

Desert Island Songs

Peter McDonald

Levels	<i>All</i>
Aims	<i>Give personal information</i> <i>Express opinions, feelings, and emotions</i> <i>Talk about likes and dislikes</i> <i>Converse about past experiences</i> <i>Discuss personal relationships</i>
Class Time	<i>≈ 1 hour</i>
Preparation Time	<i>1 hour</i>
Resources	<i>Audio recording of songs or access to YouTube</i>

Songs support fluency because music provides a stimulus that can unlock memories, feelings, emotions, and so on that may not appear under normal classroom settings. This activity is based on the popular British radio program *Desert Island Discs*, in which prominent people (movie stars, musicians, business people, etc.) talk about the songs they would choose if they were cast away on a desert island. Through context and structure, this activity gives students a clear communicative function.

PROCEDURE

1. Select four songs that you would take to a deserted island. Prepare an explanation for each song using the following questions as guidelines.
 - Why did you choose this particular song to be included in your castaway disc?
 - What does the song mean to you?
 - Which stage in your life (early childhood, teenage years, etc.) does the song represent?
 - Which memories of people, places, and other things does the song evoke in you?
2. Play/sing the songs or part of the songs to the students and explain why you selected them. Encourage the students to ask questions to initiate a discussion about music and what music means in your life.
3. Have the students create their own desert island song list based on your model.
4. Ask the students to share their songs and experiences with their classmates.

CAVEATS AND OPTIONS

1. It is important to inform the students that any song that represents things that are meaningful to them is acceptable. The song does not have to be one that they like or that is critically important.
2. You can easily adapt this activity to different levels; you can provide elementary classes with teacher-centered models and advanced classes with more autonomy.
3. The activity also provides a good foundation for follow-up activities. For example, students can make their own listening comprehension tasks based on the songs and explanations of why they selected the songs, and use these to test their classmates. Students may also search for a famous person on the BBC website (www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qnmr) and discuss what they have found in class.