

Working with podcasts for exam revision – Listen up!

Facts

In February 2004, journalist Ben Hammersley, writing in *The Guardian*, suggested the term “podcasting” for online radio and the boom he could see happening in that sector. The rise of iPods, cheap software and web blogs were all part of this development and since then, podcasting has become increasingly popular. Nearly every major media organisation has its own podcast section, and the genre has revolutionised what essentially is a modern and more comfortable way of listening to the radio.

One of the most striking characteristics of the rise of podcasts is the loyalty of podcast listeners. Once people have discovered a podcast that appeals to them, they subscribe to it and share or download the programme for later listening. Whereas radio in the 19th century was once a vital and dominant medium, a voice giving news and live reports to ordinary people, podcasts have breathed new life into the sector at a time when it was struggling to keep up with TV and Internet. One of the great advantages of podcasting that has become apparent over the past 20 years is the low cost of producing a programme. Additionally, listeners can now tailor their entertainment to match their needs very accurately. Instead of hoping that an upcoming radio programme will interest them, they can subscribe to a podcast they like and listen to it whenever it suits them.

This also applies to podcasting as a means of learning a language. Secondary school students wishing to improve their English and their listening skills can choose from thousands of podcasts. Many head straight to podcasts that are connected to their hobbies. Others use them as a source of learning for a particular subject. Podcasting also allows students access to quality programmes that would otherwise be hard to find. A variety of cultures, accents and styles of speaking, not to mention live events and archived programmes, are also available to the podcast listener. This is even more useful when students prepare for major exams. There are few ways of preparing better for an oral examination than for a student to spend the days beforehand listening to material on the major themes in question.

students to research the genre science fiction and prepare for other aspects of literary analysis which may be useful in both written and oral exams.

Topic 6 centres on the work of two well-known journalists who worked at very different times, the 1920s and the period from 2010–2018: Djuna Barnes and Lyra McKee, one American, the other Northern Irish. Both had to endure a lot as independent, lesbian writers in an unwelcoming environment. The worksheets designed here allow for comparison and contrast of their achievements and fates.

The unit is rounded off with an **exam** containing a listening comprehension task on the very current theme of epidemics and a comment writing question on digital devices and their influence on young people.

Prior to working with the materials provided, the teacher can hand out a useful **tips sheet** to the students that helps them to prepare for dealing with listening comprehension tasks.

Further sources for podcasts suitable for studies and classroom use:

- ▶ <https://www.npr.org/podcasts-and-shows/>
This website is highly recommended as the transcripts to the shows are often available. This is useful if the teacher wishes to go through a recording either before or after listening to it.
- ▶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/podcasts>
This website provides high quality productions covering a wide range of topics.
- ▶ <https://www.rte.ie/radio/podcasts/series/32758-today-with-claire-byrne/>
This is one of many programmes available at RTE.ie covering mainly Irish issues.
- ▶ <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/podcasts>
Here you can find a superb Canadian selection of material.
- ▶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/oromo/features/6-minute-english>
Strictly speaking, this programme is not an actual podcast but nevertheless beloved by many learners of English.
- ▶ <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/776/i-work-better-on-deadline>
This website provides stories about life in the USA with transcripts and downloads.

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Dealing with listening comprehension tasks – Useful tips

Listening comprehension tasks often cause students a certain amount of concern, but this does not have to be the case. Here are some guidelines and tips for dealing with such tasks.

1. It is important that all students are able to listen carefully to the recording, so **silence in the classroom** is essential. Do not rustle papers, drop pens or make other noises that can be distracting both to yourself and your classmates.
2. The most important aspect of a listening comprehension test is the task sheet. Before the audio is played, use the time to **read the tasks** as many times as you can. Focus on the information you are looking for when the audio starts.
3. When reading the tasks, watch out for **numbers, dates, names** and any other distinctive pieces of information that are asked for.
4. If you are not sure which answer is required to any particular task after the first listening, mark the likely answer in pencil and decide on it the **second time** round.
5. Remember that in multiple choice or true/false tasks, you should mark one of the options even if you do not know the answer. **Leave no task unanswered!**
6. You can prepare yourself for difficult **accents** by listening to podcasts from countries where accents may be hard to understand. These include India and Scotland to name two countries that come to mind. Of course, everything depends on the speaker you are listening to. Nicola Sturgeon for instance is a very clear speaker. The important thing is that you have an idea how people from various English-speaking countries usually speak so that if you get a difficult accent or dialect, you can quickly tune into it.
7. In general, prepare well by listening to podcasts on **subjects** you like. You will find the time flies if you like the theme under discussion.

Topic 2: *London's first Black policeman*

Worksheet – Norwell Roberts: *London's first Black policeman*

M2

Podcast: *London's first Black policeman*<https://raabe.click/podcast-Norwell-Roberts> [last access: 12/12/2022]

The worksheet is designed for minutes 00:00–05:40.



Pre-listening activity

1. In class, discuss what examples of racism you know of at international, national or local levels. Pool ideas and gather them in a mind map or other presentation format. Attach levels of seriousness to each one and suggest how it may be combatted.



Listening comprehension

Read the questions/tasks carefully. Then listen to the audio twice from 00:00 to 05:40 and work on the tasks.



2. Name Norwell Roberts' reasons for joining the police force.



- _____
- _____
- _____

3. Fill in the missing information.

- a) _____ in Kent was the first English town Norwell Roberts lived in.
- b) He moved to England at the age of _____.
- c) He was born in _____.
- d) His mother worked as a _____.
- e) The _____ in his new school dropped him on his head.

6. *List three racist attitudes of the people interviewed.*
- Black people are not clean.
 - They should live together.
 - They are hard to work with.
7. *Tick the correct answer(s). According to the programme, the Windrush Generation came ...*
- ✓ to rebuild Britain.
8. *Fill in the missing words or phrases.*
- After thirteen weeks, he passed out of training and was assigned to start his two-year probationary service at Bow Street police station in Central London near Covent Garden.
9. *Give at least three examples of abuse that Norwell suffered at the hands of his fellow officers.*
- They scratched his car and slashed his tyres.
 - They were unfriendly to him; he was verbally abused.
 - His uniform was damaged.
 - He was bullied and shunned by his colleagues.
10. *How was Norwell Roberts, the Black policeman, used by ...*
- a) *the media?*
- The media treated him as a person to photograph for the news.
- b) *Metropolitan Police Chiefs?*
- Metropolitan Police Chiefs held him up as an example of progressive policing.
11. *What happened to policemen who spoke to Norwell?*
- They were under pressure not to talk to Norwell and would suffer if they did.

Post-listening activity

12. *Research the Black Lives Matter movement and present a talk to your classmates on it. Your talk should also refer to former movements for equality for Black people. Consider some of the following in this context: slavery, American Civil Rights movement, Nelson Mandela and apartheid.*

Individual presentations.

The following websites may be of interest in answering this task:

<https://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/>

<https://library.law.howard.edu/civilrightshistory/BLM>

[last accesses: 12/12/2022]

Topic 4: Equal rights

Worksheet – An interview with Peter Tatchell

M4

Podcast: *Interview Special: Peter Tatchell*

<https://raabe.click/podcast-Peter-Tatchell> [last access: 12/12/2022]

The worksheet is designed for minutes 00:00–07:00.



Background information: Peter Tatchell (1952–) was born in Australia but has lived in London for many years and is famous for his work as a campaigner for human rights with particular emphasis on his work for LGBT groups. He is head of the Peter Tatchell Foundation and is a leading member of the support group Outrage.

Listening comprehension – Part I

1. Listen to the audio from 00:00–02:00. Take notes of the presenter's summary of Peter Tatchell's campaigning.



Listening comprehension – Part II

Read the questions/tasks carefully. Then listen to the audio twice from 02:00 to 07:00 and work on the tasks.

2. When did Peter Tatchell first campaign against an injustice? Tick the correct year.
 - 1957
 - 1967
 - 1975
 - 1985
3. Why could the escaped prisoner not have shot the warden? Tick the correct answer.
 - He was a disabled person.
 - He was unable to use a gun.
 - It was not physically possible.
 - He was mentally imbalanced.

