

3 READING

a Think of a song or piece of music that you remember hearing and liking when you were a child. Where did you first hear it? How old were you? Why did you like it?

b Look at the title of a newspaper article. Then read the article once. Why did the writer choose this title?

c Read the first paragraph again. Find words or phrases meaning:

- 1 _____ completely
- 2 _____ behave in a way that makes other people think you are stupid
- 3 _____ started crying because of a strong emotion
- 4 _____ not thinking that anything positive would happen
- 5 _____ a mixture of loud and unpleasant sounds

d What kind of sounds do you think *whir*, *hum*, and *clacking* (line 10) are?

e Read the rest of the article again. With a partner, and in your own words, say why the article mentions the following pieces of music or artists.

- 1 the *Lacrimosa* from Mozart's *Requiem*
- 2 the Rolling Stones, Michael Jackson, Sigur Rós, Radiohead, Elvis, and Pink Floyd
- 3 music from the fifties
- 4 Guillaume de Machaut's *Agnus Dei*
- 5 country music
- 6 Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody*
- 7 Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Sinatra's *Fly Me to the Moon*.
- 8 the Beatles
- 9 silence

f Talk to a partner.

- Why do you think the journalist says that Austin's experience may help us understand more about musical taste?

- Imagine you were going to recommend music to Austin. Which...

song or piece of music
decade
composer
band
singer

would you suggest?



What music would you play to an alien?

"I can hear music for the first time ever," wrote Austin Chapman, a 23-year-old filmmaker from California. "What should I listen to?"

1 Austin, you see, was born profoundly deaf. For his whole life, music has been a mystery. "I had seen people make a fool of themselves, singing or moving wildly on the dance floor," he says. "I had also seen people moved to tears by a song, which was probably the hardest thing for me to understand." Then, just a few weeks ago, his parents suggested that he try a newly developed hearing aid that they had heard about. He went to the doctor's with no great expectations. But when the doctor turned on the hearing aid, he was stunned. "I sat in the doctor's office, frozen as a cacophony of sounds attacked me. The whir of the computer, the hum of the air-conditioning, the clacking of the keyboard, the sound of my friend's voice." Austin could hear. And for the first time ever the world of music was open to him.

It didn't take him long to decide what to do: he was going to listen to music nonstop. Later that day, he heard his first piece, Mozart's beautiful *Lacrimosa* (from his *Requiem*), in a friend's car. He wept. So did everybody else in the car. The experience, he says, was "like the first time you kiss a girl." His friends went on to play him the Rolling Stones, Michael Jackson, Sigur Rós, Radiohead, Elvis, and Pink Floyd. But Austin knew that there was a vast universe of music to explore, so he decided to seek further help. He described his situation on reddit.com and so far, he's received more than 14,000 suggestions. As a strategy, he has decided to follow the advice of someone who posted this message on the site: "This is like introducing an alien to the music of earth. Once you're tired of classical, you could start with music from the fifties and progress through each decade. That way you can really see the growth of modern music."



Austin Chapman

Austin adopted that system, but chose to start much earlier, with a piece by Guillaume de Machaut called *Agnus Dei*, from the 14th century. Currently, he's listening to four or five hours of music a day. Because he had never heard music before, Austin isn't influenced by nostalgia and, via the Internet, he can listen to just about anything ever composed. Consequently, his experience may help us to understand more about musical taste. So what has he been listening to? It seems that no one genre dominates (although he says he doesn't really like country music – too depressing). His favorite piece – for now – is Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody*. He also likes Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Frank Sinatra's *Fly Me to the Moon*. But so far he has not listened to the most recommended band, the Beatles. "I'm waiting for a special occasion," he says.

Austin is also learning how to hear. When we met at a cafe in West Hollywood, we took a table far from the street to avoid the background noise of traffic. The ability to ignore unwanted noise is something that will take him time. This may help explain why Austin says that "silence is still my favorite sound. When I turn my hearing aid off, my thoughts become clearer; it's absolutely peaceful."

Adapted from The Times

Online Practice

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LIVEWORKSHEETS