

## EXPERIENCES OF ILLNESS AND DISEASE

**Topic:** Experiences of illness and disease

**EFL CEFR Level:** C1

**Main objectives:**

- Students will be able to discuss experiences of health problems.
- Students will become aware of the use of metaphor in describing experiences of health problems.

**Method:** Frame-inspired TBLT (pre-task, task cycle, language focus)

**Metaphor:** DISEASE TREATMENT IS WAR; DISEASE TREATMENT IS A COMPETITION; CANCER IS X; CITY IS A PERSON

**Materials:** PC, Internet, texts, MetaNet

**Skills involved:** listening, speaking, reading, writing

“How to cite:

Dalpanagioti, Thomai (2024). *Metaphor Task Bank*. <https://www.new.enl.auth.gr/flt/metaphor-task-bank>

## A) Pre-task



Source: China Global Television Network

- Watch the video titled "I Am Wuhan: Let's fight side by side until we win" (3:10 minutes) at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5t8pYYLDH4> . Does it refer to a literal fight?
- When you are ill and you are trying to stay healthy, do you think of yourself as fighting a battle? Who is the enemy?

## B) Task cycle

### 1. Task

- Form groups of four and read your task.  
You group will participate in a project called “The World's Greatest Problems in the 21st Century” and has decided to make a leaflet with information about the COVID-19 pandemic. Your task is to collect information about how the world has fought against this deadly disease and present it to the class.
- Decide which types of information about the COVID-19 pandemic the different members of your group should look for. You can consider different perspectives (e.g. doctors’, patients’, politicians’) about the country assigned to your group and collect information, pictures and visuals.

### 2. Planning

- Organize the information you have collected to prepare your presentation.

### 3. Report

- Choose a member of your group to present your work.
- Decide what to include in the leaflet.



## C) Language focus

### 1. Analysis

When we talk about a *disease*, we often use words that have a connection with *war*. This is an example of thinking and speaking metaphorically.

- Read the text from the video “I Am Wuhan: Let’s fight side by side until we win” and answer the following questions.

I am Wuhan, a metropolis with a population of over 11 million. I am home to China’s largest railway transfer hub and an airport carrying more than 27 million passengers annually. No city in the world embraces more college students studying here.

At the beginning of 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak befell me. It has been a major public **health incident**, the most difficult to prevent and control since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. I locked myself down to curb the **epidemic** from spreading. The lockdown is unprecedented in the history of New China. And the decision was made with enormous courage and sacrifice.

I am Wuhan. Though under lockdown, I don’t feel alone. Over the past month, I’ve seen the first dispatch of military medics arrive on the eve of Chinese New Year; I’ve seen brothers and sisters from 19 provincial-level regions rushing for my rescue; I have also seen a team of academicians, including Wang Chen, 58 years old, Li Lanjuan, 73, and Zhong Nanshan, 84, as well as more than 40,000 **medical workers** from across the country. You’ve all offered the best you have to back me up! So, I must win this **battle**! Two **hospitals**, Huoshenshan and Leishenshan, have been built. Sixteen temporary hospitals went into operation, one after the other. The renovation of more than 40 designated hospitals has been quickly completed. In the early stage, there were only 137 isolation beds, which have increased to more than 40,000. All has insured that every **patient** is admitted and treated.

I am Wuhan. I know people **in the rear** are **fighting** as hard as those on the **frontline**. They’ve kept sending me food and medical supplies. I am well aware of that. I believe our joint efforts will bring back hope to enliven this heroic city. I am Wuhan. We are Wuhan. And we are Wuhan, China. We are racing against the **virus** for humanity. With cherry flowers in blossom, let’s finish our hot-and-dry noodles. And **fight** side by side, until we win!

- What do the **grey**-highlighted words/phrases have in common?
- What do the **yellow**-highlighted words/phrases have in common?
- Which one of the two groups (**grey** or **yellow**) is used metaphorically?

d) Choose the most appropriate name for the metaphor that links the grey and yellow words together:

i. DISEASE TREATMENT IS A COMPETITION

ii. DISEASE TREATMENT IS WAR

iii. ELECTION IS WAR

Find this metaphor in [MetaNet](#)

(<https://metaphor.icsi.berkeley.edu/pub/en/index.php/Category:Metaphor>) and read more examples.

e) Is the sentence “We are *racing against* the virus for humanity.” (near the end of the text) an example of the same metaphor?

f) Are there any other metaphors in the text? Why are metaphors used in the text?

## 2. Practice

### Activity 1

Read the text about a patient’s experience with *cancer* and complete the gaps with words that have a connection with *war*. Use words from [MetaNet](#) (<https://metaphor.icsi.berkeley.edu/pub/en/index.php/Frame:War>) in the correct form.

#### **War as a metaphor for cancer can be relieved of duty**

Popular culture has long used war as a metaphor to describe the human experience of cancer. We are attacked by an **(0) *enemy*** (cancer) and expected to fight with the help of generals (doctors) and **(1) \_\_\_\_\_** (other medical personnel) who counterattack with an arsenal of **(2) \_\_\_\_\_**.

I don’t think so. Cancer begins with a single mistake within our bodies; so why would I want to declare **(3) \_\_\_\_\_** on myself?

Yet everywhere we turn, we’re told to keep up the fight until the **(4) \_\_\_\_\_** is won, as if we can control the outcome. Like all good **(5) \_\_\_\_\_**, we’re expected to take up arms, put up our shields and become strong, brave **(6) \_\_\_\_\_**, if not for ourselves, at least for our families and friends. And of course we’re told never to surrender.

If my cause of death is ultimately cancer, I’ve already told my husband that my obituary better not say, “After a long and valiant fight, Betsy lost her **(7) \_\_\_\_\_** with cancer.” It would really frost me if my life were defined by some sort of military campaign and my death implied that cancer had **(8) \_\_\_\_\_** me.

The fact is, I never, not once, **(9) \_\_\_\_\_** against cancer. Rather, I made a series of choices with the hope of extending my life. I often describe my cancer as a roller coaster with a series of

twists and turns and ups and downs. Some have described their experience as a journey. Others have called it a match, a competition, a rough sail, a marathon, even a dance.

### Activity 2

Writing:

Work in pairs and write a hopeful quote to inspire people who experience a chronic disease (such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, asthma). Work in the following way:

- Have a quick look at a website with hopeful quotes: <https://www.rogelcancercenter.org/living-with-cancer/sharing-hope/hopeful-quotes>. Notice the length of the quotes and the metaphorical language used.
- Decide on the metaphor you will use. To get some ideas, read the last paragraph of the previous text once again. Tip: you can find words/phrases related to competition, motion, etc. to help you write your hopeful quote in [MetaNet](https://metaphor.icsi.berkeley.edu/pub/en/index.php/Category:Frame) (<https://metaphor.icsi.berkeley.edu/pub/en/index.php/Category:Frame>).

### Activity 3

Speaking:

Report your hopeful quotes to the rest of the class and decide which one is the most inspiring. Give reasons for your decision.

## **D) Assignment**

Describe your own experience of a health problem.

Do you think that your description is based on a metaphor? Can you find it in [MetaNet](https://metaphor.icsi.berkeley.edu/pub/en/index.php/Category:Frame)?