

Selections: The life of a fish

by Paula Aitcheson

Activities author: Adrian Tennant

Level: Flyers

Recommended age: Grade 5, primary (10+)

Time needed: Indicated for each activity

Type of English: American

Activity 1 (5-10 minutes)

1. Either hand out the worksheet that contains Activity 1, or write the title of the poem on the board.
2. Put the children in pairs and ask them to discuss what they think the poem is about.
3. Elicit a few responses from different children and write these on the board.
4. Then ask the children to write down five words they expect to hear or read in the poem, either on a piece of blank paper or on the worksheet.
5. Ask the children to compare the words in their pairs and explain why they chose each word.
6. Ask a few children to tell you their words and write these on the board.

Note: Prediction is a good way of getting the children to think about the content of a text before they read or listen to it. It also means they are thinking about the language that might be used. When we read or listen in real life, this is something we often do.

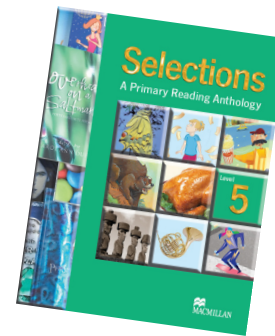
Activity 2 (5-10 minutes)

1. Next, either play the recording of the poem or hand out the transcript and ask the children to check their answers to Activity 1.
2. After listening / reading put the children in pairs and have them discuss the accuracy of their predictions with their partner.
3. Ask a few children to report back to the whole class.

Note: If you gave the children the transcript of the poem to read, take it back from them now before they start Activity 3.

Activity 3 (15 minutes)

1. Hand out the worksheet that contains Activity 3.
2. Ask the children to read the lines of the poem and answer the three questions.
3. Put the children in pairs or small groups and



encourage them to discuss their answers to the questions.

4. Monitor and help where necessary.
5. Ask a few children to report back on their discussion to the rest of the class.
6. Either play the recording of the first verse or hand out the text of the poem so that the children can check their answers.

Key:

1. The missing words are as follows:

The life of a fish

Must be good, I feel.

As long as you avoid

The fishing reel.

2. The words are the key words – the ones that are important in terms of carrying the meaning. (These are the ones that are stressed when spoken).

3. They are unstressed, and in some cases the words are shortened. So, for example, in the first line the words *of* and *a* run together, the 'f' in *of* sounds more like a 'v' and the pronunciation of *a* is a schwa.

Activity 4 (15-20 minutes)

1. Ask the children to look at the lines and think about which words would be stressed and underline them.
2. Put the children in pairs and encourage them to compare and discuss their choices.
3. Monitor and help where necessary (but don't tell them the answers).
4. Play the recording and stop after verse two to give the children a bit of extra time and stop again after verse three.
5. Ask the children to check their answers in pairs.
6. Play the recording of verses two and three again, if necessary.
7. Check the answers as a class.

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Key:

I would swim all day,

In the ocean blue.

I would lie in the sun,

With nothing to do.

I wouldn't have homework,

To do for my school.

I wouldn't need to worry

About all of those rules.

Activity 5 (10-15 minutes)

1. Hand out the worksheet that contains Activity 5.
2. Ask the children to listen to or read the poem again and have them complete the chart.
3. Either play the recording again or give the children time to read the poem.
4. Divide the children into pairs or small groups and ask them to compare their answers together.
5. Monitor and help where necessary.
6. Play the recording again, if necessary, or ask the children to read the poem again.
7. Check the answers as a class.
8. Ask the children if they think the writer would really like to be a fish and encourage them to explain their answer. [The answer is *no*, because there are too many things the writer would miss.]

Key:

Positive things: swim all day; lie in the sun; no homework; no rules to worry about

Negative things: the fishing reel; no ice cream; no chocolate; no cake; no playing in the park; no sitting by the lake; an uncomfortable bed / cave to sleep in

Activity 6 (20-30 minutes)

1. Ask the children to spend five minutes answering exercises 1 and 2.
2. Monitor and help where necessary (you might want to let them use a dictionary here).
3. Ask a few of the children to tell you their answer to exercise 1 and then their six words in exercises 2.
4. Before the children start writing their poems, point out that many of the things the writer of the poem included were things they liked or disliked, and nothing really to do with the life of a fish. Tell the children to think about this when they write their poems.

5. Hand out the worksheet that contains exercise 3 of Activity 6.
6. Ask the children to write their poems and stress that three or four verses is enough.
7. Monitor and help where necessary.
8. Finally, get the children to put their poems up on the walls around the classroom and encourage them to read each others' poems.

Note: This activity could also be completed in pairs, which would give confidence to weaker students.

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The life of a fish

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The life of a fish
Must be good, I feel.
As long as you avoid
The fishing reel.

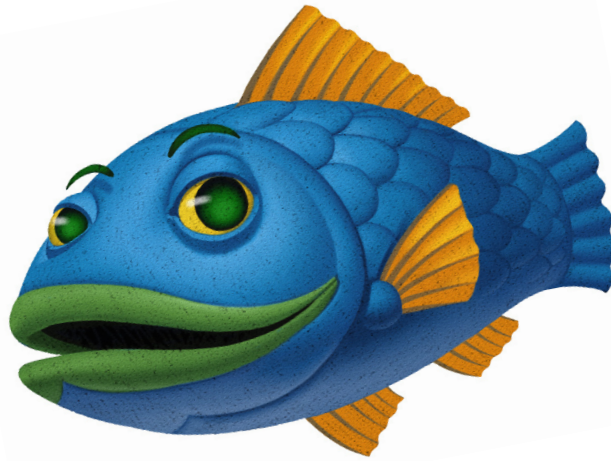
I would swim all day,
In the ocean blue.
I would lie in the sun,
With nothing to do.

I wouldn't have homework,
To do for my school.
I wouldn't need to worry
About all of those rules.

There would be no ice cream,
No chocolate, no cake.
No playing in the park,
No sitting by the lake.

I think I would miss
My comfortable bed.
I wouldn't like to sleep
In a cave instead.

A life in the ocean
Is not the life for me.
The life of a fish?
I'd rather be me!



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Before listening / reading

Activity 1

Look at the title of the poem.

The life of a fish

1. What do you think the poem is about?
2. Write down five words you expect to hear or read in the poem.











Listen or read

Activity 3

Look at these lines from the first verse of the poem.

_____ life _____ fish
 Must _____ good, _____ feel.
 As long as _____ avoid
 _____ fishing reel.

1. What do you think the missing words are?
2. What is special about the words above?
3. What happens to some of the missing words when they are spoken?

Activity 4

Now listen to the next two verses of the poem and underline the key words (i.e. the ones that are stressed).


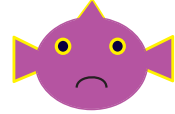
I would swim all day,
 In the ocean blue.
 I would lie in the sun,
 With nothing to do.

I wouldn't have homework,
 To do for my school.
 I wouldn't need to worry
 About all of the rules.

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Activity 5

Listen to (or read) the whole poem again and complete the chart below.

The life of a fish	
Positive things 	Negative things 


Do you think the writer would really like to be a fish? Why (not)?


After you listen or read


Activity 6


1. If you could be any animal in the world, what would you be and why?


2. Write down six words connected to your animal, i.e. in the poem about the fish we have words like *fishing reel* and *ocean*.


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