

Wrong Lyric!

Level: B1

Focus: Pronunciation for listening

Theme: Misheard song lyrics

Activity: Match mistakes and corrections

WRONG LYRICS

This is a fun awareness-raising activity based on the Beatle's song *Yesterday*. Most people have had the experience of hearing a song in their own or another language, and misunderstanding some of the lines of the lyric. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, we may hear wrongly, either because the singer pronounces strangely, or because the language has in-built ambiguities and homophones. Secondly, we may interpret wrongly. We think the singer is singing about X when in fact s/he is singing about something else completely. This causes us to think we heard one thing when in fact we heard another. This activity raises awareness of these kinds of misunderstanding.

PROCEDURE

1. Ask the students if they can recall any examples of when they have misunderstood the words of a song. Prompt them by sharing with them an example of your own.
2. Explain to the students that they will hear a famous song which has been badly misunderstood. Ask them to spot the mistakes. Then play the video or audio, once or twice.
3. Give out the worksheet. You could cut off the 'clues' in the box at the bottom of the page if you think the students will be able to correct mistakes 1-14 without them: many students will know the real lyrics fairly well already.
4. Go through the answers. Ask students if they can see how the word or phrase was misunderstood.

Key: 1 - f; 2 - l; 3 - k; 4 - l; 5 - a; 6 - g; 7 - h; 8 - b; 9 - c; 10 - d; 11 - m; 12 - n; 13 - j; 14 - e

NOTES

A common cause of ambiguity in English is the reduced vowel, schwa. Any of the vowel letters on their own or followed by an 'r' may be pronounced as a schwa, which means that there are a huge number of homophonic syllables. An example of this can be seen in 'yesterday' and 'yes, today'. The 'er' in the first is identical to the 'o' in the second (in accents like British English, where the 'r' is not pronounced after a vowel).

WRONG LYRICS

¹Yes, today

²Old men's doubles teams so far away
Now it seems³ they're over here to⁴ say
Oh⁵ why be leaving yesterday?

⁶Certainly, why not⁷ have the man I used to be
There's a⁸ chateau hanging over me
Oh why...

Why she had⁹ two goes
¹⁰Eyes and nose
She wouldn't say
¹¹Eyes, head, something wrong
Now¹² along for chess today

Yes, today
Love¹³ washed up her knees and came to play
Now¹⁴ my knees are placed too high to weigh
Oh why...

^aI believe in ^bshadow ^cto go ^dI don't know
^fyesterday ^eI need a place to hide away
^gsuddenly, I'm ^hhalf ⁱall my troubles seemed
^kas though ^jwas such an easy game
^lstay ^mI said ⁿI long for yesterday