people move huge trees?
4. Which tree or plant is important in your culture? Why?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Phrasal verbs (inseparable)

These are verb + small word pairs (look after, deal with) that do not split. Keep the verb and particle together; put the object after them, even with pronouns.

"Teams will **rely on** *cables to keep trees steady."*
"Fences will **protect against** *elephant damage."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Circle the correct option in each sentence.

1. Teams will (look after the trees / look the trees after). _____
2. Officials (look the permits into / look into the permits). _____
3. Teams will (deal the company with / deal with the company). _____
4. Rangers (guard against elephants / guard elephants against). _____
5. Staff will (wait spring for / wait for spring) to start classes. _____

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: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 8–10 minutes vocabulary, 10–12 minutes reading, 8–10 minutes comprehension, 10 minutes discussion. If needed, fold grammar into reading time.
- Pre-teach place names (Durban, Georgia, Timbavati) and key words (permit, reserve, export, warehouse). Show a photo of a baobab to set context.
- Reading and discussion: do a first skim for where, who and why; then a second read for details (dates, numbers). Start discussion in pairs so quieter students can form ideas before sharing.
- Differentiation: stronger students can summarise the timeline; others match sentences to reasons (why intercepted, why fences, why cables). Finish with a quick class poll on exporting old trees.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Push for reasons and examples beyond a simple yes/no; invite local cases students know.
2. List protection ideas on the board, then have pairs choose the top two and justify them.
3. Elicit practical risks first (weight, roots, permits), then ask how to reduce each one.
4. Encourage cultural stories but let students speak generally if they prefer not to share personal tales.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Writing: In pairs, write a 70-word update from the reserve on day one of replanting.

Debate: Half the class argues to keep ancient trees in place; half argues for moving them to reserves, then swap sides and summarise the best points.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Phrasal verbs (inseparable)

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

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where will the baobabs be replanted?
   At the Timbavati reserve in north-eastern South Africa.
2. Why were the trees intercepted in Durban?
   They were moved without the correct permits.
3. Who is leading the work to replant the trees?
   Sarah Venter from the Baobab Foundation.
4. Which country were the trees being sent to?
   Georgia.
5. How old are the trees thought to be?
   About 200–300 years old.

V. DISCUSSION

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

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Circle the correct option in each sentence.

1. Teams will (look after the trees / look the trees after). **look after the trees**
2. Officials (look the permits into / look into the permits). **look into the permits**
3. Teams will (deal the company with / deal with the company). **deal with the company**
4. Rangers (guard against elephants / guard elephants against). **guard against elephants**
5. Staff will (wait spring for / wait for spring) to start classes. **wait for spring**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: These are verb + small word pairs (look after, deal with) that do not split. Keep the verb and particle together; put the object after them, even with pronouns. (Examples constructed.)

> *"Teams will* **rely on** *cables to keep trees steady."*
> *"Fences will* **protect against** *elephant damage."*