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### Bob Marley

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# Bob Marley

By Danayit Desalegn

Level: Advanced ESL (CEFR B2/C1)

Integrated Reading and Writing and Listening & Speaking class

Duration: 1 week and a half for a 2-hour class period

At the end of this interactive unit, students will be able to:

1. Develop their academic vocabulary.
2. Create a timeline of events from a biography.
3. Use prepositions of time and place.
4. Analyze lyrical messages.
5. Interpret lyrical messages.
6. Write a biography of a famous artist.

*Before you read:*

1. Do you know Bob Marley? If so, list two things you know about him. If not, list two things you would like to know about him.
2. What genre of music do you listen to?
3. Do you listen to reggae music? If so, list two reggae artists you listen to. If not, what would you like to know about reggae music?

*Listen to the following song by Bob Marley:*

Bob Marley: "Redemption Song"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOFu6b3w6c0>

Discuss in groups: 1. How did the song make you feel?

2. What do you think is the underlying message of the song?

*Vocabulary to pay attention to:* As you read the “Life of Bob Marley”, identify the following 15 vocabulary words in context.

Transcend	Descendant	Uprising	Diaspora	Liberation
Atrocities	Babylonian	Dread Locks	Assassination	Intimidation
Turmoil	Glorified	Monumental	Myth	Rastafarian

### ***Life of Bob Marley***

#### *Early life*

1. Bob Marley was born on February 6, 1945 in St. Ann Parish, Jamaica. His mother’s name is Cedella Booker. She was a **descendant** of Coromantee slaves. Coromantee slaves had staged the strongest **uprising** for freedom in Jamaica’s plantation era in the 1800s. His father’s name is Norval Marley. He was a colonial supervisor for the British Army. Cedella was only 17 years old when she began a relationship with Norval; he was 60 years old at the time. Their relationship did not last long. Soon after Bob was born; Norval left Cedella, forcing her to raise Bob on her own.

2. During Bob’s era, having a mixed-race child was frowned upon. It was not illegal in the sense of the law, but it was still unwelcomed in Jamaica. Cedella feared her son would be met with hate from locals in the town, but that did not turn out to be the case. For Bob, being mixed-race was somewhat of a superpower. It gave him a valuable perspective on life as he was able to be the ‘middle-man’ in the **turmoil** of race wars that were taking place during his time. His message was to unify all people regardless of race. He was dedicated to the cause of **liberation** of black people everywhere, and especially the liberation of the black **diaspora** who were stripped of their identity and culture as a result of their ancestors being forced into slavery centuries earlier by American slave traders. Bob did not have hatred against any race; instead he hated the system that gave some people the privilege to colonize and enslave black people whom they believed to be inferior. He had hatred for the people in power who

committed **atrocities** against powerless groups of people; this list included politicians and other authorities like the police.

### *Teenage years*

3. In the late 1950s, Bob and his mother moved to Trench Town in the city of Kingston, Jamaica. The town was considered a 'ghetto' and one of the world's most dangerous towns. They moved there in the hopes of improving their lives because job opportunities in the countryside were rare. Jamaican society held very few opportunities for black people at the time. In Trench Town, Bob grew up in an environment where violent crime was **glorified** by many young people as one of the few ways of being financially secure; music on the other hand was viewed as a means of escape from the harsh realities of life. Although, Bob was known by almost every member in Kingston's gangs (organized group of criminals) and he, reportedly, got along with most of them; he never had any interest in being part of that lifestyle because his passion was simply music. Trench town is where Bob found qualities of perseverance, courage, and passion. He wanted to be a voice that would speak of the realities of life in the town. In 1963 in Trench Town, Bob formed the Jamaican reggae band, *Bob Marley & the Wailers*. Later after his death, the band changed the name to *The Wailers*. The *Wailers* eased tensions in Trench Town with lyrical messages of peace and love. At the same time, they warned the ruling class of 'eternal judgement,' claiming all politicians are part of the **Babylonian**, corrupt western world.

### *Rastafarian era*

4. In 1966, 3 years after the *Bob Marley and The Wailers* were formed, Bob got married to Rita Marley. Soon after they married, he visited his mother in the US who had left Kingston and moved to the state of Delaware for a better life. He didn't stay there long because he believed the pace of life in America was too fast and he also thought the job opportunities available for black men were too few. While he was in America, something **monumental** happened in Jamaica; Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie visited Jamaica. Haile Selassie was the Emperor of Ethiopia from 1930 to 1974. According to a **myth**, which is believed by **Rastafarians**

-- members of the religious movement of Jamaican origin -- black people will eventually return to their Africa; Marcus Garvey, a Black Nationalist leader, told his people in 1927 to look to Africa for the crowning of a black king, a sign that a messiah was at hand. In 1930, when Haile Selassie became Emperor of Ethiopia, believers in Jamaica regarded him as the messiah Marcus Garvey was referring to. When Haile Selassie visited Jamaica in April of 1966, about 100,000 Rastafarians from all over Jamaica arrived at Palisadoes Airport in Kingston, having heard that the man whom they considered to be God was coming to visit them. The Rastafarian movement and religion grew after Selassie's visit to Jamaica.

5. Bob Marley, who was a Rastafarian, himself, believed that Haile Selassie was the living God. In addition to the beliefs of Emperor Selassie being their God, Rastafarians reject the Euro-centric standards of beauty that led many blacks to straighten their hair. Rather, Rastafarians chose to let their hair form into '**dread locks**'. Dread locks are regarded as a symbol of having pride in one's heritage. Bob had dread locks and he considered them as an expression of pride in his heritage. In 1975, Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown by an Ethiopian communist Marxist government known as the 'Derg'. Soon after Selassie was overthrown, he was assassinated in his own home. His death was a dreadful period for Jamaicans everywhere. Bob was distraught by the news of the death of his messiah. He released and performed the song named *Jah Live*. In this song, Marley pays tribute to Emperor Selassie and declares him as the divine God who will never truly die.

#### *Last years of life*

6. On Dec 3, 1976, several men attempted to assassinate on Bob Marley in his home. He was shot in the chest while another gunman had aimed for his heart. He managed to survive the **assassination** attempt with a minor wound to his chest. On Dec 5, two days after the assassination attempt; he was scheduled to perform a "Smile Jamaica" concert in Kingston to ease the tensions in the town. He decided to go through with the plan of performing at the concert because he did not want to bow down to **intimidation** of the gunmen who had attempted to kill him just two days before. After the concert, he left Jamaica for a while. He was heartbroken that his fellow Jamaicans had attempted to end his life. He traveled to the US

and then later to England. Leading up to his last few years of life on earth, he wrote and recorded numerous songs and performed in many places around the world. In May 1977, while on tour, he injured his right toe which led to his toenail being torn off. A few months later, he saw a doctor who said the toe could turn cancerous and should be amputated. Bob refused because of his Rastafarian beliefs and the rejection of 'western' ways of life which included western medicine and treatments. On Sep 21, 1980, as he was jogging in Central park with a friend; his body froze up and he was unable to help himself. Later that day, he visited a doctor who told him that he had cancer that had already spread through his lungs, liver, and brain and was untreatable. After his diagnosis, he still wanted to keep touring. He performed a concert in Pittsburg that same month. It was the last concert he had ever performed. After his last tour, he underwent a controversial 'cancer therapy' prolonging his life for 8 more months. His wife, Rita, was by his side throughout his last months of life. On May 11, 1981, he died in Miami at 36 years old. On May 20<sup>th</sup>, his body was flown to Jamaica where a crowd of more than 13,000 people from all over Jamaica came out to mourn Bob Marley's passing at the Kingston National Arena.

7. Long after his death, Bob Marley has left a permanent mark on the world. His music and lyrical messages of peace and love **transcend** beyond his physical presence. His legacy continues long after his death. In addition, his children and grandchildren are keeping his legacy alive.

Activity 1: Vocabulary enhancement. With your group or a partner, identify the vocabulary from above and try to come up with a definition and its part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, adverb)

1. Transcend:

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2. Atrocities:

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3. Turmoil:

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4. Descendant:

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5. Babylonian:

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6. Glorified:

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7. Uprising:

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8. Dread Locks:

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9. Monumental:

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10. Diaspora:

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11. Assassination:

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12. Myth:

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13. Liberation:

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14. Intimidation:

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15. Rastafarian:

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What other vocabulary from the text would you like to know?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Activity 1A: Choose 5 words from the vocabulary list and create your own sentences using those words.

- 1.
- 2.



- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### Activity 1B: Vocabulary

Match the vocabulary with the correct definition (write the corresponding letter on the blank space)

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| 1. _____ Transcend     | a. the act of killing a prominent person                  |
| 2. _____ Diaspora      | b. go beyond the range or limits of something abstract    |
| 3. _____ Descendant    | c. the act of frightening someone                         |
| 4. _____ Atrocities    | d. a person that originated from a particular ancestor.   |
| 5. _____ Monumental    | e. extremely wicked or cruel acts                         |
| 6. _____ Intimidation  | f. the dispersion of people from their original homeland. |
| 7. _____ Assassination | g. great in importance, extent, or size.                  |

### Activity 2: *Reading*- comprehension questions

Answer the following questions in complete sentences. Then discuss your answers in groups.

1. In the *Rastafarian era* section of the reading, it says that “Bob had dread locks and he considered it as a sense of pride”. In your culture, is there something related to appearance or customs you consider as a sense of pride?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. In the *Rastafarian era* section of the reading, it says that “Bob did not stay long in the US because he believed that the pace of life in America was too fast”. Do you agree with the statement that the pace of life in America is too fast or not? Explain.

3. In the *last years of life* section of the reading, it says that “Bob’s legacy continues long after his death”. To your knowledge, can you think of a person that is not alive right now but whose legacy continues to this day?

#### Grammar review

- Prepositions of time and place

⇒ We use prepositions of time and place to describe a specific time or location.

⇒ We can use *at, in, or on* to describe both time and location depending on the context.

Examples: 1. Damian was born **in** 1998 **in** Kingston, Jamaica.

⇒ In example 1, we used **in** to express both *what year* Damian was born in and *where* he was born.

2. Damian was born **on** Oct 21, 1998.

⇒ In example 2, we used **on** to express exactly *what day* Damian was born on.

3. Damian was born on Oct 21, 1998 **at** Saint Mary’s hospital.

⇒ In example 3, we used **at** to express the exact location where Damian was born.

Activity 3: Grammar cloze test: using *in*, *at*, or *on*.

Fill the blank spaces with the correct preposition of time or place. The first space is completed as an example.

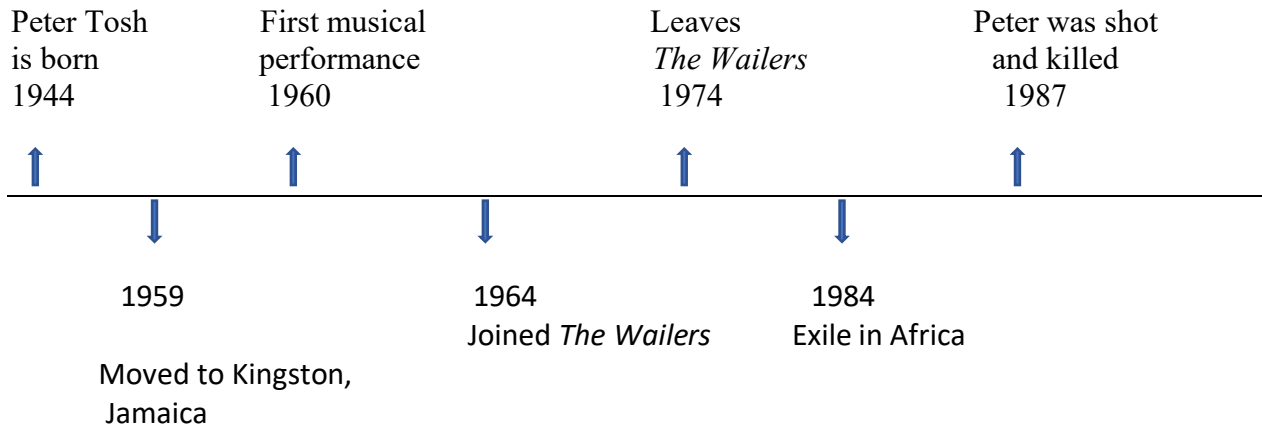
Bob Marley was born on February 6, 1945 \_\_\_\_\_ St. Ann Parish Jamaica. Coromantee slaves had staged the strongest uprising for freedom in Jamaica's plantation era \_\_\_\_\_ the 1800s. \_\_\_\_\_ the late 1950s, Bob and his mother moved to Trench Town. In 1963 \_\_\_\_\_ Trench Town, Bob formed the Jamaican reggae band. \_\_\_\_\_ 1966, Bob got married to Rita Anderson.

Marcus Garvey told his people \_\_\_\_\_ 1927 to look to Africa. \_\_\_\_\_ 1930, Haile Selassie became Emperor of Ethiopia. Haile Selassie visited Jamaica \_\_\_\_\_ April 1966 where about 100,000 Rastafari arrived \_\_\_\_\_ Palisadoes Airport \_\_\_\_\_ Kingston. \_\_\_\_\_ 1975, Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown.

\_\_\_\_\_ Dec 3, 1976, an assassination attempt was made on Bob. \_\_\_\_\_ Dec 5, he was scheduled to perform a *Smile Jamaica* concert \_\_\_\_\_ Kingston. \_\_\_\_\_ May 1977, he injured his right toe. \_\_\_\_\_ Sep 21, 1980, his body froze. \_\_\_\_\_ May 11, 1981, he died \_\_\_\_\_ Miami. 13,000 people came out to mourn him \_\_\_\_\_ May 20th \_\_\_\_\_ the Kingston National Arena.

#### Activity 4: Biography timeline

Example: Biography timeline of Peter Tosh (a former member of *The Wailers*)



Create a biography timeline of important events in Bob Marley's life using the above timeline as an example. Refer back to the reading to highlight important events before creating your timeline.

### Activity 5: Critical thinking

Write your own interpretation of the Bob Marley lyrics below:

1. Song: Trench Town rock  
“One good thing about music, when it hits, you feel no pain”.
  - Interpretation:
  
2. Song: Redemption Songs  
“Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery; none but ourselves can free our minds”.
  - Interpretation:
  
3. Song: Buffalo Soldier  
“There was a Buffalo Soldier in the heart of America, stolen from Africa, brought to America, fighting on arrival, fighting for survival”.
  - Interpretation:
  
4. Song: So much trouble in the world  
“You see men sailing on their ego trip, Blast off on their spaceship, Million miles from reality: no care for you, no care for me”.
  - Interpretation:

### Activity 6- Capstone project

- ⇒ A. Use the internet to search for the intended meaning of the songs listed in **Activity 5**. Your guiding question is, “What was Bob Marley trying to express in

the lyrics and the songs he wrote and performed?" Use the space below to record the information you found:

1.

2.

3.

4.

⇒ B. For each of the songs, did his intended meaning support your interpretation in **Activity 5**? If not, were you surprised by the actual meaning of the lyrics?

1.

2.

3.

4.

### Activity 7- Writing

Write a biography of a famous artist of your choosing

⇒ Before you start writing, refer to the reading on the *life of Bob Marley* and identify/highlight key details about his life including his date of birth and place, his early life, career, major accomplishments, and so on. These type of informations are needed for your writing assignment. The following rubric details the information you will need for your writing. Use a three-paragraph essay format for your writing.

1. Introduction paragraph

- Includes an interesting idea that grabs the reader’s attention
- Tells who the biography is about
- Tells what the person is known for
- Includes a minimum of five sentences

2. Main paragraph

- Includes date and place of birth
- Includes at least three details about the person’s early life
- Details are placed in a logical order that are easy to follow
- Person’s accomplishments/contributions are addressed
- Includes at least three relevant details about the person’s accomplishments/contributions
- Details are placed in a logical order that are easy to follow

3. Conclusion paragraph

- Addresses the person’s impact on other people or on history.
- A minimum of five sentences.

## REFERENCES

Bob Marley Official Site, Life & Legacy, History. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.bobmarley.com/history/>

Bob Marley. (2018, January 15). Retrieved from <https://www.biography.com/musician/bob-marley>