

The Christmas Number One

Task 1 UK groups and singers

Look at this list of UK artists.

- Who do you know?
- What type of music do / did they make?
 - Robbie Williams
 - Elton John
 - East 17
 - The Darkness
 - Girls Aloud
 - The Pet Shop Boys
 - John Lennon Queen
 - Cliff Richard
 - Spice Girls
 - David Bowie
 - George Michael Blue
- Which type of music do you like best?

Task 2 Your record buying habits and tastes

Answer the questions in this questionnaire then ask your partner the questions.

	You	Partner
How often do you buy CD singles?		
How often do you listen to or follow the music charts?		
Do you buy records if they are number one or high in the charts?		
Do you buy more music at Christmas or other times of celebration?		
Do you like listening to music at Christmas time? If so, what type? (religious, party music, romantic ballads, etc.)		

Task 3 Read and find out

Look at the text below and answer these questions.

- Which artist is the current favourite in the UK race for a Christmas number one single?
- Are Christmas number one single's usually religious?
- How old are the people who buy singles?
- Why are the UK charts different at Christmas time?

The Christmas Number One

Every year, for a few short weeks around Christmas time, the UK charts go mad.

It's the silly season. Groups and singers who normally make cool music release a single that they hope will be number one on Christmas Day. The Christmas number one single is written about in newspapers, talked about on the radio and people can even bet money in betting shops to see which single will win the race. It's like a horse race but this one is unpredictable. It is called the silly season because a totally unknown singer or even a single based on a cartoon character can steal the number one place from famous and popular artists!

Why?

Because the people who buy CD singles at Christmas are different. During the year the average age range of singles buyers is 16-24 but at Christmas children, mums and dads and older people buy singles as presents or to play at school or office parties. The Christmas single must be the type of record that everyone in the family will like, from 6 to 60. This could be a religious song but it might just be a romantic ballad about love, peace or snow. Some famous Christmas singles are anthem songs which lots of people like to sing along to, others are just great to dance to and have no lyrics that refer to Christmas.

The race is now on.

Recently The Darkness released a rock n' roll anthem called 'Christmas Time. Don't let the bells end' which everyone in the Media said was a sure winner! It has huge office party appeal. Then....surprise, surprise, a group of unknown singers formed from a TV competition called Pop Idol and they released a cover version of the classic John Lennon single 'Happy Xmas. War is over'. Now everyone thinks that the Pop Idol single will be the winner. But there is still a chance for a TV comedian with a silly song and a religious pop song called Santa's list from the UK's Cliff Richard, a singer who regularly releases singles at Christmas. Then there's a love song from Blue.

What would you buy?

Task 4 Christmas music

Listen to these samples of Christmas chart music and decide which one is:

- Religious
- A romantic ballad
- Good for parties
- An anthem
- Silly or humorous.

Ask and answer these questions in pairs.

- Which single do you think should be number one?
- Is there a single you like at the moment? Which one?
- What's your favourite single of all time? Why?

Task 5 The video tie-in for higher levels

Watch these three video clips and decide:

- which video is the most effective and why
- what the video has got to do with the song
- if it tells a story.

The success of the Christmas number one can depend on the video produced to accompany the single. Robbie Williams and Nicole Kidman's romantic video, full of snow and love, made their song go to number one in 2001.

- What do you think are the key ingredients of a Christmas single video? (remember that the record buying public are different and Christmas)

Plan a video for the Pop Idol single Merry Xmas (war is over) or for another single you would like to be number one. Describe the situation, the location, what people should wear, what happens in the video.

Task 6 Pop quiz

Test everyone's knowledge of your country's charts. Prepare questions like these.

Name the song: Who sang the song

Give the month or year: When did have a hit single with

Describe the song: Which single by talks about

Know the singer: What is the singer 's real name?

Know the nationality: Where are from?

Say the age: How old is ?

Know the real name: What is 's surname?

Describe the type of music: What type of music does make?

Know the band: Who sings with? Name 2 members of the group.

Know the songs: Sing 2 lines from the songby
Sing the chorus of

Task 7 Discussion: Manufactured pop and the charts.

Many young people in the UK complain that the pop charts do not reflect their tastes.

- What about the charts in your country? Do they reflect the tastes of most young people? How? Why not?

Not many singles in another language ever make it to the UK chart. The UK record buying public prefer records in English.

- What is the balance between English records and your own language records in your country?
- Do you agree with this?
- Was this the situation when your parents were young?
- Is this changing?
- Do you prefer listening to music in your own language?
- Are the lyrics important?

The number of bands manufactured by record companies is increasing. Some of these artists cannot play instruments and do not write their own songs. There are also TV shows where young people compete to become a famous pop star.

- Is there much manufactured pop in your country?
- Do you like this type of music?
- Do you think TV shows offering the prize of "becoming famous" are a good thing?
- Would you go on a show like that?