

**New
Internationalist**

Mining for gold

Easier English New Internationalist Ready Lesson – Intermediate +

This lesson:

- Speaking
- Reading
- 3 role plays
- Focus on question formation
- Analysis of development: vocabulary / grammar
- Writing

Who is this? Where? What problems do you think he has?



Read this to check:

Mauricio Ye'kuana is a Brazilian Indigenous leader and Treasurer of the Hutukara Yanomami Association. They are working to protect Yanomami and Ye'kuana communities in the Brazilian Amazon.

Yanomami Indigenous Territory is 9.6 million hectares, a little bigger than Portugal. It is in Roraima state, northern Brazil. Illegal gold mining has been increasing since the 1980s, with a very quick increase since 2000.

There was a lot more gold mining during Covid-19, especially 'wildcat miners': these are small mining camps, sometimes independent, but more and more rich business people and politicians are funding and supporting them.

3,000 hectares of forest has been destroyed by illegal gold mining in Yanomami land (up to 2021)

Role play 1:

A) Mauricio Ye'kuana

Answer the journalist's questions
– imagine your answers if you do
not know!

B) A **journalist** for an international
newspaper

Find out as much as you can for
your report



Re-order the words to form 10 questions:

- 1) destruction is there how much from illegal on Yanomami land gold mining ?
- 2) illegal gold the other effects from mining what are?
- 3) there threats against illegal gold mining are against Yanomami and Ye'kuana protesters ?
- 4) threats received you have?
- 5) Hutukara Yanomami Association has a report, *Yanomami Under Attack*. It talks about environmental racism. For mean people does what that your?
- 6) continuing why is the violence and destruction?
- 7) Gold is causing so many problems. Gold how you feel about do?
- 8) President Bolsonaro's government doesn't punish illegal gold mining and other illegal activity, such as deforestation. 2022 hopes election what are your for the October in Brazil?
- 9) Brazil support can what people outside do to you?
- 10) About hopeful the are you about situation?

Roleplay 2 - ask at least 5 of these questions:

- 1) How much destruction is there from illegal gold mining on Yanomami land?**
- 2) What are the other effects from illegal gold mining?**
- 3) Are there threats against Yanomami and Ye'kuana protesters against illegal gold mining?**
- 4) Have you received threats?**
- 5) Hutukara Yanomami Association has a report, *Yanomami Under Attack*. It talks about environmental racism. What does that mean for your people?**
- 6) Why is the violence and destruction continuing?**
- 7) Gold is causing so many problems. How do you feel about gold?**
- 8) President Bolsonaro's government doesn't punish illegal gold mining and other illegal activity, such as deforestation. What are your hopes for the 2022 October election in Brazil?**
- 9) What can people outside Brazil do to support you?**
- 10) Are you hopeful about the situation?**

Now read the interview (4 slides) – and note down extra information (to prepare for the 3rd role play):

How much destruction is there from illegal gold mining on Yanomami land?

The president, Jair Bolsonaro, and the government say illegal wildcat mining doesn't cause deforestation or environmental devastation. We're seeing the opposite. There's a lot of deforestation, a lot of cutting down trees and making big holes in the land. It is also destroying the sources of our rivers and streams. We're seeing rivers with mercury poisoning, so it's passing into communities. One of the biggest effects is children poisoned by mercury.

It's also poisoning the fish we eat. Mothers' milk is poisoned, and so there's no natural milk to give to their children. We're seeing serious malnutrition, not enough food. More children are born disabled than before.

What are the other effects from illegal gold mining?

There is a big increase in violence and sexual abuse of women by the illegal gold miners, and by workers coming in from outside. The problem is these attacks aren't reported. The miners threaten families if they say anything about the sexual abuse

Are there threats against Yanomami and Ye'kuana protesters against illegal gold mining?

This is a big problem for us. There are violent attacks by the illegal miners. I can't sleep at night. I can't go out to fish, to hunt. I have to stay at home. I'm not safe, so it's having an effect on my family because they don't have food. We are afraid. The attacks are with guns – they have automatic weapons and the Yanomami don't have them.

The illegal miners are also getting help from young Yanomami and Ye'kuana people. The Primeiro Comando da Capital is a criminal group. It offers guns to young people to work with the illegal miners. But some other young people are against the mining, so there's violence. Young people are fighting each other. Young people are dying.

Have you received threats?

I receive phone calls, and people are following me when I'm working. The miners know where I am, right now, today. And businessmen offer me a lot of money to let them work in illegal gold mining in Yanomami land.

Hutukara Yanomami Association has a report, *Yanomami Under Attack*. It talks about environmental racism. What does that mean for your people?

The government doesn't respect Indigenous lands. This is racism against all Indigenous peoples in Brazil – not just our people. The government doesn't recognize us. Indigenous people defend their own lands. We're fighting for our rights, for our people

Why is the violence and destruction continuing?

The government doesn't want to look at Indigenous people. The government is supporting illegal mining and official mining in Indigenous lands. That's why we have this problem.

Gold is causing so many problems. How do you feel about gold?

Gold, for us, is very sacred – it's part of the rich Earth. We can't mine it because it will make the land weak, and it will make the forest spirits leave – they protect our land. If I want to mine gold, I must talk with the spirits. But I don't want to mine this gold, because keeping the gold in the ground keeps the land safe. That's our philosophy. If you don't have the gold in the land, the land becomes weak.

President Bolsonaro's government doesn't punish illegal gold mining and other illegal activity, such as deforestation. What are your hopes for the 2022 October election in Brazil?

My hope is that this government will go. We don't know who will be in power but we hope it will be somebody else. We hope Lula will win. Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva was president before. Lula promised to make an Indigenous Ministry. He is happy to talk to Indigenous peoples. Other political parties don't do this.

What can people outside Brazil do to support you?

People in Europe need to know what they're buying, because gold exported from Brazil to Europe comes with Indigenous blood on it.

We want people to read the *Yanomami Under Attack* report with their friends and networks, so people know about the effects of illegal gold mining in our lands. We're also asking people in the UK to email their MPs. We want them to ask the UK government to make a new business, human rights, and environment bill. This will hold businesses responsible when they don't stop human rights abuses and environmental harm.

Are you hopeful about the situation?

People can change their thinking. Illegal gold mining is affecting three Indigenous peoples – the Munduruku, the Yanomami and Ye'kuana, and the Kaiapó. We're going to work together to report this mining problem. We want to report these human rights violations internationally. Hopefully, this will lead to change and the protection of Indigenous people and Indigenous lands

3rd (perfect?) role-play:

A) Mauricio Ye'kuana

B) Journalist for an international newspaper



Analysis – discuss:

- 1/ How much better was your 3rd role play than the 1st one?
- 2/ What vocabulary / phrases have you learnt?
- 3/ What grammar have you improved on?

Writing

Mauricio said this: **“We’re also asking people in the UK to email their MPs. We want them to ask the UK government to make a new business, human rights, and environment bill. This will hold businesses responsible when they don’t stop human rights abuses and environmental harm.”**

In pairs, write the email. If you are in the UK, you can send it via: www.writetothem.com

Follow-up:

Read the original article:

<https://newint.org/features/2022/08/08/violence-of-Brazils-wildcat-gold-mining-mauricio-yekuana>

And this longer report:

[nin.tl/39tZpEM](https://nint.org/nin.tl/39tZpEM)