

Does a song conjure painful memories? Try to rehabilitate it, say scientists

Level 2: Intermediate

Article summary: This article explains the effect that music has on memory and how people can change the negative associations and memories that they have with particular songs.

Time: 60 minutes

Skills: Reading, Writing, Speaking

Language focus: Zero conditionals and first conditionals

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

- a. This activity aims to let students consider the effect that music can have on someone and how it can bring up painful memories of the past. Ask students to share stories about music from their past that brings them happy or sad memories. Be sensitive to any very painful memories students may have and steer them away from those discussions.

2. Key words

- a. Ask students to do this task individually and then compare their answers in pairs or small groups. As an extension activity, ask students to highlight the key words in the article.

Key:

1. *arousing*
2. *joyful*
3. *recollection*
4. *induced*
5. *stirring up*
6. *associated*
7. *overpowers*
8. *rehabilitate*
9. *pair with*
10. *humming along*

11. *evicted*
12. *enhance*
13. *skip*
14. *rewires*
15. *engage*

- b. Before reading the article carefully, students use the key words in the correct form to fill the gaps in the sentences to ensure that they know how the words are used in other contexts.

Key:

1. *joyful*
2. *engage*
3. *evict*
4. *overpowered*
5. *arousing*
6. *induce*
7. *stir up*
8. *hum along*
9. *rewire*
10. *pair with*
11. *recollection*
12. *associate*
13. *rehabilitate*
14. *skip*
15. *enhance*

3. Comprehension check

- a. Students answer the questions based on the information in the article. If possible, encourage the students to add more explanatory information when they answer, e.g. in item 1, they may say, *Bonnie associates the memory of coming home from school in 1997 and being evicted from her family house with the song Bitter Sweet Symphony.*

Key:

Suggested answers:

1. *The memory of being evicted from her family house.*
2. *She turns off the radio or leaves.*
3. *His former partner was taken to a Neil Diamond concert by someone she'd had an affair with and was still in love with.*
4. *He skips the song or leaves.*

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5. *Music enhances the memory of events.*
6. *People have a better memory of the gist of an event if music creates a strong or weak emotional reaction. They remember details better when there is a moderate reaction.*
7. *Adolescence (teenage years) and early adulthood, i.e. 13 to 25 years old.*
8. *Positive music memories are more general, and negative ones are more specific.*
9. *Leal recommends repeating painful songs in happy situations until there is a new association.*
10. *Timmers recommends actively connecting to the song by humming it or adapting it.*

First Conditional

1. *If we buy him a guitar, he will learn to play.*
3. *When they release their new album, we will be the first to play it.*
6. *I will take photos of the band if I get good seats at the concert.*
8. *If we keep listening to this song again and again, we will remember the lyrics.*

- c. Students complete the sentences with their own ideas. The first sentence is an example of a zero conditional, and the second sentence is an example of a first conditional.

4. Key language

- a. This activity helps students see the uses of the zero and first conditionals. In preparation, ask students to think of examples of the zero and first conditional using the rules written in the table (Zero Conditional - *when / if + present simple, + present simple*), First Conditional - *when / if + present simple, + future simple*). Ask students to look at the examples from the article and categorise them into zero and first conditionals.

Key:

Zero Conditional = a and c,
First Conditional = b and d

- b. Students complete the sentences and then categorise them into zero or first conditional using the same table as before. Encourage students to focus on whether the action in the sentence feels like something that definitely happens or something that might happen in the future.

Key:

Zero Conditional

2. *When she sings, everyone just stops what they are doing.*
4. *The radio has a camera, and if people walk past, loud music starts playing. It's hilarious!*
5. *There are musicians who, if they see the notes on paper, hear the music in their head.*
7. *My dad relaxes when he listens to slow songs.*

5. Discussion

- a. Students discuss the statements related to the article and give their reasons and justifications for each answer, referring to their own experiences wherever possible.

6. In your own words

- a. Ask students to imagine they have a friend who gets upset every time they hear a particular song. Have students create a flowchart for them that describes step by step what they need to do to change the way they feel about the song. Encourage students to use the questions to help them come up with ideas.
- b. Students then present their flowcharts to the class. They should describe the effect that each step will have on someone using zero and first conditionals. Encourage students to use the example to help them.