

# You Are The Course Book

How to get 3 hours + of English teaching material from one 4-minute song! (Oct '13)

You can prepare great lessons – you don't need a course book. Let's get 3 hours + of material out of one four-minute song!

## Preparation:

- Find a song that you want to use
  - students could choose it
  - something you and the students are interested in
  - something suitable, with interesting lyrics, not just "Yeah, Yeah...!"
  - a song with a story would be great
- Get the lyrics and choose the target vocabulary
- Create a gap-fill activity with the lyrics minus target vocabulary
- Mark sentences with sentence stress for Pronunciation stage, and prepare sentences in Clear Alphabet
- Decide what themes you can see in the text; choose some matching idioms

## My Example:

- I used the song "Gold Can Turn To Sand" (3:24) from *Kristina: the Musical (At Carnegie Hall)*
- Level: Intermediate – Upper Intermediate
- Target vocab (20 items): brother, one another, springtime, beside, guide, godforsaken, shared, mad, believed, company, desert, foolish, desperate, to will sb along, rest, grave, poisoned, fell, eyes, watch
- Idioms of fortune and risk:
  - for luck to run out
  - good luck!
  - to take a risk
  - to seek your fortune
  - fortune favours the brave
  - to strike gold
  - all that glitters is not gold
  - to risk life and limb

... and so on

## Lesson Plan:

- Follow the outline below, using your song as the text; you don't have to do every stage
- Timings are approximate. Of course you can spend longer or shorter time with any of the sections. My example is for two 90-minute lessons, which could be on separate days

### Lesson 1 (90 mins):

#### Warmer (00)

- Discuss the general topic: taking risks; following your dreams; dangers of greed

#### Vocabulary (10)

- Target vocab (gap-fill words; new words; stress & vowel sounds; rhyming words; song structure); try to predict the story from the target vocab

#### Text (Real) (25)

- Read the text once; check any more new vocab; try to predict missing words; listen once; check answers with a partner; listen again; check answers

#### Grammar Point (55)

- Focus on past simple to recount an event; include past continuous and/or past perfect

#### Verb Forms Revision (70)

- 8 questions: WHO, WHERE, WHAT, WERE, WHEN, HOW, HOW OLD, DID

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## Lesson 2 (90 mins):

### Warmer (00)

- Act out the story of the song in mime (without speaking!)
- Or, act out the story of the song with only one of the gap-fill words, e.g. "Guide... guide... guide..." (using different intonation and mime to convey the story)

### Pronunciation (15)

- Sentence stress; study one or more sentences from the lyrics – identify content words, stressed syllables, and stressed vowel sounds; notice different stress (rhythm) because it's a song; notice more deliberate phrasing and clear SP accent; watch a performance of the song in its original language – Swedish. Note that both English and Swedish are stress-timed languages. What similarities and differences do you notice?
- Connected speech; SS identify passages written phonetically in Clear Alphabet; listen to the audio normal speed, then slowed down; discuss what happens and why (note: sound connections, especially cv which means consonant moves forward):
  - hi man Mee (him and me)
  - Dreem so Fgeu twer Grand (dreams of gold were grand)
  - hii Sheir din mai Dreem (he shared in my dream)
  - wi w Foo li shan dun Weir rii (we were foolish and unwary)
  - i n Leun lii Greiv (in a lonely grave)
  - fro m Wel (from a well) ... *and so on*

### Free Practice (50)

- SS identify the main points of the story
- SS role play the story as the main characters
- Introduce (and/or elicit if possible) idioms of risk; identify the literal meaning of each; SS note new idioms
- SS role play a story of when they have had to take a risk; use all the idioms

### Writing (Homework)

- SS write up one of their role plays (or both) as a dialogue or story; focus on using past verb forms
- Or, write the last will and testament of one of the main characters (both die!)
- SS find more idioms on the topic of risk and fortune, then write a text (e.g. an informal email) including all of them; write the text again using literal English instead of idioms; what's the difference?

### Further Study

- SS research the period described in the song: 1850s Gold Rush in California; then present their findings or create a multimedia account, e.g. imagining they are involved and recording their experiences with audio/video/photography/theatre, etc.