

The British roundabout revolution in the USA

A British roundabout revolution is slowly sweeping across America. The US famous for its stop signs and traffic lights is now starting to embrace the British roundabout. The city of Carmel in Indiana is one such example. It has been described as 'the Milton Keynes of the USA'. Lying on the outskirts of Indianapolis, Carmel is seeing more and more roundabouts created. The question is why? The Mayor of Carmel Jim Brainard explains: "We are saving thousands of gallons of fuel per year per roundabout." The city is at the forefront of the roundabout revolution that is taking place across several American States. The circular traffic intersection was redesigned in 1960s Britain by Frank Blackmore. He tinkered with the designs and established the modern roundabout by introducing a "Give way" rule for cars entering. The idea was subsequently exported around the world. It didn't arrive in the USA till 1990 when one was installed in Nevada. Since then more than 3,000 have sprung up. California has now built 200 in the last three years.

The Mayor of Carmel is leading the way in the US. Carmel has now demolished 78 sets of traffic lights replacing them with the British roundabout. Four more are currently under construction. The Mayor added, "We have more than any other city in the US. It's the trend now in the United States. There are more and more roundabouts being built every day because of the expense saved and more importantly the safety." The mayor quoted a reduction of 40% decrease in accidents and a 90% drop in fatal accidents. The long term saving is about US\$150,000 per roundabout, due to reduced maintenance costs, and there are also fuel savings. The mayor's passion for roundabouts started while studying in Britain. "I remembered those roundabouts in England and it raised the question in my mind - why don't we do this?" He did a bit of research and got his traffic engineers to try some. At first there was scepticism. Slowly he won people over. The mayor's ambition is to replace the city's remaining 43 traffic lights with roundabouts. Ironically, the city of Carmel saw the first traffic light system installed in 1923. **Note:** US States with roundabouts: Washington, Colorado, California, Florida, Kansas, Oregon, Maryland, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Arizona. **Note:** Countries with British-style roundabouts: France (about 30,000, the most in the world), Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, US, Belgium, and Luxembourg.

Category: USA / Roundabouts / Transport
Level: Intermediate / Upper Intermediate

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EXERCISES

1. Traffic lights and roundabouts: Briefly, what three things do you know about traffic lights and roundabouts? Go round the room swapping details.

2. Dictation: The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

3. Reading: The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

4. Vocabulary: Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

5. The article: Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?

6. Geography: Indiana, USA: Where in the USA is the US state of Indiana? What is its capital? What State counties surround it? Draw a map on the board then **look on Google maps** to help you.

7. Let's think! Think of three advantages and disadvantages of roundabouts (compared to traffic lights). Write them below. Explain to your partner why you chose these.

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|------------|---------------|
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 |

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

8. Roundabouts! Think of three US States with roundabouts. Then add three countries with roundabouts. Write them below. Explain to your partner why you chose these.

| US states with roundabouts | Countries with roundabouts |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 |

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

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9. Let's think! In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with **Roundabouts**. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

10. Let's roleplay: BBC America: In pairs/groups. One of you is the interviewer. The others are one of the following people. You are in the *BBC America* radio studio in Washington. Today's interview is about: *British-style roundabouts in the USA*. *5-10 minutes*.

| | | | |
|---|----------------------|---|------------------------|
| 1 | The Mayor of Carmel | 3 | Yourself |
| 2 | A road safety expert | 4 | A car driver in Carmel |

The teacher will choose some pairs to roleplay their interview in front of the class.

11. Road signs! Think of ten different road signs. Write and/or draw them below/on the board. Explain to your partner why you chose these.

| | |
|---|----|
| 1 | 6 |
| 2 | 7 |
| 3 | 8 |
| 4 | 9 |
| 5 | 10 |

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

12. Let's tell a story: Using the road signs you have prepared in No 11 tell your partner a story of how you travelled from your home to the office/language school by car. (Imagine!)

13. Let's do 'The Article Quiz': Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) Name the city.
- 2) Name the mayor.
- 3) Where was the first roundabout in the US installed and in what year?
- 4) How many roundabouts are in California?
- 5) How many traffic lights has the city in the article demolished?

Student B

- 1) What was installed in 1923?
- 2) How much do they hope to save per roundabout and on what?
- 3) What was the Mayor doing in Britain?
- 4) Who won who over?
- 5) Who invented the modern roundabout? When? What did he do?

14. Let's write an e-mail: Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **Roundabouts**. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

15. Sentence starters: Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

a) Traffic lights _____

b) Roundabouts _____

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) Do you drive? If yes, explain for how long etc...Are you a regular driver? Are you a good driver? When was the last time you had an accident?
- 3) What do you think of roundabouts compared to traffic lights?
- 4) What do you think of mini roundabouts?
- 5) What do you think of roundabouts with mini roundabouts within them?
- 6) What do you think of roundabouts with flowers on them?
- 7) Are roundabouts with flowers on them a health and safety hazard for those planting the flowers?
- 8) Does your town/city/village have roundabouts? Explain.
- 9) Have you considered writing to your mayor to encourage more roundabouts to be built where you live?
- 10) What do you think of the Mayor of Carmel?

Student B questions

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) Do you think the roundabout revolution will continue? Why? Why not?
- 3) On remembering the roundabouts he saw in Britain the mayor said, "Why don't we do this?" - What can you think of that might work in your town/city that you saw elsewhere?
- 4) Do roundabouts save you time? Explain.
- 5) Have you been stuck in traffic because of a set of traffic lights not working?
- 6) What do you think of Frank Blackmore's idea for the roundabout design?
- 7) Have you ever come up with a good idea for a redesign of something? What? Explain.
- 8) Do you know where Milton Keynes is? Explain.
- 9) Would you like to visit Carmel in Indiana, USA? Explain.
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's discuss! Traffic lights and roundabouts

Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

Consider the following points to discuss:

| |
|--|
| 20 things about traffic lights and roundabouts. |
|--|

The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING:

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

The British roundabout revolution in the USA

A British (1)_____ revolution is slowly sweeping across America. The US famous for its stop signs and traffic lights is now starting to (2)_____ the British roundabout. The city of Carmel in Indiana is one such example. It has been described as 'the Milton Keynes of the USA'. Lying on the (3)_____ of Indianapolis, Carmel is seeing more and more roundabouts created. The question is why? The (4)_____ of Carmel Jim Brainard explains: "We are saving thousands of gallons of (5)_____ per year per roundabout." The city is at the forefront of the roundabout revolution that is taking place across several American States. The circular traffic intersection was redesigned in 1960s Britain by Frank Blackmore. He (6)_____ with the designs and established the modern roundabout by introducing a "(7)_____" rule for cars entering. The idea was subsequently exported around the world. It didn't arrive in the USA till 1990 when one was installed in Nevada. Since then more than 3,000 have (8)_____. California has now built 200 in the last three years.

The Mayor of Carmel is leading the way in the US. Carmel has now (1)_____ 78 sets of traffic lights replacing them with the British roundabout. Four more are currently under (2)_____. The Mayor added, "We have more than any other city in the US. It's the (3)_____ now in the United States. There are more and more roundabouts being built every day because of the expense saved and more importantly the (4)_____." The mayor quoted a reduction of 40% decrease in (5)_____ and a 90% drop in fatal accidents. The long term saving is about US\$150,000 per roundabout, due to reduced maintenance (6)_____, and there are also fuel savings. The mayor's (7)_____ for roundabouts started while studying in Britain. "I remembered those roundabouts in England and it raised the question in my mind - why don't we do this?" He did a bit of research and got his (8)_____ engineers to try some. At first there was scepticism. Slowly he won people over.

sprung up

embrace

outskirts

fuel

Give way

tinkered

mayor

roundabout

passion

costs

construction

safety

traffic

trend

demolished

accidents

GAP FILL: LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

The British roundabout revolution in the USA

A British _____ is slowly sweeping across America. The US famous for its stop signs and traffic lights is now starting to embrace the British roundabout. The city of Carmel in Indiana is one such example. It has been described as 'the _____ USA'. Lying on the outskirts of Indianapolis, Carmel is seeing more and more roundabouts created. The question is why? The Mayor of Carmel Jim Brainard explains: "We are saving thousands of gallons of fuel per _____." The city is _____ the roundabout revolution that is taking place across several American States. The circular traffic intersection was redesigned in 1960s Britain by Frank Blackmore. He tinkered with the designs and established the modern roundabout by introducing a "Give way" _____. The idea was subsequently exported around the world. It didn't arrive in the USA till 1990 when one was _____. Since then more than 3,000 have sprung up. California has now built 200 in the last three years.

The Mayor of Carmel is _____ the US. Carmel has now demolished 78 sets of traffic lights replacing them with the British roundabout. Four more are currently under construction. The Mayor added, "We have more than any other city in the US. It's the trend now in the United States. There are more and more roundabouts being built every day because of the expense saved and more importantly the safety." The mayor quoted a reduction of 40% decrease in accidents and a 90% drop in fatal accidents. The _____ about US\$150,000 per roundabout, due to reduced maintenance costs, and there _____. The mayor's passion for roundabouts started while studying in Britain. "I remembered those roundabouts in England and it raised the question in my mind - why don't we do this?" He did _____ and got his traffic engineers to try some. At first there was scepticism. Slowly he won people over. The _____ to replace the city's remaining 43 traffic lights with roundabouts. Ironically, the city of Carmel saw the first _____ installed in 1923.

GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

A British roundabout revolution is slowly sweeping across America. The US famous for (1)___ stop signs and traffic lights is now starting to embrace the British roundabout. The city (2)___ Carmel in Indiana is one such example. It has been described as 'the Milton Keynes of the USA'. Lying on the outskirts of Indianapolis, Carmel is seeing more (3)___ more roundabouts created. The question is (4)___? The Mayor of Carmel Jim Brainard explains: "We are saving thousands of gallons of fuel per year per roundabout." The city is at the forefront of the roundabout revolution that is taking place across several American States. (5)___ circular traffic intersection was redesigned in 1960s Britain by Frank Blackmore. He tinkered with the designs and established the modern roundabout by introducing (6)___ "Give way" rule (7)___ cars entering. The idea was subsequently exported around the world. It didn't arrive in the USA till 1990 when one was installed in Nevada. Since then more than 3,000 have sprung up. California has now built 200 (8)___ the last three years.

The Mayor of Carmel is leading the way in the US. Carmel has now demolished 78 sets of traffic lights replacing (1)___ with the British roundabout. Four more are currently under construction. The Mayor added, "We have more (2)___ any other city in the US. It's the trend now in the United States. There are more and more roundabouts being built every day (3)___ of the expense saved and (4)___ importantly the safety." The mayor quoted a reduction of 40% decrease in accidents and a 90% drop in fatal accidents. The long term saving is about US\$150,000 per roundabout, due to reduced maintenance costs, and there are also fuel savings. The mayor's passion for roundabouts started (5)___ studying in Britain. "I remembered (6)___ roundabouts in England and it raised the question in my mind - why don't we do this?" He did a bit of research and got his traffic engineers to try some. At first (7)___ was scepticism. Slowly he won people over. The mayor's ambition is to replace the city's remaining 43 traffic lights (8)___ roundabouts. Ironically, the city of Carmel saw the first traffic light system installed in 1923.

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings:

Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20

| | | | |
|----|--------------|----|-------------|
| 1 | roundabout | 11 | decrease |
| 2 | outskirts | 12 | scepticism |
| 3 | intersection | 13 | ambition |
| 4 | revolution | 14 | ironically |
| 5 | tinkered | 15 | passion |
| 6 | subsequently | 16 | demolished |
| 7 | California | 17 | maintenance |
| 8 | construction | 18 | forefront |
| 9 | mayor | 19 | circular |
| 10 | embrace | 20 | accidents |

LINKS

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-13863498>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roundabout>

<http://www.roundaboutsusa.com/>

<http://www.gentlewisdom.org.uk/3846/why-americans-dont-like-british-roundabouts/>

<http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Roundabout>

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