

# MEGADROUGHT AND MURDER

May 11th, 2022

**WARM-UP QUESTIONS:** *Discuss the following questions with your partner(s).*

1. How is the weather in your home region? Do you get a lot of rain?
2. Read the headline above. Have you heard this news story? If so, say what you know. If not, can you guess what it is about?

**VOCABULARY:** *Match the following vocabulary words with a description. Use a dictionary if you need to.*

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| 1. Megadrought      | a) a lake where water is stored before it goes to be used   |
| 2. Reservoir        | b) when there is not enough of something  |
| 3. Bout             | c) a large round container with flat ends, made of wood or metal                                      |
| 4. Declare          | d) to announce something clearly or officially  |
| 5. Shortage         | e) a criminal organization that originated in Sicily and became especially active in Italy and the US |
| 6. Consequence      | f) an extended drought when there is little or no rain for decades                                    |
| 7. Barrel           | g) to give recognition to someone for doing something   |
| 8. Speculate        | h) groups with a leadership and other organizational features that plan and commit crimes             |
| 9. Mafia            | i) a result   |
| 10. Organized crime | j) to guess when you don't have enough information to be sure   |
| 11. Credit          | k) a short period of activity   |

---

**LISTEN:** *Listen to the audio track on [eslnewsstories.com](http://eslnewsstories.com) or to a reader of the text. Try to fill in the missing words. Then check your answers with the full text.*

Lake Mead, the largest reservoir in the United States, \_\_\_\_\_ water to 20 million people in Las Vegas and Los Angeles. However, the lake level has been dropping because the region has been experiencing a *megadrought* over the last two decades.

During a megadrought, \_\_\_\_\_ dryness lasts for decades. Previous megadroughts have lasted as long as fifty years with only occasional bouts of rain. Scientists say that climate change

further reduces the \_\_\_\_\_ of wet years occurring. The government has declared a water shortage in the area and will limit the amount of water that farmers, and later, ordinary citizens can use.

The weather \_\_\_\_\_ have had other consequences. The lower lake level has revealed several dead bodies, and one discovered in early May was \_\_\_\_\_ a victim of murder. The person had been shot and put into a barrel that was then dumped in the lake, probably between the mid-1970s and the early 1980s.

Discoveries like this, near Las Vegas, have \_\_\_\_\_ speculating that these bodies are the victims of mafia violence. The city has been connected to organized \_\_\_\_\_ as far back as its early development which is credited to the famous gangster Bugsy Siegel. The police have opened an investigation over the body in a barrel, but it could be \_\_\_\_\_ to solve given the amount of time that has passed.

**WORD FORMS:** Fill in different forms for the vocabulary from the article. Use a dictionary if you need to. Where there is an **x**, the word is unimportant for ESL students, has a different meaning, or doesn't exist. Sometimes there are multiple possible answers, and sometimes the adjective form is a past or present participle.

VERB	ADJECTIVE	ADVERB	NOUN
declare			
x			shortage
x		x	consequence
speculate			
credit		x	

Lake Mead, the largest reservoir in the United States, provides water to 20 million people in Las Vegas and Los Angeles. However, the lake level has been dropping because the region has been experiencing a *megadrought* over the last two decades.

During a megadrought, extreme dryness lasts for decades. Previous megadroughts have lasted as long as fifty years with only occasional bouts of rain. Scientists say that climate change further reduces the chances of wet years occurring. The government has declared a water shortage in the area and will limit the amount of water that farmers, and later, ordinary citizens can use.

The weather conditions have had other consequences. The lower lake level has revealed several dead bodies, and one discovered in early May was obviously a victim of murder. The person had been shot and put into a barrel that was then dumped in the lake, probably between the mid-1970s and the early 1980s.

Discoveries like this, near Las Vegas, have people speculating that these bodies are the victims of mafia violence. The city has been connected to organized crime as far back as its early development which is credited to the famous gangster Bugsy Siegel. The police have opened an investigation over the body in a barrel, but it could be difficult to solve given the amount of time that has passed.

Sources: nytimes.com, apnews.com, bbc.com

For source links, see the article on [ESLNewsStories.com](http://ESLNewsStories.com)

**COMPREHENSION:** *Decide if the following are true (T) or false (F), and then discuss your answers with your partner(s).*

1. The level of water in Lake Mead has been going down. ( T / F )
2. During a megadrought, it never rains. ( T / F )
3. A person was killed while boating on the lake. ( T / F )
4. Bugsy Siegel was a gangster. ( T / F )

**COMPLETE:** *Re-order the following sentences. Capitalize certain words and add punctuation.*

1. restrict / the / water / government / will / usage
- 

2. hide / someone / the / wanted / to / body
- 

**DISCUSSION:** *Discuss the following questions with your partner(s). Try to speak in sentences and ask follow-up questions.*

1. What do we use water for at home? What do farms and industry use water for?
2. Where does your town get its water? Is there always enough water? Has your region experienced drought?
3. Have you ever been to Las Vegas? What did you do there? If not, are you interested in going there? To do what?
4. Bugsy Siegel was one of several famous gangsters in the United States in the first half of last century. Do you know any other famous gangsters from the United States or elsewhere?
5. How would you react if you discovered a dead body?

