**Cambridge English B for the IB Diploma: Teacher resource**

**Audio scripts**

**Audio track 15**

**Jennifer**: Today is the anniversary of the Occupy Wall Street movement. And where better to reflect on its impact and talk to its organisers than Zuccotti Park in Manhattan. This is where it all started in 2011. This is where a spark ignited a fire that started protest all over the world. And while many people believe the fire has long been extinguished, there are those who argue that it’s still burning somewhere, somehow. As I walk around the park, it feels more like a reunion or festival than an active protest. The young activists that once took to the streets, fought back tear gas and pitched their tents are all looking clean-shaven and well fed today, some of them with young children. Where thousands of people stood chanting “we are the ninety-nine per cent”, there are only about a hundred people hugging and smiling, sharing stories, reminiscing. I’ve caught up with Mike Pellagatti, who was here in 2011. Mike, tell me, what do you think of the atmosphere here today? How would you compare it to what it was like in 2011?

**Mike:** Hi, oh, of course it’s very different. But if you look around you can see that we’re still fighting for the same cause. We’re fighting for equality and fairer wealth distribution. We still want to get big money out of politics. But I suppose the difference is, we’re just having more fun and we’re more patient. This protest isn’t as urgent or desperate as it was then.

**Jennifer:** Would you call this a protest?

**Mike:** Oh yes, most certainly. But it’s different from your typical march or protest. You can see we’re putting on acts and sketches. There are food trucks. We aren’t sleeping in tents, thank God.

**Jennifer:** I’m sure that’s a relief. For our listeners it might be useful to describe what we’re seeing right in front of us: there’s a woman wearing a mask here with a sign that reads ‘Tax the poor through the floor’. In fact she’s pretending to hit another protester who’s wearing stars and stripes.

**Mike:** Yeah, I think a lot of our sketches rely on symbolism and allegory.

**Jennifer:** This one here has a group of sad clowns playing violins over tombstones that read ‘peace’, ‘hope’, ‘justice’, ‘Earth’ and ‘truth’. I mean this is a rather sombre message, don’t you think? Does this say something about where the Occupy movement is today? Could ‘Occupy’ be another tombstone there?

**Mike:** No, no, we’re not dead. Far from it. We have volunteers in countries all over the world.

**Jennifer:** But would you say that this is in fact the weakness of Occupy? Are you too dispersed, and not centrally organised?

**Mike:** I see what you’re saying. I admit the whole Occupy thing has fragmented. And while there’s a core group of us here every year, it’s the same faces.

**Jennifer:** Thank you Mike. I’m going to ask your friend here a few questions. What’s your name?

**Harrison:** Harrison.

**Jennifer:** Hi Harrison, can you tell me how active you are in the Occupy movement these days?

**Harrison:** Well, I’ve never stopped. Literally. I’ve had a martial arts studio here in Manhattan since 2011. I train people how to protest and stand their ground against police brutality.

**Jennifer:** What would you say to people that say that the Occupy movement has failed?

**Harrison:** Well that’s not true.

**Jennifer:** But many people say it died the moment Trump got elected.

**Harrison:** Well let’s put it this way: I don’t think we would have had a Trump without an Occupy movement.

**Jennifer:** You’re saying that Trump was a backlash against Occupy?

**Harrison**: Well, yes and no. Look he was a political outsider and so were we. He pitched himself as the anti-establishment candidate. And in some sense he was. But not according to *our* definition of ‘anti-establishment’. We wanted less backroom lobbying, corruption, and ‘pay-to-play’ politics. And he jumped on that bandwagon. He told everyone that he would ‘drain the swamp’. But he *was* the swamp!

**Jennifer:** So you’re saying that not only did he lie to the American public, but he also stole your message? Did he hijack your constituency?

**Harrison:** Well yes, he stole our message. But he wasn’t the only one. So many politicians have claimed to have an Occupy connection. But we have never backed any candidates. So no one has hijacked our constituency, to answer your question.

**Jennifer:** Do you think it’s time for Occupy to get into politics, first hand, and nominate a candidate for public office? I mean some would argue that the system can only be changed from within. So get a candidate elected and make a change, right?

**Harrison:** Yeah, the problem with that is that we are a leaderless organisation, because we’re so democratic and grassroots. I don’t even know what a public endorsement of a candidate would look like.

**Jennifer:** Thank you for that Harrison. I’m going to walk around and interview a few more people now. Thanks.

**Harrison:** OK, thank you.

**Jennifer:** This is interesting.Here I see a man in black, Grim Reaper outfit, wearing a gas mask. On his cloak it reads, ‘Fossil fools: work, consume, be silent, DIE’ Oooh that’s rather morbid! And here it reads, ‘I rely on your apathy. It’s costing the Earth.’ This is a theme I’ve come across more often in the park today. There seems to be an environmental strain to the Occupy message as well. In fact Occupy seems to connect so many issues. Here’s a sign for Black Lives Matter and here’s another for the fifteen dollar minimum wage. Excuse me! Hi. I’m with NBR, Could I ask you a few questions?

**Susan:** Certainly.

**Jennifer:** Thank you. I’m Jennifer Nelson.

**Susan:** I’m Susan Singer.

**Jennifer:** I couldn’t help notice that there are so many issues that are represented today at this Occupy event: women’s rights, Black Lives Matter, Paris Climate Agreement, Arab Spring. Can you tell me what the core message of Occupy actually is?

**Susan:** Oh, I know it’s confusing for some people. But I think the core message has always been: ‘We are the ninety-nine per cent.’ Look, you have to see it in the context of the economic crisis of two thousand and eight . Banks had been deregulated under Bush. The rich were receiving tax cuts, while middle-class families were foreclosing on their homes. And the government’s response was to bail out the banks, because the banks were ‘too big to fail’. In other words, the wealthiest one per cent didn’t have to take any responsibility for this mess that they created. They got a ‘get out of jail free’ card, and that made us angry. It still makes me angry, because nothing has really changed.

**Jennifer:** That sounds like a clear message to me, but what does any of this have to do with Black Lives Matter or the Arab Spring?

**Susan:** Well, I think that as we occupied Wall Street, people all around the world noticed. It was like they woke up and realised how unfair their world was and how easily they could disrupt it with a Twitter account and a tent.

**Jennifer:** Would you say they’re here today to pay homage to Occupy?

**Susan:** I don’t know, that makes us sound so paternalistic. I think that all these groups and causes *are* Occupy. They have all tried to occupy something, be it Gezi Park or Ferguson.

**Jennifer:** Is this a sign of Occupy’s success? Or have others only diluted your message?

**Susan:** I know the criticisms. And I think that yes, we have had our shortcomings. But we’re just getting started. Lasting change is slow. Some of us were naïve to think that upending Wall Street would be a ‘quick win’.

**Jennifer:** Thank you for that insight.