

**Pearson Edexcel International GCSE**

# **English Language B**

**Paper 1**

Thursday 28 January 2016 – Afternoon

**Extracts Booklet**

Paper Reference

**4EB0/01**

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## Text One

### 'Does Music Help You Study?'

adapted from an article by Sheela Doraiswamy



If you're a student, I am almost willing to bet that you have music playing right now. Maybe it's Drake, maybe it's Mumford and Sons, or maybe it's The Beatles. Whatever your preference, I'm sure you love listening to your favourite artists every chance you get – maybe even while you study. Is playing your favourite song an easy way to make that homework bearable, or are you damaging your performance?

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Previous research has found numerous benefits to listening to music before performing a task – it improves attention, memory, and even mental maths ability. It has also been found to reduce depression and anxiety.

However, the more realistic scenario is that students will study or do homework while playing background music. A recent study at the University of Wales looked at how background music affects students' ability to complete a Serial Recall Test (remembering items in a specific order).

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Students were given a Serial Recall Test in five different situations:

1. A quiet environment.
2. With 'steady state' speech. This means a single word was repeated for the duration of the test. 15
3. With 'changing state' speech. This means a variety of words were played during the test.
4. With 'liked' music, meaning each student chose one song. They brought in their own music (such as Lady Gaga, Rihanna, or Arcade Fire); the only requirement was that it had to have vocals. 20
5. With 'disliked' music, which in this case was a heavy metal song, (all students in the study disliked heavy metal).

The researchers expected that the 'changing state' speech would have the most damaging effect on the students' performance. Think about it like this – 'changing state' is like having to do your homework while someone else is talking. 'Steady state' is more like repetitive background noise (a noisy heater, for example), which is easier to tune out.

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Surprisingly, the results actually found no significant difference between test scores with 'liked' music, 'disliked' music, and 'changing state' speech. In other words, whether students enjoyed the music or not, having it on while they worked was just as distracting as hearing someone talk. Scores were significantly higher for tests taken in a quiet environment or with 'steady state' speech. The researchers hypothesise that they would see similar results if they were to repeat this procedure using a reading comprehension test rather than a Serial Recall Test. 30

But before you sadly put your iPod away, feeling that you've lost your only way of making homework bearable, consider this: another study that tested music's effect on attention found similar results, but the researchers also noticed something intriguing. The students who took a test with music did have a lower average score than those who didn't have music, but the researchers noted that there was a lot of variation in the scores. This could imply that the effect of music can vary a lot from person to person. 35 40

Furthermore, we should also note that these studies only looked at music with vocals, and not music that was purely instrumental. Research from the University of Dayton found that students performed better if Mozart was playing in the background. So maybe having instrumental music can help performance, since it doesn't have any distracting vocals. 45

So should you listen to music while you study or do homework? Unfortunately, the answer I have to give you is 'it depends!'. It seems like, in general, music with vocals is distracting while instrumental music might actually help your performance.

We will have to wait for more research, but for now I'd say, if you want some music to lighten up that homework, go for some instrumental jazz, classical, or, if you're a movie-addict like me, try a movie score (the soundtrack of *The Social Network* got me through exam revision). 50

## Text Two

### 'The Benefits of Listening to Music in the Classroom'

adapted from an article by Elona Hartjes



I think I can safely say that we know from personal experience that music affects our bodies and our minds. Listening to music relaxes us, energises us, comforts us, keeps us company, helps us celebrate and even helps mark special occasions. I think I can also say that we know the music we like to listen to at any given time varies from person to person and situation to situation.

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Why is there so much interest in this topic? I guess now that personal music players have come down in price, making them so much more affordable, more students bring them to school as they want to listen to their favourite music while they work on their lessons. However, teachers and parents are wondering if it's OK to let students listen to music while doing their school work.

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I've had students tell me that listening to music helps them work. I've had teachers tell me that when they let their students listen to music in the classroom, the students work better. That feedback supports my experience in the classroom. I also had feedback from people who say that they can't listen to music and do their work at the same time. The music distracts them. Now, I wouldn't have known this because I like listening to music when I work.

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I thought that I would see what the research said. I did find some exciting research that supports my belief that music facilitates learning, especially the learning of students who have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). These students show symptoms of having difficulty staying focused on the task at hand, of being easily distracted, of fidgeting excessively, or having to get up frequently and move about. I see students behaving like this all the time in my classroom.

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One study concludes that music that has a repetitive beat produces a reduction in muscle tension, thus reducing hyperactivity. There was significant reduction in loss of attention among students after being exposed to music. Short-term memory was also beneficially affected by having listened to music. Although the researchers conclude that listening to music promotes academic success, they suggest that further research is needed.

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Nina Jackson in her article 'Music and the Mind' suggests that although more research needs to be done, we can be cautiously optimistic about the potential benefits of

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listening to music to motivate students, and improve concentration and study skills. She supports the use of music in the classroom. In fact, she calls music the new teaching tool for the 21st century. I guess her point is that anything that's as powerful as music should be used to help students. Energising music can make your brain exercise longer and harder. It increases speed and workload capacity. Music with a strong steady beat can increase endurance, boost effort level, increase motivation and distract from discomfort and agitation. Boost effort, increase motivation and distract from discomfort and agitation? That's what I want for my students. That's what will help them learn.

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Although she suggests specific pieces of music to listen to for specific results, I usually just let students choose their own music. The only thing I suggest is that they listen to music that they're very familiar with. Supposedly, listening to very familiar music isn't distracting because you know it so well.

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Here's what I propose. Until more research is done and either proves or disproves that music facilitates learning, let's allow students to decide if music helps them learn or not. They know. They can tell you. Just ask. If they think it does, then let's encourage them to listen to music while working. If they don't think it helps, they don't have to listen to music. We're always looking for ways to motivate students, to engage students, if music is the way, let's go for it.

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Sources taken/adapted from:

Text One:

<http://www.mindthesciencegap.org/2012/10/08/does-music-help-you-study/>

[http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/Music\\_g370-Woman\\_Listening\\_To\\_Music\\_p32761.html](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/Music_g370-Woman_Listening_To_Music_p32761.html)

Text Two:

Research about the benefits of listening to music in the classroom leads to optimism

<http://www.teachersatrisk.com/tag/listening-to-music-in-the-classroom/>

<http://lh5.ggpht.com/-bEu9Ns-ZRfl/URsKjHxu9LI/AAAAAAAAAE6s/0gg-P4yJEf0/s9000/headphones.jpg>

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