Did you know…?

‘Quarantine’ is a period of time during which an animal or person that might have a disease is kept away from other people or animals so that the disease cannot spread.

Etymology: From the French ‘quarante’ meaning forty. Adding the suffix ‘-aine’ to French numbers gives an element of roughness to the figure (like ‘-ish’ in English), so ‘quarantaine’ means ‘about forty’. Originally when ships were suspected of carrying infectious diseases, they were asked to forego any contact with land for a period of ‘around 40’ days before they could unload.

The following activities help develop:

- Team work
- Investigation skills
- Vocabulary learning

Please note these activities work well alongside Units 7.1–7.4 of the English Language for Cambridge International AS & A Level Coursebook.
Activity idea 1

Step 1
Set your students in teams and ask them to look up the meaning of Greek and Latin prefixes that you provide. For example ‘mono-’, ‘di-’, ‘tri-’ or ‘ad’- and ‘ab’-

Extension – you can ask students to use the internet to search for their own Greek and Latin prefixes.

Step 2
Each team gives their prefixes and their meanings to another team. This team then has to find three words that use that prefix. E.g. monopoly, monochrome and monotheism.

Extension - give students longer to find more words. They can use dictionaries or the internet.

Step 3
Teams take it in turns to present their words to the class, ideally writing them up on the wall so that everyone can see the spelling of the word.

Extension - ask the students to select three words each and use these words in a sentence.
Activity idea 2

Step 1
Set your students in pairs and ask them to write lists of 10–20 words relating to certain topics. For example: food; sports; animals; subject-specific words such as mathematics, geography, history; adjectives describing wealth, beauty or unkindness; adverbs relating to walking or speaking. Time the teams to give further impetus.

E.g. Things you’d find in a kitchen – spoon, knife, fork, plate, bowl, table, kettle.

Step 2
Using dictionaries or the internet, ask students to research the etymology of the words in their word lists and write them down.

E.g. Etymology of ‘spoon’ – from Old English spōn, meaning ‘chip of wood’.

Step 3
Ask the pairs to select three words. For one of these, ask them to invent a different etymological meaning. They then present these three words with their etymology to another pair of students and ask ‘True or False?’ to see if the other pair can guess the false answer.

E.g. Spoon – from Old English spōn, meaning ‘chip of wood’. (True answer)
    Bowl – related to Dutch ‘bol’, meaning ‘round object’. (True answer)
    Knife – from Scandinavian ‘nif’, meaning ‘metal stick’. (False answer)
What’s happened here…?

The meaning of ‘viral’ can be two different adjectives.

1. Used to describe something that’s caused by a virus
2. Used to describe something that quickly becomes very popular or well known by being published on the internet or sent from person to person by email, phone, etc.

How has the meaning of the word ‘viral’ changed over time?

After your students have learnt about Ngrams as a way of measuring language change over time, the following activities would allow:

- further Ngrams practice
- independent work
- team work

- Please note these activities work well alongside Units 7.1–7.4 of the English Language for Cambridge International AS & A Level Coursebook.
Activity idea 3

Step 1
Set your students in groups and ask them to think of words they use in their digital world. For example: AddThis; algorithms; avatar; Bitly; blogs; boosted posts; connections; Facebook; Flickr; follower; friends; GIF; hashtag; hearts; Instagram; LinkedIn; live streaming; newsfeed; Ow.ly; podcast; Reddit; retweet; share; Snapchat; trending; troll; Tumblr; tweet; UGC; Vimeo; viral; virtual reality; webinar; WhatsApp; YouTube.

Step 2a
Ask the groups to use Ngrams to measure the change in language usage of these digital words over time and in different categories e.g. Widely understood / Not widely understood.

OR

Step 2b
Ask the students to carry out independent research with older age groups to see which words are known and understood, or known but not for their current meaning, e.g. ‘tweet’.
Activity idea 4

Hieroglyphics, runes, emojis… we have not always used letters to record language. This is an opportunity for students to consider other ways language has changed over time.

**Step 1**
Set your students in pairs and ask them to communicate as fully as possible with each other using only emojis. A conversation of emojis.

**Step 2**
As a class, discuss the benefits and problems of using only pictures to convey meaning.

**Step 3**
Ask the students to carry out independent research into how emojis were introduced and have been used over time. Compare this to another pictorial language such as hieroglyphics or runes, considering the purpose of each in their historical context.