

China's noisy 'dancing grannies' silenced by device that disables speakers

Level: Elementary

1 Warmer

a. **Work in groups. Collect short answers to these questions on a board or shared screen.**

Who uses your local public park?

E.g., joggers, dog walkers, parents with small children, ...

Are there any rules about using the park?

E.g., no barbeques; no sitting on the grass, ...

2 Key words

a. **Write the words from the wordpools next to the definitions below. Then find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.**

device

disable

grannies

retired

speaker

1. a word used to describe older women _____
2. a machine or piece of equipment that does a particular thing _____
3. stop a machine or piece of equipment from working properly _____
4. an object or part of a computer that produces the sound from a CD player, radio, etc.

5. no longer working in a job or career, especially after having worked in it for most of your life

bully

fine

generation

hostile

respect

6. frighten or hurt someone smaller or weaker _____
7. make someone pay money for doing something wrong _____
8. show that you understand how important something or someone else is

9. group of people who are born and live around the same time _____
10. acting in an unfriendly or aggressive way to other people _____

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b. Use some of the key words above to complete these sentences.

1. My father is _____ now. He worked in the police for 40 years.
2. This simple locking _____ will keep your bike safe.
3. She was one of the best tennis players of her _____.
4. I don't think that the bosses really _____ the workers.
5. If you press the red button, you will _____ the printer and it won't work.

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Chi Hui Lin and Helen Davidson in Taipei

Fri 8 Oct 2021

- 1 Groups of grannies meet in China's public parks and squares, in the early morning or late afternoon.
- 2 The groups, mostly middle-aged and older women who went through the Cultural Revolution, dance together in a local park or sporting ground to loud Chinese music.
- 3 The dancing is causing problems, because many people live near the parks and the music is loud. But people are too scared to say anything to the women.
- 4 Some people have looked for tech solutions to the problem of the dancing grannies. One, a device can disable a speaker from 50 metres away.
- 5 "It is finally quiet. For two days the grannies thought their speaker is not working!", said one man.
- 6 "Great invention, with this device I can control the neighbourhood now," said another.
- 7 China has about 100 million dancing grannies. Many are retired and live alone. The dancing groups allows older women to have a social life. They exercise, make friends, and go shopping and do other activities together.
- 8 But neighbours say different groups blast their music over each other in small areas, and that the grannies bully people who say anything. Videos and reports show the groups arguing and fighting with basketball players and stopping a football game to dance on the football field.
- 9 In some cities police now fine the dancing grannies up to 500 yuan (£56) if their music is too loud in public.
- 10 Some arguments have become violent. Neighbours have spread stinky tofu, paint, and engine oil to stop the dancing.
- 11 "Most of them are from the Red Guard era, they don't respect other people or the environment," said a young Chinese woman.
- 12 "Square dancing is a problem left over from history. Many elderly people feel that China is built by their generation. They can say and do anything they want. They think young people have done nothing, and cannot question them."
- 13 But, it's not all hostile. One group has a solution that makes everyone happy. They use bluetooth earphones, and have their own version of a silent disco.

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3 Comprehension

a. Put a tick next to the true sentences, and a cross next to the ones that are false.

1. The members of the dancing groups are mostly older women.
2. They meet in public parks and squares in the early morning or late afternoon to dance together.
3. They do this to get money to pay for their health care and retirement.
4. People who live near the parks say the music is too loud.
5. The dancing groups are unfriendly to people who ask them to be quieter.
6. Some people in nearby apartments have bought guns online to shoot the music speakers.
7. Some cities make the groups pay money if there are more than 500 people in a group.
8. In one group, dancers wear Bluetooth earphones so that they do not need to play loud music that everyone in the area can hear.

4 Key language

a. Join the words to make word pairs from the article. Find them in the article to check your answers.

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| 1. sporting | life |
| 2. tech | dancing |
| 3. social | earphones |
| 4. square | ground |
| 5. bluetooth | solutions |

b. With a partner, talk about what each word pair means. Look up any you do not know.

c. Use the word pairs to complete these sentences about the article.

1. When dancers use _____ other people cannot hear their loud music.
2. The large groups meet in the mornings or afternoons to do _____ to keep them fit.
3. The groups dance in parks, public places, and even on _____ where other groups want to play basketball or football.

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4. Without the dancing groups, many of the older women would not have a _____.
5. Some people are looking for _____ that can stop the loud music.

d. Now use each one in a new sentence of your own.

5 Discussion topics

a. Which of these music sounds do you not like, and which are ok for you? Why?

- music from phones
- music in pubs, restaurants, shopping malls, supermarkets, gyms,...
- music from cars with their windows open
- music from parties, barbeques, groups of people in parks, ...
- music from your work colleague's radio
- music from outdoor concerts and street festivals

b. Discuss this question.

- What other loud sounds would you like to stop with a disabling device and why?

6 In your own words

a. Work with a partner. Do either task A or B. Write to your local newspaper about the situation. Structure your letter as follows:

- Describe the situation.
- Say why it is difficult.
- Say how it affects your life.
- Give an example.
- Ask for something to be done.

A

You are in your 20s or 30s and live in an apartment next to a public park. Most of the time, it is a nice place where your children can play, but groups of older people meet and dance to loud music at 7am three times a week. Your partner works nights and goes to bed at 6 in the morning. Someone must stop these old people, it is not their park.

B

You are in your 70s or 80s. You worked hard for many years. Now, you live on your own. You don't have much money, and your partner died three years ago. Last year, you joined a square-dancing group that meets in the park three mornings a week. Now you are fitter, happier, and you have new friends. Why don't young people understand and respect that?