

Wimpy Kid author Jeff Kinney: 'I've sold 300m books. What's next?'

Level 3: Advanced

Article summary: This article is an interview at a book signing event in the UK, with the bestselling author of the Wimpy Kid series of books for children – Jeff Kinney. His books have sold over 300 million copies.

Time: 60 minutes

Skills: Reading, Speaking, Writing

Language focus: Phrasal verbs

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

- a. This activity aims to get students thinking about books and reading. Ask students if they have read, or have heard of, the Wimpy Kid series of books, and if so, what they thought about them. If possible, find a copy of one of the books online or in a library so you can show it to students. Explain that the Wimpy Kid franchise includes four live action films and three animated Disney films as well as other connected books. Extend the activity by talking in general about children's literature and ask students to tell you what books they would consider to be part of this genre.

2. Key words

- a. Ask students to work individually to find words in bold in the text and to match them to the definitions. Remind them to read the sentences that come before or after the words in bold to help them work out the meaning of the words in context. For an extra challenge, you might like to ask students to try and work out the meaning of the words before they look at the different options. Allow a few minutes for students to check answers in pairs or groups before checking answers with the whole class.

Key:

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. <i>franchise</i> | 9. <i>bears</i> |
| 2. <i>mine</i> | 10. <i>custodian</i> |
| 3. <i>swivel chair</i> | 11. <i>misadventures</i> |
| 4. <i>unflappably</i> | 12. <i>akin to</i> |
| 5. <i>relatable</i> | 13. <i>credits</i> |
| 6. <i>legacy</i> | 14. <i>consistency</i> |
| 7. <i>sideline</i> | 15. <i>longevity</i> |
| 8. <i>mediums</i> | |

- b. Ask students to work individually or in pairs to complete the sentences using words from the previous activity in the correct form.

Key:

1. *credits*
2. *relatable*
3. *bears*
4. *unflappably*
5. *longevity*
6. *sideline*
7. *the custodian*
8. *mediums*
9. *franchises*
10. *akin to*
11. *misadventures*
12. *mined*
13. *consistency*
14. *legacy*
15. *swivel chair*

3. Comprehension check

- a. Students can work individually or in pairs to do this activity. Encourage them to highlight the section of the article where they found the answers to the questions. To extend the activity, ask students to rewrite the sentences that are false so that they are true according to the information in the article. Explain that *graying* means the process of hair going gray. In British English, the spelling is *greying/grey*. The temples are the sides of the head above the ears.

Wimpy Kid author Jeff Kinney: 'I've sold 300m books. What's next?'

Level 3: Advanced

Key:

1. *False (It tells us that the hair on the sides of his head is gray.)*
2. *True*
3. *False (He says his first books were just collections of jokes and he didn't care much about telling a good story.)*
4. *True*
5. *False (It refers to his secure professional / commercial position, not immunity to criticism.)*
6. *False (He compares it to a cartoon character because cartoon characters tend to go on for a long time.)*
7. *False (He says he is working to develop the area and to provide people with places they can go to relax and enjoy themselves.)*
8. *True*

4. Key language

- a. Students work individually to choose the correct definition of the phrasal verbs.

Key:

1. *b*
2. *c*
3. *a*
4. *c*
5. *a*
6. *c*

- b. Ask students to work individually or in pairs to complete the sentences with the phrasal verbs from task a. You might like to point out to students that the phrasal verb branch out can be followed by into, e.g. *Kath branched out into cyber security after her initial police training.*

Key:

1. *branch out*
2. *took off*
3. *break in*
4. *come out of*
5. *toying with*
6. *move on*

5. Discussion

- a. Students discuss the questions in pairs or groups. Ask them to justify their opinions, referring to their own experiences whenever possible.

6. In your own words

- a. The aim of this task is to get students to think creatively about ways they could make a difference to their local community by investing money, as Jeff Kinney has. Divide the class into small groups and encourage them to follow the steps. Monitor as they do this, helping with ideas or suggestions if students need guidance.
- b. Give students time to develop their plans before they present them to the class. Encourage them to explain their decisions and to answer any questions about them that their classmates may have. Students can vote on the ideas they think are the most creative or that provide the most innovative solutions.