

Craze of the Month: The Voice

What is The Voice?

The Voice is a British television talent show where hopeful singers battle to receive prize money and a record deal. The show has five stages, during which more and more acts are eliminated.

The seventh series started in January 2018. It is presented by Emma Willis and there are four celebrity judges: will.i.am, Sir Tom Jones, Jennifer Hudson and Olly Murs.

How can The Voice be used to teach literacy?

Utilising popular trends is a great way to engage children with literacy and learning. Our research shows that children who enjoy writing are seven times more likely to write above the level expected for their age compared with children who do not enjoy writing. Similarly, children and young people who write outside school daily are five times more likely to be writing above the expected level for their age compared with young people who never write outside school¹.

Our **Craze of the Month** taps into current trends to improve outcomes in literacy and make literacy engaging and relevant. The activities featured here relate to the English Programmes of Study from the National Curriculum in England².

Using The Voice in the classroom

The Voice offers a number of engaging and interactive opportunities to promote learning and literacy. The activities have been designed so that they could easily be adapted for another TV show and could be used in different subject and classroom settings. Students can apply and develop a range of literacy skills covering reading, writing, speaking and listening. For instance, they can be used on a cross-curricular basis; as starter and plenary tasks; for homework and extensions or in form time sessions. The activities are designed to be adaptable for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. You can print off the activities page and put it on your staff room notice board to share these ideas with colleagues.

¹ Clark, C. (2016). [Children's and Young People's Writing in 2015](#). Findings from the National Literacy Trust's annual survey. London: National Literacy Trust

² DfE (2013). The National Curriculum in England. Key Stage 1 and 2 framework document.

Grab 'n' Go

Activity One: Would you rather?

Have a 'Would you rather...?' question on the board ready for when students enter the classroom. Examples:

- "Would you rather have will.i.am or Sir Tom Jones as your coach and why?"
- "Would you be a presenter, singer, judge or work backstage on *The Voice* and why?"
- "Would you rather sing a rock song or a love ballad if you were auditioning and why?"

Ask students to write down an answer on a post-it or to share ideas in pairs, using full sentences.

Optional extras: Provide students with structured sentence starters to develop their articulacy, such as; "I would rather... because..." or "I would rather... although an alternative viewpoint is..."

Activity Two: Making Maths lessons literary

For basic numeracy, longer comprehension questions could be based on *The Voice*. Examples:

- **Question 1:** The four *Voice* judges, will.i.am, Jennifer Hudson, Olly Murs and Sir Tom Jones listen to twenty candidates in a row. Seven candidates get at least one judge to turn his or her chair, two get all four judges to turn and eleven don't get any turns. What is the probability that:
 - a) the first candidate does not get a chair turn and
 - b) the first candidate gets at least one chair to turn.
- **Question 2:** Eighteen candidates are scheduled to give an audition in one day. Two don't show up and four are successful. What percentage of the original number don't make it through to the next round?

Optional extras: Ask students to prepare their own probability or *Voice* related question to test on other members of the class.

Activity three: Can you tell?

The Voice is about making judgements without seeing; challenge students to:

- **Taste:** Choose some foods that look horrible but taste nice. Ask students to try them. How does it feel not seeing what you're eating? When you see after eating does your view alter?
- **Touch:** Make a box filled with objects. Students reach into the box but can't see the objects. They must guess the objects on feel and describe the texture and experience.
- **Listen:** Ask students to close their eyes and then read aloud a few lines from a story. They must then decide what kind of story it will be (e.g. Is it a funny or sad story? A fantasy or a mystery?) How do they know what kind of story it will be? Encourage students to listen to your tone of voice to help them.
- **Describe:** The class should describe something without saying what it is. For instance, for the word "tree" they must describe its appearance, feel, purpose etc without saying 'tree' itself. Make this harder by limiting words they can use or using abstract words including emotions, such as "anger" or "excitement", or abstract nouns such as "smell" or "words".

Optional extras: Follow up with a written task, in class or at home, asking students to describe their experience. Students can peer mark their work and give feedback.

Recommended reading inspired by The Voice

Students who are interested in The Voice might like to try some of these books, which can be used to promote reading for enjoyment. These books feature a range of characters, some experience fame, others who are involved with music and many overcome hardships to achieve success:

Young Adult/Adult Fiction:

- *Geek Girl* by Holly Smale
- *About A Boy* by Nick Hornby
- *The Earth is Singing* by Vanessa Curtis
- *This Song Will Save Your Life* by Leila Sales

Fiction for Younger Readers:

- *The Singing Mermaid* by Julia Donaldson and Lydia Monks
- *There's a Monster in Your Book* by Tom Fletcher (lead singer from Mcfly)
- *The Talent Show* by Jo Hodgkinson
- *The Bear and the Piano* by David Litchfield

Non-Fiction:

- *Decoded* by Jay-Z
- *Uncommon People: The Rise and Fall of the Rock Stars* by David Hepworth
- *Musical Storyland* by Bob Dylan and illustrated by Jamilla Naji.
- *Cheryl: My Story* by Cheryl Cole

Further resources

The BBC have produced an interactive lesson that focuses on using The Voice to introduce students to coding that is put together with a series of literacy-building activities.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/livelessons>. The resources are free to download and you just need to tick a box to agree to the terms and conditions.

For parents who are interested in using their children's favourite TV shows, hobbies and games as learning opportunities, have a look at the National Literacy Trust's Words for Life resources, which provide further ideas to help encourage children to read and write for pleasure:

<http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/7-11>.

**By Alice Penfold,
Project Manager, Words for Work**

The Voice glossary

The Voice uses lots of vocabulary that many people outside the music industry might find confusing! Below are a few suggestions of common music terms. See if you can write a definition for each term and an example of it being used in a sentence. Can you find the French and/or Italian translation?

Words to define: *a cappella, accompaniment, diaphragm, duet, falsetto, harmony, pitch, soprano, staccato, tone...* Can you think of any more?

[illegible]