

Headline English

2011, week 40 *Learn English through reading on current world affairs*

1 **Political correctness gone mad?**

2 original at

3 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/sep/28/bbc-respect-political-correctness>

4 The politics of being offended are complicated and subtle. In the first
5 instance there are those who claim to be offended by, say, cartoons of the
6 prophet or by replacing references to "Christmas" with "winter holidays".
7 Some are genuinely offended by these things, and some feign offence as
8 leverage for some desired change. On the other hand, there are also
9 those who point the finger at people who are allegedly claiming offence
10 when they are in fact not offended at all.

11 Take the latest nonsense. The BBC has advised that BC (as in Before
12 Christ) and AD (Anno Domini) ought to be changed to BCE (Before the
13 Christian Era) and CE (Christian Era). Familiar voices on the right – and
14 more specifically those who have a track record of bashing the BBC – have
15 got all steamed up about it.

16 Predictably, London mayor Boris Johnson got the boot in early, and Daily
17 Mail columnist Melanie Phillips also added her two pennies' worth: "The
18 idea that any of us would be offended by anyone else using BC and AD
19 would be totally ridiculous. How could we possibly take offence? These are
20 the commonly used and understood expressions!"

21 "Political correctness gone mad" is a phrase such people have on cut and
22 paste to use for every occasion.

23 The funny thing is, Melanie Phillips admits that she employs BCE herself:
24 "Along with many other Jewish people I sometimes use CE and BCE, since
25 the terms BC and AD are not appropriate to me." So why is it so hard to
26 understand the BBC wanting to use these terms as broadcasting
27 standard?

28 In fact, such complaints have nothing to do with really being offended. No,
29 this is all about having a go at the BBC.

30 The BBC, for its part, is certainly not being offended on somebody else's
31 behalf to drive forward some politically correct agenda. What it does is
32 show respect for difference. And long may it continue.

Questions

- 1) Explain why people might be offended by cartoons of the prophet, and what prophet the text is talking about in the first place.
- 2) Are, according to the text, all people who say they are offended by the lack of political correctness actually offended?
- 3) Why has, according to the author of the text, the BBC recommended the use of BCE instead of BC?
- 4) Explain the idiom 'get the boot in early' (line 16).
- 5) Who does 'such people' refer to in line 21 (note 'on cut and paste' roughly means *readymade*, that is available for immediate use)?
- 6) Explain the meaning of 'having a go at' (somebody, line 29). Hint: you might find some help in the vocabulary section.
- 7) Give a brief summary of what the article is about.
- 8) What is your opinion on political correctness? Do you think it has gone mad?

Vocabulary

track record (line 14) – all of a person's or organization's past achievements, successes, or failures, which show how well they have done something in the past and how well they are likely to do in the future

bashing (line 14) – strong and usually unfair public criticism of a particular group or person

two pennies' worth (line 17) – one's opinion or thoughts.

drive forward (line 31) – push for or advance (an agenda)

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> or <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

Přejeme Vám mnoho studijních úspěchů.

Tým jazykové skupiny Spěváček:

