

Language for ...

music

Age: Adult

Level: Intermediate

Length: 45–60 minutes

Language Focus: key vocabulary associated with music

Skills: reading, speaking

Materials: one copy of the text and worksheet per student

Aims: to provide students with the language needed to discuss music and musical tastes



What are red words?

Ninety per cent of the time, speakers of English use just 7,500 words in speech and writing. These words appear in the Macmillan Dictionary in red and are graded with stars. One-star words are frequent, two-star words are more frequent and three-star words are the most frequent. 'Language for' lessons are based on red words and encourage students to improve their English through communicative tasks using collocation and commonly used phrases.

- 1 To introduce the topic, ask students to think of a famous musician. The musician could be alive or dead, from their country or an international artist. Remind them not to tell their classmates who they've chosen! Ask students to work in groups of four. They must try to find out the musicians the other group members have thought of. They can do this by asking questions, but the student answering the questions can only answer 'Yes' or 'No'. For example, 'Is it a man?' 'No.' 'Is she American?' 'Yes.' Questioning continues until all four musicians have been correctly guessed.

An alternative idea for a warmer is to put students into teams. Give each team a piece of scrap paper

and a pen. Set a time limit (for example, one minute). Students have to write down the names of all the musical instruments they can think of. When the time is up, teams swap papers and mark each other's lists. Points can be awarded for correct spelling and bonus points for naming instruments that no other team has also written.

- 2 Make a copy of the worksheet for each student.
- 3 Ask students to work in pairs or small groups to choose the correct answers to the first warmer. Check the answers with the whole class. Make sure they spell the words correctly.



Teaching tip: Ask students to spell words aloud in open class. This can help them to focus on the correct pronunciation of the letters in English as well as the correct spelling of the words. Write the words on the board as they spell them. For example, if they pronounce the letter 'i' as /i:/, write 'violin' as 'veolen' and highlight the mispronunciation.

- 4 Brainstorm different types of music as a class. You may want to search on the internet (e.g. YouTube) to find some examples. Possible music types include: *blues, dance, R&B (rhythm and blues), hip-hop, pop, classical, reggae, easy listening, country and western, traditional/folk, jazz, rock.*
- 5 Ask students to read the text. Then ask them to work individually and complete the second part of Exercise 1. Point out that they can find the adjectival forms of the four words in the text. Ask them to compare their answers in pairs and then check the answers with the whole class.
- 6 Ask students to read through all the eight questions in Exercise 2a. Then ask them to read the text again and find the answers. Ask them to compare their answers in pairs. Then ask them to tell you the answers.

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- 7 Ask students to work individually to complete Exercise 2b and then compare their answers in pairs. Check their answers as a class.
- 8 Ask students to work in pairs to complete Exercise 2c. Check answers with the whole class.
- 9 Ask students to work individually to answer the questions in Exercise 3. Monitor, and assist students as necessary. Make sure they understand that they should write notes (key vocabulary) rather than full sentences.
- 10 Divide students into pairs for Exercise 4. Ask them to ask and answer the questions, if necessary referring back to the notes they made in Exercise 3. Encourage them to think of one or two additional questions.
- 11 Ask students to work individually to think about their reactions to the statements in Exercise 5. Encourage them to write notes as necessary. Then ask them to work in pairs or small groups to discuss the five statements. Ask each pair or group to report back to the class. Make sure they give reasons and don't simply say 'We agree' or 'We disagree'.

KEY:

- 1a.
 1. keyboard
 2. saxophone
 3. electric guitar
 4. mandolin
 5. violin
- 2b.
 1. traditional
 2. musical
 3. experimental
 4. memorable
- 2a.
 1. She was 13.
 2. The guitar, the banjo and the mandolin.
 3. When she was 17.
 4. Eclectic.
 5. Blues.
 6. Reggae.
 7. Modern (experimental) jazz.
 8. In small venues.
- 2b.
 1. stringed
 2. acoustic
 3. tastes
 4. traditional
 5. catchy
 6. band
 7. into
 8. take
- 2c.
 1. e
 2. h
 3. d
 4. a
 5. g
 6. c
 7. f
 8. b
3. students' own answers
4. students' own answers
5. students' own answers

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1 Warmer



a. Rearrange the letters to make musical instruments.

1. bdyekoar _____
2. psxaoeohn _____
3. ectricel tragiuh _____
4. lodinman _____
5. oilvin _____

b. Write the adjective forms of each of the nouns below.

1. tradition _____
2. music _____
3. experiment _____
4. memory _____

An extract from an interview with a musician



You're best known as a vocalist, but do you also play an instrument?

Yes. In fact I can play several instruments.

Really? Which ones?

Well. I play the guitar, of course, but I can also play other stringed instruments like the banjo and the mandolin.

Continued

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How old were you when you learnt to play the guitar?

My parents gave me an acoustic guitar as a birthday present when I was thirteen, so I took it up soon after. I learnt some basic chords and then, when I was about seventeen, I bought my first electric guitar.

Is the guitar your favourite instrument?

I don't think I have a favourite instrument. I like all kinds of instruments for different reasons. I like the piano, for example, and, obviously, the keyboard. I love the sound of the saxophone. That's an instrument I'd really like to take up one day.

You sing in a rock band, but how would you describe your musical tastes?

I think my musical tastes are quite eclectic. I like many different kinds of music for many different reasons. I'm very keen on classical music, for example, especially composers like Mahler and Bruckner.

How about jazz?

I like traditional jazz, but I have to admit I'm not so keen on some of the more modern, experimental jazz you sometimes hear these days.

What about other musical genres?

I love rock music, of course. I sing in a rock band, after all. And as a rock singer I love the blues because so much rock music is influenced by blues. I also like some traditional English and Irish folk music. Some of the tunes are brilliant and the lyrics often tell stories. I like reggae too. The rhythms of reggae music are really catchy so they are easy to remember.

Are there any musical genres you're not into?

It's difficult to think of a genre that I actually dislike but, as I said, I don't listen to modern jazz much so I'm not really into that sort of music.

What makes a good song in your opinion?

Well, firstly it has to have a catchy tune: a tune that's memorable and that people will instantly recognise. It also needs to be a bit complex and not just based on three or four simple chords. The lyrics of the song should also be interesting and, as I said before, if they can tell a story, that will make the song itself more memorable.

Where do you like to listen to music?

Everywhere! But I guess my favourite places are the small venues because they are friendlier and the audience can feel in touch with the musicians. Big venues like stadiums and festivals don't have that connection, in my opinion.

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2 Text

a. Read the text and answer the questions.

1. How old was the musician when she was given an acoustic guitar as a birthday present?

2. Which three instruments does she say she can play?

3. When did she buy her first electric guitar?

4. Which adjective does she use to describe her musical tastes?

5. According to her, which type of music influences rock music?

6. In her opinion, which type of music has catchy rhythms?

7. Which genre of music is she not so keen on?

8. Where does she like to listen to music?

b. Find words in the text to complete these sentences.

1. The violin and guitar are _____ instruments.

2. An _____ guitar does not use electronic equipment to make its sound louder.

3. The singer says she has eclectic musical _____.

4. She likes _____ English and Irish folk music.

5. A successful song usually has a _____ tune.

6. She's a singer in a rock _____.

7. She's not really _____ modern jazz.

8. She wants to _____ up the saxophone one day.

c. Match the words from the text (1-8) with definitions (a-h).

1. composer

a. consisting of many different types

2. genre

b. the types of thing you like in art, music or clothes

3. keyboard

c. the words of a song

4. eclectic

d. an electronic piano

5. chord

e. someone who writes music, especially classical music

6. lyrics

f. a place where an event takes place

7. venue

g. a particular position of the fingers on the guitar producing a particular sound

8. tastes

h. a particular style used in music which can be recognised by certain features

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3 Language in use



Answer the journalist's questions. Make notes.

1. Do you play an instrument? If so, which instrument or instruments can you play?

2. Which instrument or instruments would you like to take up?

3. What is your favourite musical instrument?

4. What are your musical tastes?

5. Are there any musical genres you don't like?

6. Where do you like to listen to music?

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4 Communicate



Work with a partner. Ask and answer the questions from Exercise 3. Write 1-2 more questions to ask them.

5 Discussion



Read these statements. Decide whether you agree or disagree with them. Think of reasons for your answers. Then discuss your answers with a partner or in a small group.

1. 'Most classical music is boring. It all sounds the same.'
2. 'I only like music I can dance to.'
3. 'Music helps me relax. I listen to music when I'm doing my homework or revising for exams.'
4. 'The best way to listen to music is to go to a live concert.'
5. 'English is the best language for rock music.'

Red Words

composer**	genre*	keyboard*	chord*	venue**	taste***
modern***	rock***	tune**	successful***	musical**	singer**
sound***	equipment***	electronic***	guitar***	instrument***	
violin*	take***	into***	band***	traditional***	