

2

## Taylor Swift – superstar



Source: Adobe Stock/naka

2 a

### Warm-up: talking about Taylor Swift

Speaking

Get into pairs and talk about Taylor Swift.

1. What have you heard about her?
2. Which of her songs do you know and like? Explain.
3. Would you buy expensive tickets for a show of hers? Why / why not?
4. What do you think makes her so popular?
5. Have you ever heard about the phenomena 'Swifties' and 'Swiftflation'?

2 b

### Learning about messages in Taylor Swift's songs

Language in use

Read the text about Taylor Swift asking the young generation to get engaged. Most prepositions have been removed. Complete the text by writing a suitable preposition for each gap (1–14) in the spaces provided. The first one (0) has been done for you.

In her early career, Taylor Swift gained millions of fans with love songs and romantic ballads. She did not speak of<sup>0</sup> her political ideas. In 2012, she made that clear. "I don't talk about politics because it might influence other people. And I don't think that I know enough yet \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup> life to be telling people who to vote \_\_\_\_\_<sup>2</sup>."

The first sign of a change happened \_\_\_\_\_<sup>3</sup> the fall of 2018 when rumours circulated that she was a big fan of MAGA and President Donald Trump. Shortly \_\_\_\_\_<sup>4</sup> that, she put an end \_\_\_\_\_<sup>5</sup> that rumour and entered the political battle \_\_\_\_\_<sup>6</sup> an Instagram post criticising Senator Marsha Blackburn \_\_\_\_\_<sup>7</sup> her home state of Tennessee \_\_\_\_\_<sup>8</sup> having voted against the Violence Against Women Act as well as LGBTQ-friendly bills. [...] She went \_\_\_\_\_<sup>9</sup> to say, "I need to be \_\_\_\_\_<sup>10</sup> the right side of history."

In 2020, \_\_\_\_\_<sup>11</sup> the age of 30, her hit song *Only The Young* showed a new desire to speak \_\_\_\_\_<sup>12</sup> on the issues most important to her. In this song, she urges young people to get involved and calls out to them \_\_\_\_\_<sup>13</sup> passion about her concern \_\_\_\_\_<sup>14</sup> the escalating gun violence in America. At a time when many suggest that young people are politically apathetic, *Only The Young* is a powerful message that our democracy badly needs.

MAGA: "Make America great again" – slogan of Trump in 2016


Senator: in the US each state has a senate (part of parliament)

bill: law

to escalate: to increase

apathetic: not interested, not active

Source: <https://thefulcrum.us/Pop-Culture/Music-Poetry--Arts/only-the-young-taylor-swift>

**2 c** **Improving your English with Taylor Swift's song *Only The Young* – part I**  
**Listening** Watch the official video of her song  [Only The Young](#) on a streaming platform and then highlight the political statements in the lyrics below.



<p>It keeps me awake                  The look on your face                  The moment you heard the news                  You're screaming inside                  5 And frozen in time                  You did all that you could do                  The game was rigged, the ref got tricked                  The wrong ones think they're right                  You were outnumbered, this time</p> <p>10 Chorus:                  But only the young                  Only the young                  Only the young                  Only the young can run                  15 Can run, so run                  And run, and run</p> <p>So every day now                  You brace for the sound                  You've only heard on TV                  20 You go to class, scared                  Wondering where the best hiding spot would be                  And the big bad man and his big bad clan                  Their hands are stained with red                  Oh, how quickly, they forget</p> <p>25 They aren't gonna help us                  Too busy helping themselves                  They aren't gonna change this                  We gotta do it ourselves</p>	<p>They think that it's over                  But it's just begun</p> <p>30</p> <p>Chorus:                  Only one thing can save us                  Only the young (only the young)                  Only the young (only the young)                  Only the young (only the young)                  Only the young (only the young)                  Only the young</p> <p>35</p> <p>Post chorus:                  Only the young (only the young)                  Only the young (only the young)                  Only the young (only the young)                  Only the young</p> <p>40</p> <p>Only the young (only the young)                  (Don't say you're too tired to fight                  It's just a matter of time                  Up there's the finish line)                  Only the young</p> <p>45</p> <p>Can run                  Don't say you're too tired to fight                  It's just a matter of time (can run)                  Up there's the finish line</p> <p>50</p> <p>So run, and run, and run                  Don't say you're too tired to fight                  It's just a matter of time (so run)                  Up there's the finish line</p> <p>55</p> <p>And run, and run, and run                  Only the young                  Only the young                  Only the young</p>
--	--

Source: <https://genius.com/Taylor-swift-only-the-young-lyrics>

**2 d** **Improving your English with Taylor Swift's song *Only The Young* – part II**  
**Speaking** After highlighting the political statements in the lyrics, discuss the following:

1. Who does she address and why?
2. What is the message to her listeners? Can you identify with it? Why / why not?
3. Should singers get involved in politics and address issues like the climate crisis, gun violence or poverty?
4. Why should young people speak out?

2 e

**Reading**

**Exploring the reasons for Taylor Swift's popularity**

Read the text about Taylor Swift. Complete the sentences (1–6) using a maximum of four words. Write your answers in the spaces provided. The first one (0) has been done for you.

**Why is Taylor Swift so popular among young people?**

Taylor Swift doesn't need a big introduction for the music lovers. After the release of her album *Taylor Swift* in 2006, this American singer quickly rose to fame in the US and since then, her popularity has been growing rapidly.

Her fanbase mainly consists of teenagers and young adults. She is definitely not the best singer out there, which makes people wonder why she is so massively popular among young people. One way to attract the young audience is to write songs about things they can most relate to.

Swift is a prolific songwriter famous for writing songs based on her emotions and experiences. She can take universal emotions such as teenage heartbreak and turn them into a catchy song that every teenager worldwide can relate to.

Initially, Swift started in country music, but shifted to pop music to reach out to bigger audiences. Pop music made her lyrics more memorable and universal to reach teenagers beyond borders.

Swift is able to express the complexity of her feelings with simple lyrics. Apart from the teenage heartbreaks and past relationships,

her creative talent of writing lyrics also touches upon concepts like friendships, life lessons, confidence, and so on.

Nowadays, pop music stars are criticised for not interacting enough with their audience. But Swift is an exception, listening to the audience about producing her songs, which she confessed in an interview on *Late Night with Seth Meyers*. As she makes her fans feel close to her, she has a unique relationship with her fans that other artists often don't have.

Swift is known for her wide range of activism. The young population in present times is associated with many causes, like gender and racial equality, gun control, pro-choice, and so on. Swift has been a critic of these causes and often uses her platform to talk about them, which makes her one of the leading figures of young activists.

Taylor Swift is one of the best-selling artists of all time. There are a lot of famous musicians around, but what makes her unique among them is her ability to reach out and connect to her ever-growing young audience with her music and her flamboyant personality.

to confess:  
(ein)gestehen,  
einräumen

range:  
Bandbreite  
prolific:  
ideenreich  
pro-choice:  
Recht auf  
Abtreibung

initially:  
ursprünglich  
memorable:  
einprägsam

beyond borders:  
über die  
Grenzen (der  
USA) hinaus  
flamboyant:  
extravagant,  
auffällig

30

35

40

45

50

Source: <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/lifestyle/entertainment/why-is-taylor-swift-so-much-popular-among-youth-1646302369>, shortened and slightly simplified

**Test format  
Note form**

0	Taylor Swift's career started ...	in 2006
1	She is popular among ...	
2	She became famous although she ...	
3	Some basic themes in her lyrics are ... (Name <u>two</u> .)	
4	Taylor Swift is able to connect ...	
5	When writing her lyrics, she draws on ...	
6	In recent years, Taylor Swift has spoken out on ... (Name <u>two</u> .)	

## Snap Shot ✨ [O]

### 2 f The many faces of Taylor Swift

**Speaking** Get into pairs and look at the pictures.

1. Describe how Taylor Swift's outfits and shows have changed.
2. Briefly discuss which your favourite Taylor Swift style is and why.
3. Speculate on the reasons why pop stars like Taylor Swift have changed their appearance over time.

Source: Wikimedia Commons/minds-eye (Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license)



Source: Wikimedia Commons/Eva Rinaldi (Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license)



Source: Wikimedia Commons/Jana Zills (Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license)

Source: Wikimedia Commons/UltimateWarrior13 (Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license)



Source: Wikimedia Commons/Ronald Woan (Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license)

### 2 g Searching information about a person's life

**Reading / Watching** Either stream the video or use the Taylor Swift Museum site to collect some basic information about Taylor Swift's life and career.



**Taylor Swift Museum: [Life and Career](#)**

**Video:** [Taylor Swift – Life Story](#) (Short Biographies)

You may take notes on the following:

- » childhood / family
- » musical influences
- » education
- » beginning of her career
- » tours
- » boyfriends / relationships
- » awards



Source: Adobe Stock/thingamajigs

### 2 h Writing out an imaginary interview

**Writing** Use your info from above and work out five to six questions about Taylor Swift's life. What have you always wanted to ask Taylor Swift? Give imaginary answers to your questions, pretending you are Taylor Swift. Write down the whole "interview" in your notebook.

## Snap Shot

2 i

### The Swiftie friendship bracelets

**Add-on**

Do the additional  [interactive tasks](#) on the Swiftie friendship bracelets.




Source: Adobe  
Stock/Anastasi17

2 j

### A new concert film

**Watching /  
Speaking**

1. Watch the official trailer of the new concert film  [THE ERAS TOUR](#) on a streaming platform. The movie is a 165-minute compilation of Taylor Swift's shows at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, CA.



2. Together with a partner, discuss your views on how the movie might convey the impression of having a front row seat in the show. Is it a full replacement to those who couldn't get or couldn't afford concert tickets? Explain.

3. Taylor Swift and her management decided to work directly with the cinemas / movie theaters and avoid the usual routes of film distribution. Discuss in class: What might be the motivation behind this decision? What are the pros and cons of circumventing professional film distributors?

to circumvent: to  
avoid sth