

The Final Frontier?

English Language materials exploring

David Bowie *Space Oddity*

Songwriters David Bowie © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.

Free 16 page mini lesson
to commemorate the
50th anniversary of the
Moon Landings



Chris Walklett

Overview

Activities within this unit include:

- Listening to two versions of *Space Oddity*, overviewing the song and its imagery.
 - Speaking and discussion activities on the unit's themes.
 - A reading passage on the Moon landings.
 - Activities looking at uses of vocabulary in context.
 - A speaking activity making deductions using cautious language.
- A look at a modern version of the song including a 'spot the difference' activity.
 - Three fun 'multi-skill' activities.

This is a shortened version of a full lesson plan available based on this song. The full version including teacher's notes is available from www.teachingtracks.co.uk. There are also materials available on Katy Perry *Roar* and Pink Floyd *Money* available from there.

We hope you have fun using this activity book and enjoy the music! Feel free to check the artist's official website <http://www.davidbowie.com>.

This product is not endorsed by the artist/songwriter or the estate of David Bowie.



Activity Breakdown

Activity	Main language focus	Specific focus
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1	Speaking (i)	Brainstorming existing knowledge
2	Reading (i)	One giant leap for mankind



3	Listening (i)	Overview of the song and its imagery
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4	Vocabulary & Grammar	Uses in context
5	Speaking (ii)	Making deductions



6	Listening (ii) & Reading (ii)	Chris Hadfield's Space Oddity
7	Multi-skill	3 fun activities

You will need to use the following QR codes to access the song/video and lyrics.

Teaching Tracks uses and recommends <https://www.qrcode-monkey.com/>



Bowie – Song/video Bowie – Lyrics (AZ) Hadfield - Song/video Hadfield – Lyrics (Genius)

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Activity 1 ~ Speaking (i)

Brainstorming existing knowledge

What do you know about the Moon? Think about things like:

Its gravity

Its atmosphere

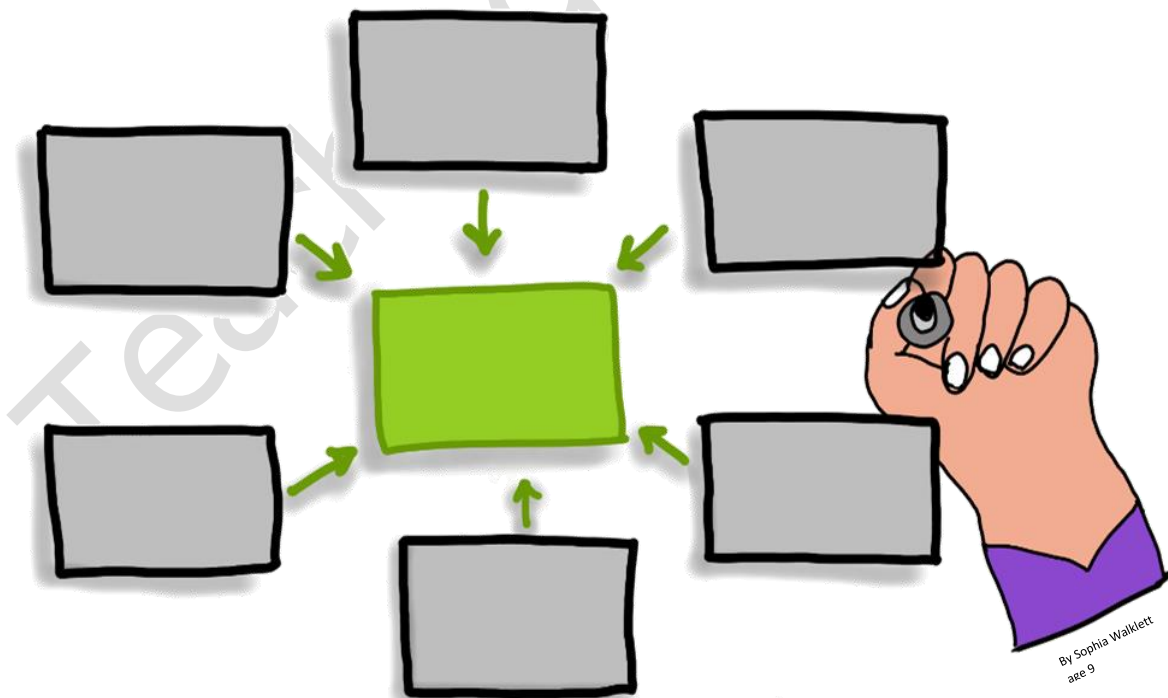
Its size

Its distance from the Earth

Its effect on the Earth

Its effect on humans

Make notes on the mind map below.



Activity 2 ~ Reading (i)

One giant leap for mankind



The Moon Landings

In July 1969, Apollo 11 became the first manned spacecraft to land on the Moon. NASA, **spurred on** by the then President J F Kennedy's speech in 1961, had **ploughed** all its efforts into its space programme. The objective was to put astronauts, not only into space but also on the Moon. Neil Armstrong and "Buzz" Aldrin became the first astronauts to **set foot on** the Moon's surface. Armstrong famously (and grammatically incorrectly) stated at the time that it was "one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind".

Following this **landmark** achievement, there were a total of nine Apollo missions to the Moon and twelve people in total (all American) have set foot on it. **Conspiracy theories abound** that this (and presumably all other Moon landings) did not and could not have taken place, pointing to several believed **anomalies** in the photos and **footage** of the 1969 landing. These have since been widely **discredited**.

A song called "Space Oddity" by a relatively new artist from London called David Bowie was timed to coincide with the landings. The BBC used it for their footage of the event. It was a strange choice given what happens at the end of the song.

Glossary

<i>spurred on</i> (v)	encouraged
<i>ploughed into</i> (v)	to invest heavily, intensive effort
<i>set foot on</i> (v)	to go to a place for the first time
<i>landmark</i> (n)	an event or discovery marking an important stage/ turning point
<i>conspiracy theories</i> (n)	the belief that the government or other official accounts of some events are not what actually happened
<i>abound</i> (v)	very common/numerous
<i>anomalies</i> (n)	irregularities
<i>footage</i> (n)	recorded filming or videoing of an event
<i>discredited</i> (adj)	not believed / having lost respect or credibility



Text questions and discussion points

1. What is the grammatical mistake in Armstrong's statement?
2. What do you think he meant to say?
3. What kinds of anomalies might people point out?
4. Is the USA the only country to have landed on the Moon?

Activity 3 - Listening (i)

Overview of the song and its imagery

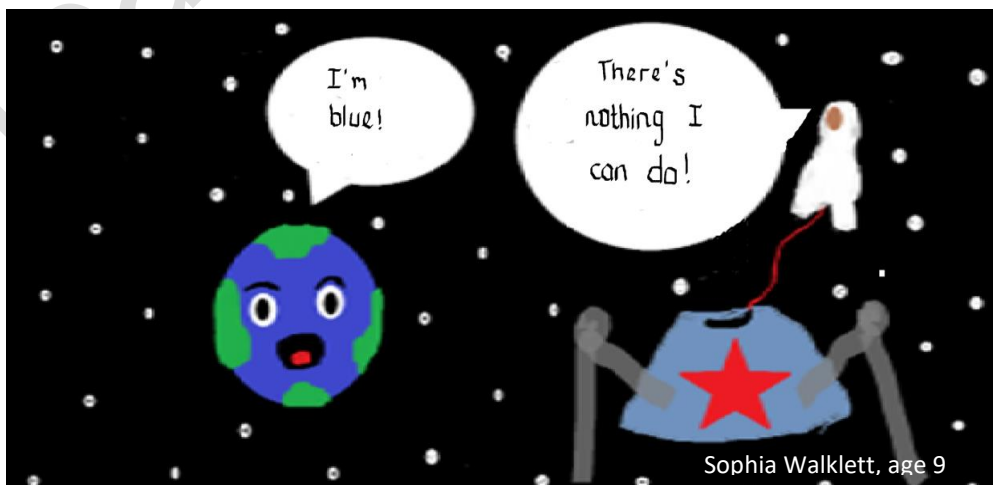


Listen to the song (no video) for the first time with your eyes closed.

After you have listened consider the following questions.

1. What is the atmosphere of the song?
2. Were there any lines you caught? If so, what do you think they mean?
3. What happens in the song?
4. Have you heard of an odyssey?
5. What does the word *odd* mean?
6. Given the subject matter, what might the word *oddity* mean?

Do you understand the joke below in relation to the last line of the song?



Activity 4 ~ Vocabulary & Grammar

Uses in context



Scan the lyrics and find the words below.

capsule / whose / through / peculiar / still

By looking at the words around them (the context) discuss their probable meanings.

Use cautious language (see Appendix) if you are not sure.

1. What is a *capsule*?
2. What does *whose* mean? How do we use it?
3. What type of word is *through*? How do we use it?
4. What does *peculiar* mean? Give an example sentence.
5. Why might the spaceman be feeling *still*?

What examples of the present continuous can you detect?

What effect does using the present continuous have?

Activity 5 ~ Speaking (ii)

Making deductions

What do we know about the Major?

What does the Major say and what is said to him that makes us think this?

Use cautious language – see Appendix.

E.g. *He is probably scared as he says...*

Use the notepad below to write notes.




Activity 6 ~ Listening (ii) & Reading (ii)

Chris Hadfield's *Space Oddity*



In 2013, astronaut Chris Hadfield recorded his own version of the song *Space Oddity* whilst floating in space on the International Space Station. David Bowie called this the most moving version of the song.

Listen to the song and compare Chris Hadfield's lyrics, using the QR code below, with the original lyrics. Which words have been changed? Why? Take notes in the box below.



Activity 7 ~ Multi skill

3 Fun Activities

Mime, karaoke or dub (i)

In pairs or groups, mime to the song or sing it 'karaoke style'.

Desert island astronaut (ii)

Decide on five things you would take on a trip into space and justify your selection.

I would take....	Because...
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Moonwalking competition (iii)

Michael Jackson introduced the 'moonwalk' in 1983. Rather than the astronaut's slow motion hops it was a seemingly impossible backward slide - see QR code



Can anyone in the class moonwalk?

Appendix

Cautious Language

When we are not sure about the accuracy of what we are saying, we should use cautious language. We use this when we may not have all the facts and are speculating based on belief.

In order to express caution we often use modal (auxiliary) verbs such as can, could, may, might followed by be and other verbs such as appear and seem followed by to be.

Adjectives of probability such as likely, possible, and probable or their opposites unlikely, impossible, and improbable are also useful when using this type of language.

Adverbs of probability such as perhaps, possibly, probably, and presumably are useful in cautious language, so too are frequency adverbs such as generally, usually, occasionally, often, rarely, and seldom. The noun likelihood is also useful when expressing caution.

Teaching Tracks - Teachers' Feedback Form

I hope the lessons were a success and we look forward to hearing your thoughts about them. Please take a moment to fill out the form, scan or copy and paste and send it back to chriswalklett@teachingtracks.co.uk

For every completed form we will send you a PDF of the *Top Ten* teacher's book.

Name: [Your Name]

Email and/or other contact: [Your email address and phone number]

PRESS PLAY ►

1) Were the materials easy for **you and your students** to use?

☐ Yes ☐ No Explain: [Explanation]

2) Did you supplement the materials Do you think the materials need supplementing?

☐ Yes ☐ No Explain: [Explanation]

3) Please clarify which materials/activities you used (please say 'all' if applicable) or you didn't use.
[Comments]

4) Were the teaching instructions easy to read/ use?

☐ Yes ☐ No Explain: [Explanation]

5) Was the prescribed level appropriate? If not at what level did you use these materials?

☐ Yes ☐ No Level used at: [Suggestions]

6) Were the reading passages useful?

☐ Yes ☐ No Explain: [Explanation]

Please include any other comments or suggestions that you'd like to share.

[Comments or suggestions]

■ THANK YOU!

About the author

Chris Walklett has been using music, songs and song lyrics in the classroom for many years dating back to his very first lesson in the mid-1990s. Music and its educational use is a subject that is dear to his heart, and it formed his choice of MA Linguistics dissertation, “The use of (and attitudes to) songs and song lyrics in coursebooks”. Chris has also written a number of articles on the subject in a range of publications.

In 2015 Chris gave a TEDx Talk on a related topic and has had numerous appearances giving both talks and workshops at a variety of ELT conferences all over the UK and Europe. Chris lectures History and EAP/ELT at the University of Essex and also is a teacher trainer. He runs an engaging Facebook group Creating Uses for Songs and Song Lyrics for like-minded teachers.

To find out more please visit www.teachingtracks.co.uk
or contact Chris – chriswalklett@teachingtracks.co.uk

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I would also like to thank my daughter Sophia who did two of the illustrations for this book when she was only 9 – *you are my sunshine my only sunshine...*☺



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English language teaching materials exploring
David Bowie *Space Oddity*

What teachers have had to say about *Teaching Tracks*:

“materials were clear and straightforward”

**“perfect for an integrated
skills lesson”**

“lots of discussion was generated”

“very good materials...well planned”

“the students enjoyed and
felt motivated by it”

“the material was well staged”

“the target language is well scaffolded”

“they learnt a lot of new vocabulary”

“a good build up to listening to the song”

“the material can be easily exploited”

“teaching instructions were very clear
and easy to use”

What students have had to say about *Teaching Tracks*:

“learning English via music was a very
interesting experience”

“I loved this way of learning”

“I don’t normally listen to foreign music but
this was inspiring”

**“I like English songs, so I enjoyed this
very much”**

“this was a unique type of English lesson
– I enjoyed it a lot”

**“it was the first time I had learnt this
way, it was great!”**

“it was an easy and enjoyable way to learn”

“studying with songs is very nice”

