

# Reviewing Time with the Song 'Rock Around the Clock'

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The focus of this lesson plan centers around tasks for intermediate level adult students of English as a foreign language or English as a second language (EFL/ESL). However, the activities can be adapted for use with EFL/ESL classes of all levels. Time required for intermediate students is approximately 1-2 hours, depending on class size, and teacher choice, and variation of exercises.

## Aims

- Primarily, to use the song "Rock Around the Clock" to practice, and revise notions of time, and numbers while sharpening listening skills.
- Secondly, to familiarize students with colloquial styles of language use, and the practice of informal speech in conversation while revising language structures known to students.

The song is centered around a theme that intermediate students would be comfortable with but not necessarily fluent in i.e. time - thus the song acts as a valuable learning aid, and extends to become the basis for exercises that provide positive reinforcement.

## Review

Prior to using this song in class review notions of time or use the song as a follow-up to a lesson on telling the time or arranging to meet people in certain places at certain times.

The song can also prove useful for initially teaching beginner level EFL/ESL students the concept of time telling, and performing a certain action at a specified time.

## Classroom Presentation

Initially play the song all the way through so that students can familiarize themselves with the tune, and flow of music. If you do not have an audio copy of the song the rhythm can be passed on to students by having them clap along with the teacher as the teacher, and students sing in unison. If you are unfamiliar with the tune, a sample is available online from: [www.hotshotdigital.com/OldRock/BillHaley.html](http://www.hotshotdigital.com/OldRock/BillHaley.html). (You will need the 'real audio player' to hear this sample, download it from [www.realaudio.com](http://www.realaudio.com)). Students should be handed a copy of the lyrics at or prior to this time.

Second, go around the class asking each student to read one line of the song. At this stage students should be asked to identify unfamiliar words or phrases, this vocabulary can be underlined by students if they are exceptionally shy. The teacher should write the unfamiliar vocabulary on the board, and ask other students if they can explain the meaning of these terms in English. This type of activity allows students to focus upon how words are used, and in what particular context, and to determine meaning from such context. The activity should be arranged as pair work so that students are 'forced' to co-operate, and complete the task with the onus on them rather than the teacher. The teacher should explain the meaning of any unfamiliar vocabulary where students could not initially determine the meaning from context. To check understanding the teacher should ask students to compose new sentences using the highlighted unfamiliar vocabulary before moving on. Students should then write their sentences on the board so that other students can become familiar with the new terms as well as other possible uses for the vocabulary. The teacher can then correct any errors within the sentences illustrating at the same time what makes the errors, errors.

By this point in the lesson the theme of the song should easily be identified by students, and elicited by the teacher to provide purpose for the following range of exercises.

## Listening Emphasis and Practice

A picture of an analog clock should be drawn on the board. The teacher can start out by filling in a certain o'clock, and then ask a student what will happen in the song at that time. The student chosen by the teacher (regardless if the response was correct or incorrect) then has a chance to fill-in an o'clock, and continue the activity.

### Sample Dialogue

- Teacher: "What time is it? (pointing at the clock, and time drawn on the board)."
- Student A: "It is one o'clock".
- Teacher: "That's right, and what will the people have, when the clock strikes one?"
- Student A: "They will have some fun".

Student extension:

- Student A: "What time is it?"
- Student B: "It is three o'clock".
- Student A: "Right, what will the people do at three o'clock?"
- Student B: "(If the band slows down) They will yell for more".

This activity can be extended to see students ask each other "What time is it?", and according to the following sentence structures provide an appropriate response, and an activity being performed. The teacher can draw a series of analog clocks on the board each with a different time represented, or hand out photo-copies of clocks showing different times. This guided type of activity is particularly useful as it allows the teacher to focus upon student specific problems associated with telling the time. e.g. one class may have a problem with the concept of o'clock (e.g. repeatedly saying 10:30 o'clock), another class may have a problem with the concept of 'minutes to'. The correct method should be written on the board, so that students do not practice their errors, along with an example dialogue such as the one given below. Examples of activities can be written on the board as well. e.g. I go to sleep, I read a book, I meet my friends, I wake up, I study English, and so on. The teacher should circulate amongst students to ensure they are not practicing their errors.

### Sample Dialogue

- A: "What time is it?"
- B: "It is 11:30 pm".
- A: "What do you do at that time?"
- B: "I go to sleep".

## Extended Activities

At this point in the lesson a small listening test can be conducted by the teacher, with students asked to answer a few short questions on the song in writing. This reinforces the listening skill emphasis of the lesson.

### Sample Listening Quiz

The following sentences can be dictated by the teacher while students write in full the correct completion for the sentence. Alternatively students can listen to the song a second time, and circle the answers to the questions on a sheet provided by the teacher.

Sentence: When the clock strikes one ...  
Completion: a) ... we'll have some bun.  
b) ... we'll have some sun.  
c) ... we'll have some fun.

Sentence: If the band slows down ...  
Completion: a) ... we'll yell for more.  
b) ... we'll yell for sure.

c) ... we'll yell for floor.

Sentence: When the chimes ring five, six, and seven ...

Completion: a) ... we'll be light in seventh heaven.

b) ... we'll be tight in seventh heaven.

c) ... we'll be right in seventh heaven.

Sentence: When it's eight, nine, ten, eleven too ...

Completion: a) ... I'll be goin' wrong, and so will you.

b) ... I'll be goin' song, and so will you.

c) ... I'll be goin' strong, and so will you.

Sentence: When the clock strikes twelve ...

Completion: a) ... we'll drool off then.

b) ... we'll cool off then.

c) ... we'll spool off then.

This type of activity/test will give students practice in distinguishing pronunciation as well as assessing if students can disseminate between similar sounding words.

Papers should be collected after all students have written their names at the top of the page. Redistribute the papers to the class so that each student receives a paper which was not their own. Ask students to write their names at the bottom of the page. Answers to the test can then be elicited from students, and written on the board by the teacher. By having students immediately write their names at the bottom of the page ensures that no student will write an offensive comment on another piece of students work. (This depends on the maturity level of your students, it is at the teacher's discretion whether or not peer correction should be anonymous, or even conducted at all).

This type of error checking on a short in class test allows students to develop a realistic idea of the language level of their peers, and stimulates tolerance in students towards errors made by other students, and themselves throughout the learning process. This also allows better students to become more patient while waiting for others to complete a spoken sentence or formulate a question to ask the teacher. It also prompts students to help each other in the learning process, and can assist in delimiting the fear of students making errors in front of classmates.

## Vernacular Language Use Exercise

A further activity that can be gained from this song is illustration of the natural tendency of most native English speakers to drop the 'g' from the ends of words, run words together, and use contracted forms of words in informal conversations. Examples of these speech forms present in the song are: goin' (going), rockin' (rocking), hon' (honey), 'till (until), and 'round (around).

Students can then choose some of these contracted word forms, and others that the teacher may have elicited from the students, and placed on the board, and ask questions to each other. The question or the answer should contain one of these contracted word forms such as the dropping of a 'g' when using the present continuous tense.

This activity can then develop to teach: gonna (going to), gotta (got to), havva (have to), wanna (want to), lotta (lot of), ya (you), and so on. These contracted word forms should be placed on the board as well as the example sentence:

"Ya gonna wanna havva lotta fun before ya gotta go home".

This sentence incorporates all the examples above, and illustrates their usage in a compact, and easily understandable sentence for intermediate adult EFL/ESL learners.

This activity allows students to develop an active understanding of colloquial speech, and will allow their listening skills to develop for effective 'real-life' communication, and language understanding.

Questions used in this exercise should reflect previous language taught in the students EFL/ESL course. This exercise then not only acts as representing a new style of spoken speech that students should come to understand for effective conversational listening skills, but solidifies previous target language learnt throughout the students present study of English. Example questions for this exercise can be written up on the board by the teacher or chosen at random by students from their copy of the course material. The first method ensures controlled review, and can see the teacher focus upon student problem areas, the second method allows students to practice

sentences that they feel comfortable with, and results in solidifying their use of familiar expressions.

This stage of the lesson can be completed on the same day as presenting the song or used as a lead-in to a 'controlled' conversational lesson the next time the class meets.

## Reference

- "Bill Haley". Online. [www.hotshotdigital.com/OldRock/BillHaley.html](http://www.hotshotdigital.com/OldRock/BillHaley.html) (The link was checked on March 30, 1999.)

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