

Unit 76

The 4 (the giraffe / the telephone /the piano etc. ; the + adjective)

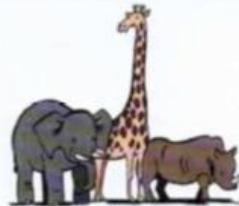
Study these sentences:

- The giraffe** is the tallest of all animals.
- The bicycle** is an excellent means of transport.
- When was **the telephone** invented?
- The dollar** is the currency of the United States.

In these examples, **the** ... does not mean one specific thing.

The giraffe = a specific type of animal, not a specific giraffe.

We use **the** in this way to talk about a type of animal, machine etc.



In the same way we use **the** for musical instruments:

- Can you play **the** guitar?
- The** piano is my favourite instrument.

Compare **a** and **the**:

- I'd like to have **a** piano. but I can't play **the** piano.
- We saw **a** giraffe at the zoo. but **The** giraffe is my favourite animal.

Note that we use **man** (= human beings in general / the human race) without **the**:

- What do you know about the origins of **man**? (not the **man**)

B The + adjective

We use **the + adjective** (without a noun) to talk about groups of people. For example:

the young	the rich	the sick	the injured
the old	the poor	the disabled	the dead
the elderly	the homeless	the unemployed	

The young = young people, **the rich** = rich people etc. :

- Do you think **the rich** should pay higher taxes?
- We need to do more to help **the homeless**.

The young / the rich / the injured etc. are **plural** in meaning. For example, you cannot say 'a young' or 'the injured' for one person. You must say 'a young **person**', 'the injured **woman**' etc.

Note that we say 'the poor' (not the poors), 'the young' (not the youngs) etc.

C The + nationality

You can use **the + nationality** adjectives that end in **-ch** or **-sh** (**the French** / **the English** / **the Spanish** etc.). The meaning is 'the people of that country':

- The French** are famous for their food. (= the people of France)

The French / the English etc. are plural in meaning. We do not say 'a French / an English'.

You have to say **a Frenchman / an Englishwoman** etc.

We also use **the + nationality** words ending in **-ese** (**the Chinese** / **the Sudanese** / **the Japanese** etc.):

- The Chinese** invented printing.

But these words can also be singular (**a Chinese**, **a Japanese** etc.).

Note also: **a Swiss** (singular) and **the Swiss** (= the people of Switzerland)

With other nationalities, the plural noun ends in **-s**. For example:

an Italian → **Italians** **a Mexican** → **Mexicans** **a Turk** → **Turks**

With these words (**Italians** etc.), we do not normally use **the** to talk about the people in general (see Unit 75).

Exercises

76.1 Answer the questions. Choose the right answer from the box. Don't forget **the**. Use a dictionary if necessary.

1

animals
tiger elephant
rabbit cheetah
giraffe kangaroo

2

birds
eagle penguin
swan owl
parrot pigeon

3

inventions
telephone wheel
telescope laser
helicopter typewriter

4

currencies
dollar peso
euro rupee
rouble yen

- 1 a Which of the animals is tallest?
b Which animal can run fastest?
c Which of these animals is found in Australia?
- 2 a Which of these birds has a long neck?
b Which of these birds cannot fly?
c Which bird flies at night?
- 3 a Which of these inventions is oldest?
b Which one is most recent?
c Which one was especially important for astronomy?
- 4 a What is the currency of India?
b What is the currency of Canada?
c And the currency of your country?

the giraffe

76.2 Put in **the** or **a**.

- 1 When was **the** telephone invented?
- 2 Can you play **a** musical instrument?
- 3 Jessica plays **the** violin in an orchestra.
- 4 There was **a** piano in the corner of the room.
- 5 Can you play **the** piano?
- 6 Our society is based on **a** family.
- 7 Martin comes from **a** large family.
- 8 **A** computer has changed the way we live.

76.3 Complete these sentences using **the** + the following:

injured poor rich sick unemployed young

- 1 The **young** have the future in their hands.
- 2 Ambulances arrived at the scene of the accident and took **the injured** to hospital.
- 3 Life is all right if you have a job, but things are not so easy for **the poor**.
- 4 Helen has been a nurse all her life. She has spent her life caring for **the sick**.
- 5 In England there is an old story about a man called Robin Hood. It is said that he robbed **the rich** and gave the money to **the unemployed**.

76.4 What do you call the people of these countries?

one person (a/an ...)

the people in general

- 1 Canada
- 2 Germany
- 3 France
- 4 Russia
- 5 China
- 6 Brazil
- 7 England
- 8 and your country

a Canadian

Canadians