

English in Mind Second edition

Level 4 Unit 11

Lesson Plan

Music's boy wonder: Composer, conductor, singer ... and he's only fifteen

THE INDEPENDENT

AIMS

- to read extensively and study a text related to the Unit theme
- to help students identify correct word stress
- to help students express their opinions on a controversial topic
- to help students produce a well-organised, coherent composition

Total time: 1 hour 30 minutes

(Note: The composition task can be set for homework.)

Lead-in

- 1** Tell students they are going to listen to some music and that they must write down the images which come into their heads. (Choose a classical piece of music if possible.) Tell them to relax, close their eyes and listen. Play a piece of music for a couple of minutes and then tell students to write down between eight and ten words that describe their mental images. Make sure they work individually and quietly and that they don't write down sentences. Then, using their list to help them, ask them to describe their images to a partner.

Time: 10 minutes

- 2 Pre-reading task.** Write the title of the article on the board, and ask students what they think the article will be about. Elicit/explain that we use the word 'prodigy' to describe people who have great talent. Ask the class to give you one or two examples of 'ingredients' that make a great composer/prodigy. Tell students to continue writing down 'ingredients' in pairs. Allow two minutes for this. Now elicit all the students' ideas and write them on the board.

Time: 5 minutes

Reading comprehension (1):
reading for gist

- 3** Tell students to read the whole article and check which of the 'ingredients' are mentioned in the article. Ask them to make a note of all those that appear in the article, but not on the board. To help students find the relevant passages in the text, tell

them to pay particular attention to paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 14, 16, 19, 20 where the main 'ingredients' are mentioned.

Key:

- Ambition: '*his ambition is to become chief conductor*' (1); '*Some parents nourish a frightening ambition*' (14)
- Natural (innate) talent: '*God-given talent*' (2)
- Family (genealogical) history: '*it is claimed, he is related not only to Stanislavsky but to Tolstoy and Tchaikovsky*' (3)
- Starting early: '*He has been writing music since he was eight; at 12 he was the youngest composer to be commended in the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition.*' (4)
- Determination: '*he remains determined enough to see his talent through to the other side*' (6)
- Parenting: '*Parenting, plus good teaching, is what helps any child prodigy to sink or swim*' (7); '*Yet, without a parent who is supportive at best and pushy at worst ...*' (10)
- Hard work: '*Hard work remains essential*' (9)
- Motivation (practical): '*prodigydom could be an escape route to a better life*' (14)
- Schooling/teaching: '*Prior left school in 2006; he now attends the St Petersburg Conservatory. Exams are tackled with the help of a home tutor. In Prior's case, this has almost certainly been the right solution*' (16)
- Strength of character: '*Yet the strongest do more than survive*' (19)
- Luck: '*Good luck to him. Chances are that he is going to need it.*' (20)

Time: 15 minutes

Reading comprehension (2):
true or false?

- 4** To encourage a more detailed reading of paragraphs 7 to 13 for specific sense, ask students to look at the statements on their worksheets and decide if they are true (T) or false (F). They should compare their answers in pairs and give evidence from the text.

Key:

- 1 F: '*Parenting, plus good teaching, is what helps any child prodigy to sink or swim; it cannot be otherwise.*' (para 7)
2 T: '*Child prodigism – if I may coin a word – is a disease which is generally fatal.*' (para 7)

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- 3 F: *'Prior's parents took part in a television documentary which, they told interviewers, they had understood would be called Talented Children.'* (para 8)
- 4 T: *'Getting the balance right is next to impossible.'* (para 9)
- 5 F: *'Yet, without a parent who is supportive at best and pushy at worst, Mozart himself would not necessarily have succeeded.'* (para 10)
- 6 T: *'That's not to say that all of Prior's musical activities have been so inspiring.'* (para 11).

Time: 10 minutes

Reading comprehension (3): reading for detail

- 5 Here students will need to make further use of their scanning skills to find specific information and answer a series of questions about the musical prodigies discussed in the text.

Key:

- 1 Mozart (para 17)
- 2 Josef Hassid (para 18)
- 3 Prior (para 16)
- 4 Horszowski (para 19)
- 5 Helfgott (para 18)
- 6 Mozart (para 17)
- 7 Judd (para 18)
- 8 Horszowski's parents (para 19)

Time: 10 minutes

Vocabulary: word stress

- 6 This exercise will help students recognise and practise the word stress of musical lexis in the text, which can cause problems. Say the example words, e.g. **ambition**, asking the students how many syllables the word has and where the stress lies. Ask them to work with a partner to categorise the words. Check answers and then drill the words. Students can continue practising saying the words in pairs.

Key:

oOo ambition	Oo table	Ooo musical
conductor	ballet	symphonies
composer	opera	requiem
	baton	

Time: 5 minutes

Discussion

- 7 To enable students to expand on the ideas presented in the article and to prepare them for the follow-up writing activity, write the following statement on the board:

Prodigies should be allowed a normal childhood.

Elicit one or two arguments for each point of view and ask them, in pairs, to brainstorm as many arguments to support each case as possible. Give a few minutes for this. Now put the students into two groups (**for** and **against**) and ask them to collate their arguments. Tell students that they need to produce a list of words to help them remember all the points and to nominate two spokespersons. The four spokespersons come to the front of the class and present their arguments using the list of words to help them. Allow two minutes for each speech. The other students listen and write down questions to ask the spokespersons after the speeches.

Time: 20 minutes

Writing: preparation

- 8 **Preparation 1.** The purpose of this activity is to model a standard layout for writing 'for' and 'against' type compositions. Ask students to read the text about teenage pop stars and to put the paragraphs in the correct order:

Key: b, a, d, c

Time: 5 minutes

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- 9 Preparation 2.** Writing in logical paragraphs creates many difficulties for students. The idea behind this activity is to make students aware of the logic behind each paragraph.

Key:

b = Introduction: the writer introduces the topic and uses rhetorical questions to suggest there are two sides to the story.

a = Arguments against, i.e. pop stars deserve their earnings and life style.

d = Arguments in favour: this paragraph comes next in order to make the essay more coherent, i.e. the writer's conclusion is in favour (i.e. pop stars do earn too much money).

c = A summary saying why the writer thinks that pop stars earn too much money.

Time: 5 minutes

- 10 Preparation 3.** Students are now asked to note (1) cohesive devices (words or phrases used in a text to connect ideas together, e.g. conjunctions, synonyms, pronouns, transitional words) and (2) rhetorical questions. Elicit an example of a cohesive device from the students, and then ask them to find the others working on their own, before comparing with a partner. Elicit or explain that rhetorical questions

serve the purpose of engaging directly with the reader.

1 cohesive devices: 'After all' (a); 'On the other hand', 'Moreover' (para d); 'For all the reasons outlined above' (c) 2 rhetorical questions: 'But is it really a dream come true? And what does the future hold for these stars of the moment?' Function: to encourage the reader to reflect on what the implied answer to the question must be.

Time: 5 minutes

Writing: composition

- 11** Encourage students to put the learning points from the writing preparation into practice and write a composition. This could be set for homework.

Time: 30 minutes

This article first appeared on Wednesday, 6 February 2008, at www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/musics-boy-wonder-composer-conductor-singer-and-hes-only-fifteen-778670.html.

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