

## Riding the nostalgia wave

**Level:** Intermediate +

**Time:** 90 minutes +

**Summary:** This lesson is about the commercial success of vintage and retro items. In this lesson, students:

1. discuss the concepts of vintage and retro items;
2. study a text about how companies are capitalizing on this trend;
3. complete sentence stems from the text with their own ideas;
4. give their opinions on present and future vintage trends.

**Materials:** One copy of the worksheet per student

**Group size:** Any

**Note:** This lesson plan is for both pre-experience and in-work business students based on an original article first published in *Business Spotlight* issue 4/2016.

### Warmer

Students work together to come up with things that they associate with the words *vintage* and *retro*. Give some examples from the answer section below, if needed. You can also offer the following definitions if your students require them:

- vintage – a vintage object is old but is kept in good condition because it is interesting or attractive
- retro – deliberately intended to be like clothes, music, etc from the recent past (This word is sometimes used in the same way as *vintage* to describe an item from the recent past, rather than a new item imitative of a past style.)

To find more words that collocate with *vintage* and *retro*, students could type the words separately into a search engine, online dictionary or online corpus and see what hits they get.

Ask if students have ever seen these words used to advertise items or events.

**Key:**

a. (possible answers) clothing, fabrics, cars, films and TV series, music, teapots, bikes, camper vans, vinyl, cassette tapes

b. The term is generally used to describe items dating from the 1950s, 60s or 70s.

### Understanding the title

The title uses a well-known idiom. Check the students' understanding of it by getting them to decide which answer defines the idiom.

**Key:** b

### Key words

Students read the definitions and scan the article to find the key words. In higher level groups, students could try to work out the answers from the definitions before scanning the article to check their answers. (If they need extra clues, you could provide the first letter of each word, the number of letters and the number of syllables.) The clues are given in the order that the words appear in the article.

**Key:**

1. *nostalgia*
2. *goods*
3. *thriving*
4. *seriously antique*
5. *brands*
6. *chime in*
7. *pinning*
8. *early-onset*
9. *compress*
10. *vinyl*
11. *embraced*
12. *acts*

### Understanding the article

First, get the students to discuss and answer the questions in pairs or small groups. After they have done that, they can check their answers by scanning or reading the article again.

**Key:**

1. *in their late teens to early 30s*
2. *because they've grown up in a digital world, surrounded*

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*by information. The effect is to compress time.*

3. *It never has gone out of fashion.*
4. *vinyl music records; helped initially by hipsters who embraced them*
5. *probably around 50; her comments about her dancing shoes and scarf from 1984*

### Sentence stems

- a. Students find and underline the five sentence stems in the article. Make sure they notice how they were used, that is what type of words follow them, what grammatical structure these words have, etc.
- b. Working alone or in pairs, students complete the sentences with their own ideas. Get them to share their completed sentences with other students. Make any corrections as necessary and discuss any grammatical questions that arise.

### Discussion

Students discuss the questions relating to the article.

### Vocabulary record

Here, students should be encouraged to record all of the new and useful vocabulary they have learnt during the lesson, not only in the form presented in the article but also in related forms.

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### 1 Warmer

- a. What things can be described as *vintage* or *retro*?
- b. How old should something be before it can be described as *vintage*?

### 2 Understanding the title

When you 'ride the wave' of something, you ...

- a. ... feel free and successful, like a surfer;
- b. ... enjoy a period of success because you are connected to something attractive or interesting;
- c. ... do what everyone else does, even though you don't know why you are doing it.

### 3 Key words

Read the definitions, then find the key words in the article.

1. thoughts about happy times in your past, often mixed with the wish to be back in the past

\_\_\_\_\_

2. objects produced for sale \_\_\_\_\_

3. very successful \_\_\_\_\_

4. very old (two words) \_\_\_\_\_

5. groups of products that have their own name and are made by one particular companies

\_\_\_\_\_

6. join a conversation by saying something (two words) \_\_\_\_\_

7. feeling sad because something that you used to have is gone

\_\_\_\_\_

8. when something starts sooner than usual (two words) \_\_\_\_\_

9. make a process or activity last for a shorter period of time than usual

\_\_\_\_\_

10. records, used for listening to music before CDs were invented

\_\_\_\_\_

11. completely accepted something such as a new belief, idea or way of life

\_\_\_\_\_

12. a singer, band or other person or group who performs on stage

\_\_\_\_\_

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Elisabeth Ribbans



**When you see items whose style is not very old but which shops label as 'retro', you might ask yourself at what point people start to become nostalgic. Ride the wave of commercial nostalgia with Elisabeth Ribbans.**

- 1 Professionally, I'm now meeting more and more people born in the 1990s. Too often, I have the same thought: "My goodness, I have clothes older than this person!" Clearly, what I should be doing is turning that thought into money. Research in 2015, by e-commerce analysts Terapeak, found 32.5 million items with the key word "vintage" or "retro" had sold on eBay.com in the previous 12 months. The value of these goods was \$1.1 billion a year.
- 2 "Even as eBay has grown into an e-commerce marketplace that competes with retailers of new goods," says Terapeak, "there's also a thriving market for vintage and retro goods." I'm sure my Miss Selfridge\* satin scarf, circa 1984, would be worth something.
- 3 I have a problem believing anything in my wardrobe could be called "vintage". But young colleagues and relatives tell me that the 1980s and 90s are seriously antique. Brands know it, too, because the millennials (people in their late teens to early 30s) are the new target of "nostalgia marketing". Jeff Fromm is president of FutureCast, a marketing consultancy that specializes in millennial trends. In his blog, he explains that millennials are optimistic about the future but are reaching the age when they

start to become nostalgic, "which means now is the perfect time for brands to chime in and remind millennials of the good times."

The good times? Isn't 25 a bit young to be pining for the past? "We call this 'early-onset nostalgia'," Jamie Gutfreund of creative agency Deep Focus told Digiday.com. It has something to do with growing up in a digital world, surrounded by information. The effect is to compress time. I suppose the past has never really gone out of fashion but what is really fascinating is the revival of things you thought were gone forever. Vinyl records, for example. According to *Fortune* magazine, vinyl was initially embraced by hipsters in their 20s and early 30s. Now, it's fully riding the nostalgia wave, with the Recording Industry Association of America showing US sales at \$416 million in 2015, their highest level since 1988.

Of course, anyone who wishes to hear these sounds live needs look no further than just about every music festival this summer to find vintage acts like the Rolling Stones, Earth, Wind & Fire, The Who ... OK, maybe I won't sell my 1980s (dancing) shoes on eBay just yet.

**Elisabeth Ribbans** is a British journalist and editorial consultant. She is also a former managing editor of *The Guardian* newspaper in London.

\* Miss Selfridge – a nationwide UK high street store which began as the young fashion section of Selfridges department store in London in 1966. Its own stores became very popular in the 1980s

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### 4 Understanding the article

Answer the questions, if possible without looking back at the article.

1. How old are the people known as *millennials*?
2. Why are many millennials already becoming nostalgic?
3. When did the past go out of fashion?
4. What has made a huge comeback? Who helped sales of this item to reach their highest levels for nearly 30 years?
5. Approximately how old is the writer of the article? What information leads you to your answer?

### 5 Sentence stems

a. Find and underline these sentence beginnings in the article. Notice how they are used.

I'm sure my ...

I have a problem believing ...

I suppose ...

What is really fascinating is ...

Maybe I won't ...

b. Complete the sentences with your own ideas.

### 6 Discussion

- What things from your youth have come back into fashion?
- Is there anything you wish had *not* come back into fashion?
- What things from today do you hope, or think, will soon go out of fashion?
- What things do you think might make a comeback (but haven't really done so yet)?

