

Vorüberlegungen

Lernziele:

- *Das Leben und Wirken des “King of Pop” aus verschiedenen Blickwinkeln zu betrachten, ist Ziel dieser Unterrichtseinheit.*
- *Die positiven, aber auch die negativen Eigenschaften des “Berühmtseins” sollen dabei bewusst gemacht werden.*
- *Die kritische Auseinandersetzung mit einem Thema, das die Welt erst kürzlich bewegt hat, soll das Interesse am Lesen authentischer Texte wecken.*
- *Modernes Vokabular und idiomatische Ausdrucksweise werden dabei vertieft.*
- *Das selbstständige Bearbeiten von Textaufgaben schult den Blick fürs Wesentliche.*

Anmerkungen zum Thema:

Von frühester Kindheit an sorgte Michaels Vater, Joseph Jackson, für die musikalische Förderung seiner neun Kinder. 1964 gründete er dann das damalige Trio **The Jackson Brothers**, das zwei Jahre später zu **The Jackson Five** umbenannt wurde. Diese Band bestand aus den fünf Brüdern Jackie, Tito, Jermaine, Marlon and Michael. Später waren vor allem Michael und seine Schwester Janet Jackson als Solokünstler musikalisch erfolgreich.

Michael Jackson war zweimal verheiratet und hatte für seine drei Kinder das alleinige Sorgerecht, welches nach Jacksons Tod auf seine Mutter Katherine überging.

Jackson war gerade in **sozialen Bereichen** vielfältig engagiert. Für seinen großen Einsatz erhielt er 2002 den Bambi für sein Lebenswerk.

Mit schätzungsweise 750 Millionen verkauften Tonträgern war Michael Jackson einer der kommerziell erfolgreichsten Musiker in der Geschichte der Popmusik. Das bis heute weltweit meistverkaufte Album **“Thriller”** veröffentlichte Michael Jackson 1982.

Am 25. Juni 2009 starb Michael Jackson in Los Angeles, Kalifornien. Nach seinem Tod fand die Polizei große Mengen an Medikamenten.

Zu seinen Ehren fand am 7. Juli 2009 eine **Trauerfeier** im Staples Center in Los Angeles im Beisein von 17.500 Fans, 2.000 Journalisten und 500 Prominenten statt. Die Feierlichkeiten wurden von zahlreichen Fernsehsendern auf der ganzen Welt übertragen.

Hinweis: Da es sich um eine relativ kurze Unterrichtseinheit handelt, entfällt der Abschnitt “Unterrichtsplanung”. Dafür werden im Folgenden die Texte kurz vorgestellt und Lösungshinweise zu den Assignments gegeben.

Ein Foto, das Michael Jackson zeigt (vgl. **Texte und Materialien M 1**), dient als Einstieg ins Thema. Die Schüler sollen sich dabei frei äußern, was ihnen zum “King of Pop” einfällt.

Der Text *“Michael Jackson”* auf **M 1** bietet eine kurze Zusammenfassung über das Leben und den Tod des Stars.

“Deformed by Surgery. Warped by Fame. The Sad End of an American Icon” (vgl. **Texte und Materialien M 2**) gibt detailliert Aufschluss über die verschiedenen Stationen im Leben des Michael Jackson. Seine streckenweise zwiespältige Persönlichkeit, die viel zitierte versäumte Kindheit, der Hang zur Romantik und nicht zuletzt sein unglaubliches musikalisches Talent werden dabei sehr kontrovers diskutiert.

5.40 Michael Jackson – The Blessing and the Curse of Being Famous**Vorüberlegungen**

In *“He Never Made Me Moonwalk”* (vgl. **Texte und Materialien M 3**) bringt Seth Colter Walls kurz und prägnant zum Ausdruck, dass er persönlich diesem Mythos “Michael Jackson” nichts abgewinnen kann.

Joshua Alston beschreibt in seinem Text *“How Michael Jackson Became a Pop God”* (vgl. **Texte und Materialien M 4**), wie der King of Pop durch sein musikalisches Können die Generationen in seinen Bann zieht.

Schließlich beschreibt der Artikel *“Michael Jackson Concert Film Due in October”* (vgl. **Texte und Materialien M 5**) die Anstrengungen der Musikindustrie, Michael Jackson auch nach seinem Tod aus musikalischer Sicht am Leben zu halten.

Lösungshinweise:

Die gefetteten Zeilenangaben weisen auf die Textpassage hin, in der die betreffende Antwort zu finden ist.

Zu M 1:

- 1. Outline the basic steps of Michael Jackson’s life briefly. Add more background information if possible. (II. 1-12)*
- 2. What were immediate reactions to the news of Michael Jackson’s death? (II. 13-19)*
- 3. What does the memorial service, which was broadcasted all over the world, show about the person Michael Jackson? (II. 20-48)*

Zu M 2:

- 1. Which two major traits of character of Michael Jackson does the author exemplify throughout the first paragraph of the text?*

On the one hand there is the genius, the star, and on the other hand, there is a personality full of oddities and strange behaviour.

- 2. In how far did the oddities described in the text influence Jackson’s career?*

He turned himself into such a spectacle, he almost made people forget the real phenomenon he was.

- 3. How does the author explain Jackson’s attachment to childhood pursuits?*

The delayed preoccupations of a child star denied a real childhood.

- 4. In what way does the author of the text connect the second paragraph with the first one?*

At the very beginning of the text, there is a question. The first sentence of the second paragraph is the answer to that question.

- 5. Describe the two personas that Jackson has according to the author of the text.*

On the one hand there is the sensitive boy, and on the other hand, there is the raging adult.

Vorüberlegungen

6. Which of Jackson's oddities became somehow obvious through his song "Black or White"?

Jackson's skin had been getting significantly lighter.

7. Which incident started "the real trouble" (l. 32) for Michael Jackson?

He was being investigated on suspicion of child molestation.

8. Refer to Jackson's marriages and to his children briefly.

He was married twice, first to Lisa Marie Presley, later on to Debbie Rowe. With Debbie Rowe he had two children; after divorcing her he got custody of both children, in 2002 a third child was born to a still unnamed surrogate mother.

9. Describe Lenny Kravitz' impression of the children.

The children are full of respect and not robotic.

10. Why were people at a certain point "starting to wonder if the thrill was gone" (l. 67)?

Jackson obviously couldn't deliver his own lines anymore. There was too much backstory. The things he was singing about like romantic need, devotion, and desire didn't seem to be plausible anymore.

11. Which incident caused a lot of trouble for Michael Jackson in 2005?

In a 14 week trial he was accused of child molestation. In the end the jury found Jackson innocent on all counts.

12. In how far was Jackson disappointed by people after the trial?

He didn't trust people anymore. He felt he'd been let down so often.

13. What is it about Michael Jackson that we will keep in our memories in the eyes of the author?

Most people will be likely to remember the man-child at the height of his phenomenal powers.

14. What is the author's attitude towards Michael Jackson's personality in your eyes? Refer to relevant passages in the text to explain your view.

For example: He obviously doubts Jackson's innocence. That is why he uses a quite ironic tone once in a while; l. 44: "Maybe it was just a coincidence, but by that time Jackson was married."

Zu M 3:

1. Refer to the author's attitude towards Michael Jackson and his music.

He can only enjoy some of his music when he tries to ignore the Jacko Mythology.

5.40**Michael Jackson – The Blessing and the Curse of Being Famous****Vorüberlegungen****Zu M 4:**

1. *The author of the text states that Jackson's "music doesn't connect for" him (l. 8). Which reasons does he give to explain his attitude?*

Stardom doomed Jackson to a tragic adulthood.

2. *In how far has the author's taste changed over the years and what does that show concerning Jackson's music?*

The author's taste started to evolve when he got to college; he wanted something cleaner than hip-hop and grunge. All of a sudden Jackson's pop-music shook him, it's powerful.

Zu M 5:

1. *What is the film "This Is It" supposed to show?*

It will serve as proof that Michael Jackson was one of the greatest entertainers ever.

2. *Which other huge event in memory of the King of Pop has been announced? Describe it briefly.*

In early September members of Jackson's family and other entertainers will honor Michael from a stage at Vienna's Schoenbrunn Palace by a so called "farewell concert".

VORSCHAU

Deformed by Surgery. Warped by Fame. The Sad End of an American Icon*By Richard Lacayo*

When was it, exactly, that Michael Jackson completed the transition from merely eccentric to faintly creepy? It began as far back as the mid-1980s, not long after *Thriller* made him a star of the magnitude of Elvis Presley or the Beatles. At first, his rumored oddities seemed harmless. Trying to buy the bones of the Elephant Man? Idiosyncratic maybe, but not sinister. Sleeping in an oxygen chamber? Unusual but, hey, superstardom has its prerogatives.

By the '90s, however, a more complicated transformation of Jackson's image was under way. In the last few months of his life, he could still sell hundreds of thousands of tickets for the long series of London concerts that he hoped would mark the start of a big, lucrative comeback. But the very fact that a comeback was in order was a sign of how much the once flourishing career had been undercut by the peculiarities of the man. When he was still in his 20s, Jackson's attachment to childhood pursuits – the amusement-park rides and Disney movies and ice cream carts – could still be borderline charming, the delayed preoccupations of a child star denied a real childhood. When the guy on the merry-go-round was 50, it started to look pathological. The wigs, the skin bleaches, the face masks and parasols, the plastic surgery more thorough than what you get in the witness-protection program, the suspicious dealings with young boys – in the final decade or so of his life, Jackson accomplished his last remarkable feat: he turned himself into such a spectacle, he almost made people forget the real phenomenon he was.

Maybe it began long ago. In *Moon Walk*, the memoir he published in 1988, Jackson told stories of physical abuse by his father Joe, the man who whipped his boys on to stardom as the Jackson 5. As Jackson said in a later interview, "He practiced us up with a belt in his hand." Before long, Jackson had two well-established and irreconcilable personas. There was the eternal boy so sensitive that his voice in any love song could end up on the verge of sobs. And there was the raging adult with his yelps and war whoops and his dance moves full of spring-loaded aggression. Like Mike Tyson, he had a child's high-pitched voice and the pent-up furies of a man. The original version of the video for his song "Black or White" included a long pantomime of rage in which, for four minutes, he smashed up a car, grabbed his crotch and carried out one of his angular, hip-jabbing dances in silence. He quickly thought better of it and had the segment cut – maybe because it said too much.

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M 2 <small>(4)</small>	Texte und Materialien
<p>115 Even if he had succeeded in making it back to the top for a while, however, it would have always been difficult to imagine Jackson, the eternal child, in old age. It was hard not to picture him as ever more eccentric and secluded, like Howard Hughes, or Gloria Swanson in <i>Sunset Boulevard</i>. The Michael Jackson we prefer to keep in our memories is the man-child at the height of his phenomenal powers, the one with the saw-toothed yelps and the jackhammer moves, the one who flung thunderbolts from</p> <p>120 the stage. That's the man whom the future, which has a way of putting uncomfortable questions to the side, will take to its heart.</p> <p><i>(With reporting by Laura Fitzpatrick, Barbara Kiviat and Julie Rawe)</i></p> <p><i>(aus: Time Magazine, June 27, 2009)</i></p> <hr/> <p>Annotations:</p> <p>1 faint: feeling weak and as if you are about to become unconscious because you are very ill, tired or hungry (adv.: faintly); 2 creepy: making you feel nervous and slightly frightened; 3 oddity: a strange quality in someone or something; 4 idiosyncratic: an unusual habit or way of behaving; sinister: making you feel that something evil, dangerous, or illegal is happening or will happen; 5 prerogative: a right that someone has, especially because of their importance or social position; 9 to undercut: to make something weaker or less effective; peculiarities: strange habits; 13 pathological: pathological feelings or behaviour happen regularly, and are strong, unreasonable, and impossible to control; parasol: a type of umbrella used to provide shade from the sun; 20 irreconcilable: irreconcilable positions are so strongly opposed to each other that it is not possible for them to reach an agreement; 28 jaunty: showing that you are confident and happy; to dart: to move suddenly and quickly in a particular direction; 46 a kindred spirit: someone who thinks and feels the way you do; 52 lethal: likely to be powerful or dangerous; 79 felony: a serious crime such as murder; indictment: an official written statement charging someone with a criminal offence; 84 to ply somebody with: to keep giving someone large quantities of drink or food; 89 ordeal: a terrible or painful experience that continues for a period of time; 96 to renege: not to do something you have promised or agreed to do; 100 forensic: relating to the scientific methods used for finding out about a crime; 103 afloat: having enough money to operate or stay out of debt; to leverage: to make money available to someone in order to invest or to buy something such as a company; 107 to default: to fail to pay money that you owe at the right time; 117 Howard Hughes: Howard Robard Hughes, Jr. (December 24, 1905 – April 5, 1976) was an American aviator, engineer, industrialist, film producer and director, philanthropist, and one of the wealthiest people in the world. He gained fame in the late 1920s as a maverick film producer, making big budget and often controversial films like <i>Hell's Angels</i>, <i>Scarface</i>, and <i>The Outlaw</i>; Gloria Swanson: Gloria Swanson (March 27, 1899 – April 4, 1983) was an American actress. She was most prominent during the silent film era as both an actress and a fashion icon, especially under the direction of Cecil B. DeMille. She was also one of the first stars to challenge the Hays Code by producing the banned <i>Sadie Thompson</i> in 1928. In 1929 Swanson successfully transitioned to talkies with <i>The Trespasser</i>. However, personal problems and changing tastes saw her popularity wane during the 1930s. Today she is best known for her role as Norma Desmond in the film <i>Sunset Boulevard</i> (1950); 119 yelp: a short sharp high cry which a person or an animal makes because they are excited, in pain, or surprised; thunderbolt: flash of lightning</p>	

Michael Jackson – The Blessing and the Curse of Being Famous	5.40
Texte und Materialien	M 2₍₅₎

Assignments:

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8. Refer to Jackson's marriages and to his children briefly.
9. Describe Lenny Kravitz' impression of the children.
10. Why were people at a certain point "starting to wonder if the thrill was gone" (l. 67)?
11. Which incident caused a lot of trouble for Michael Jackson in 2005?
12. In how far was Jackson disappointed by people after the trial?
13. What is it about Michael Jackson that we will keep in our memories in the eyes of the author?
14. What is the author's attitude towards Michael Jackson's personality in your eyes? Refer to relevant passages in the text to explain your view.

How Michael Jackson Became a Pop God

By Joshua Alston



He might have died a sudden death, but Jackson leaves us with a music legacy for the ages.

Besides the “Thriller” movie, and the solo gloved hand, the other indelible image of Jackson from my childhood was a parodic one. The video for Neil Young’s anti-corporate-sponsorship anthem, “This Note’s For You,” mimics Jackson’s real-life accident with a punched-out stage light that, in turn,

- 5 engulfed his head and body in flames. Sign a big contract with Pepsi, Young seemed to warn, and you get burned by the karmic payback system of authentic music. Looking back, the symbolism of those flames was prophetic. Jackson was a man consumed by the incendiary mega-ness of his stardom. So it’s not because I can’t hear the talent in Jackson’s voice that his music doesn’t connect for me. It’s the fact that, by the time I was in high school, everybody knew that stardom doomed him to a tragic adulthood.
- 10 Seeing video of the frantic crowds screaming irrationally for Jackson doesn’t make me nostalgic for the ‘80s. It just looks a little sick.

So my life was not changed by the King of Pop as much as it was by the musical regime that dethroned him. When Nirvana’s Nevermind displaced Dangerous on the Billboard 200 Album chart, my middle-school soul thrilled to the new order. I celebrated the rise of grunge and dove into the back catalog of

15 its antecedents, from garage rock to punk. When I wanted a thundering beat, there was hip-hop. When I wanted double-entendre, there was Prince. And when I wanted a groove, there was plenty of jazz to enjoy, much of which was wilder and freakier than anything on the radio. Who needed Michael?

- By the time I got to college, though, my taste started to evolve. I began to tire of grimy sonics. I wanted something cleaner. Not perversely slick to the touch, but with at least a little polish. In making my first
- 20 concerted effort to absorb the American catalog of soul music, I inevitably wound up listening to the Jackson 5 song “I Want You Back.” There’s little left to say about that wondrous chord progression, the shocking authority of that preteen voice, but it did what pop music should: it shook me. Jackson’s early solo albums have the same power, though the songs that were huge enough to inspire one of the generally witless Al Yankovic parodies are still hard for me to enjoy completely free from the context of their
- 25 cultural bigness.

Other generations have different reactions. My parents will probably never forgive Jackson for buying up the publishing rights to the Lennon-McCartney catalog (and then pimping it out for commercials).

- The high-school generation before me, of course, was the one that drove his chart success. And now again, my younger brother’s generation, which wasn’t even around for any part of the authentic Michael
- 30 1.0 experience, merely sees him as the godfather of current tween auteurs like Britney Spears, Justin

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Timberlake, and Miley Cyrus. In between, there are people like me – those who are only too happy to celebrate his talent, but are put off by his decades of enabling the tabloid culture that both elevated and obliterated him. Some redemption may come from remix artists like Girl Talk, who are helping to give us a new sonic context for appreciating Jackson.

- 35 For us, the most poetic summation of Michael’s life is probably Harmony Korine’s experimental film *Mister Lonely*, in which a Michael Jackson impersonator is invited to help colonize an island with other individuals who make a living from impersonating global icons. Our Michael falls in love with a Marilyn, also played by a damaged soul looking for a little glamour. The poetry of the film comes from the fact that not only do the characters inhabiting the roles of Marilyn and Michael find a few fleeting moments of communion, but so too, in a sense, do those restless, self-destructive icons. Viewing the film,
- 40 one imagines that these megastars might finally escape inner torment and achieve a modicum of peace. If I ever want to try and understand Michael’s spirit, I’ll take that over TMZ.

(aus: *Newsweek*, June, 2009)

Annotations:

2 **indelible**: impossible to remove or forget; 5 **to engulf**: to completely surround or cover something; 7 **incendiary**: something that intentionally makes people angry; 9 **to doom**: to make someone certain to fail, die, or be destroyed; 14 **grunge**: a style of fashion and music popular with young people in the 1990s, involving loud electric music and dirty clothes, hair etc; 15 **antecedent**: an event, organization, or thing that is similar to the one you have mentioned but existed earlier; 18 **to evolve**: to develop and change gradually over a long period of time; 22 **preteen**: relating to or made for children who are 11 or 12 years old; 33 **to obliterate**: to remove a thought, feeling, or memory from someone’s mind; **redemption**: the state of being freed from the power of evil, believed by Christians to be made possible by Jesus Christ; 42 **TMZ**: a website featuring celebrity and entertainment news

Assignments:

1. The author of the text states that Jackson’s “music doesn’t connect for” him (l. 8). Which reasons does he give to explain his attitude?
2. In how far has the author’s taste changed over the years and what does that show concerning Jackson’s music?