

Do you remember a few episodes ago, a podcast called Smoke to the North? We learned how to say that something is going on in a particular direction. Well, recently, we have had very bad fires to the West which are still burning. The photo on the blog page was a late afternoon view from my back garden, unusually dark, with a beautiful but very unusual sun. That was taken a few days ago. Now the hillside is completely black, and the fire has swept up(1) to the forests and hills behind our valley. First of all, when the fire was small and confined to an area of empty, dry hillside, it seemed just interesting, and even a little exciting. You could hear the whining (2)of emergency sirens here and there, and of course, it was the main topic of conversation. But these fires have dragged on(3). For the past two mornings we have woken up to a valley full of smoke; you can't even see the hills anymore. The local school district has canceled all outside sports and recesses, and sporting clubs have done the same(4). People we know have had to evacuate their homes, though some have decided to stay in order to wet their rooves, trees, and gardens, to prevent fire. And remember, it's not just people who have been affected. The hills around here have many different kinds of wild animals, including predators. They are on the move(5) now, trying to get away from the smoke and ash, to reach cleaner, greener areas. One of my husband's favorite hunting areas is getting heavy traffic of deer and coyotes; the bears and cougars will be following as well. The whole thing started with a lightening storm several days ago. There was fork lightening everywhere, and of course, after the summer, the surrounding hills are completely dry. A fire was bound to (6)start. Add to that our desert climate of very little to no rain, and you find us here, still in this smokey situation. The fire fighters have been working around the clock(7), and helicopters go to and fro(8) collecting water from the rivers and taking it up the mountains. Now, it's a question of sitting and waiting. There's nothing really that we can do. It is not so bad that we have to leave, but it's certainly not yet under control. I hope that in a few days we will be back to normal; I look forward to breathing clean air again.

1. 'Swept' or 'to sweep' is used often to describe how something has moved, especially if that something looks similar to a brush, or acts like a brush. It is similar, in this case, to 'wipe'.

a. She swept her long, thick hair out of her face, and pinned it up at the back of her head.

b. The fire swept through the fields in no time, burning up the wheat.

2. 'To whine', 'whining', or 'whiny' is an uncomfortable sound used to describe a certain noise that people make, though it can be used to describe mechanical noises as well.

a. I can't stand it when children whine; their tone of voice when they moan, beg, or complain is tiring. We must teach them to express themselves differently.

b. That man is a whiner. He complains about everything; he's always negative.

c. The fire alarm whined loudly, and immediately everybody evacuated.

3. 'To drag on' means to continue tiresomely.

a. The musical rehearsal dragged on; the beginner players tried their best, but sounded awful.

b. Gosh that meeting dragged on! I wish people wouldn't repeat themselves and talk on and on for no good reason.

4. 'The same' is short for 'the same thing'. The sentence talks about sports clubs doing the same thing as the school district; it is unnecessary to always add 'thing'.

a. They have just painted their fence, and we've done the same (thing).

b. She got 99% on the math exam, and he got the same. (\* Here, you wouldn't use 'thing' because you are specifically referring to the percentage).

5. 'To be on the move' is used when referring to animals migrating, or large amounts of vehicles

moving.

- a. The wildebeest are on the move, walking many miles each day in search of food and water.
  - b. The tanks have been given their orders, and are now on the move.
6. 'To be bound to...' means the same as 'was/were going to'. 'Bound' is the past participle and adjective of 'to bind' which means to tie up, to secure. So, 'to be bound to...' means that something will happen, and there is no other choice.
- a. With the economic crisis hitting this town, there is bound to be a lot of unemployment.
  - b. He's bound to go to the pub; he can't stay away from them.
7. 'Around the clock' is a phrase we use in order to say 'a lot' or 'for many hours' or 'night and day'.
- a. The builders have to work around the clock to get the stadium finished on time.
  - b. The investigators are working around the clock to find the criminals.
8. 'To and fro' is similar to 'back and forth'.
- a. The deer would come into our garden and then go back to the forest, to and fro all Winter.
  - b. We watched the tennis players hit the ball to and fro, until our heads got tired.

Remember to join me on FACEBOOK at Anna fromacupofenglish; it's an open invitation to all listeners! If you wish to contact me, you can do so at [acupofenglish@live.com](mailto:acupofenglish@live.com) or [acupofenglish@hotmail.com](mailto:acupofenglish@hotmail.com) My app 'A Cup Of English' is available in iTunes.