

Charlie Chaplin: Music Man Teacher's Notes **A2**

In this A2 article, your students will learn about Charlie Chaplin's life and films, and about the importance of music in both his life and his art. Although he could not read music, he was able to compose and play the violin by ear, and even direct an orchestra. Most of his films were silent, and he dreaded having to make his characters speak and thus lose the universality of mime and music, which is why *The Little Tramp* never said a word. For those of you who teach in or near Paris, the exhibition at *la Philharmonie* is well worth a visit.

Vocabulary

- dates
- expressing an opinion, agreeing and disagreeing
- *famous, popular, international, all over the world / all around the world*
- *recognise, recognisable, distinctive*
- *popular, a success, a triumph*

Grammar

- indirect speech: *I don't know / I want to know when/who/why/how/if...*
- past and present simple

Culture

- one of the most famous British creatives of the 20th century: Charlie Chaplin

Pronunciation

- stress: *Charlie Chaplin, London, California, music, dictator, popular...*
- /ə/ in 'He was born in London', 'He was popular all over the world'
- pronunciation of <o> and <or> *London /lʌndən/, popular /'pɒpjʊlə/, world /wɜːld/*
- pronunciation of transparent words: *dialogue, triumph, violin*

Speaking, reading and writing

- We suggest starting by brainstorming Charlie Chaplin as "The Little Tramp" to be able to start from what your students actually know or think they know. In **Activity A**, you may get very little information ("It's

Charlie Chaplin", or even "It's Charlot") or more depending on whether anyone in the class has seen at least one film. You should get the usual biography questions in the "What do you want to know about him?" section of the grid ("When and where was he born?" "What was his nationality?" "When did he die?" "How old was he when he died?" "Did he have any brothers or sisters?" "Was he married?" "Did he have any children?...") Some of these questions are not answered in the article, which is a common situation in real life and therefore needs special training (learning to delay the search for information and keep open questions in mind). Hence **Activities B** and **D**. But before getting there, make sure the pairwork in **Activity A.2.** is carried out properly, orally at first before a report is written.

- **Activity C** is meant to find out the main events in Chaplin's life as an actor and director. Correct the two grids before your students move on to the writing and reading aloud tasks, which will require individual help from you or the more able students in the class. Pay particular attention to their pronunciation, as stressing and linking are usually difficult for French learners of English.

- In **Activity D**, have your students read FOR the information they need rather than try

to understand everything in a long text.

Activity E is designed both to help students understand more precise information and to learn some new vocabulary. Finally, you will decide to do the optional activity watching a scene from a Chaplin film if you feel that the class is ready for more, or just for fun.

Solutions

A. The following are only examples of what might be produced.

1. He's Charlie Chaplin. He was a funny actor. He didn't speak in his films. He was *American.

I want to know when he was born / when he died/ if he was married/ if he had children...

2. X thinks he was American, but I don't agree. I think he was British. I think he was born in England. I know he had some children. X agrees with me. We think he had a lot of children.

B. He was born in London in 1889. He made his first films in California.

C.1. 1889 Eighteen eighty-nine

1898 Eighteen ninety-eight

1913 Nineteen thirteen

1914 Nineteen fourteen

1927 Nineteen twenty-seven

1936 Nineteen thirty-six

1940 Nineteen forty

2.1889 Charlie Chaplin was born in London.

1898 He was a professional dancer and actor.

1913 He signed a contract with a film company in California.

1914 He invented "The Little Tramp".

1927 The first talking films were made.

1936 CC made his last silent film.

1940 He made his first talking film, *The*

Dictator.

3. Here is an example of what students might write, possibly with some help to rephrase.

Charlie Chaplin, who was born in London in 1889, became a professional dancer and actor at a very early age. In 1913, he signed a contract with a film company in California and a year later he invented The Little Tramp. When the first talking films came out / were made in 1927, he decided to go on producing silent films and he made his last one in 1936. It was called Modern Times and it was a satire of modern industry. Finally, in 1940, he directed his first talking film, the Great Dictator. The main character was a satire of Hitler.

D. Here are some examples.

1. I don't know when he died. I don't know if he was married...

2. Now I know that Charlie Chaplin died in 1977 in Switzerland. He was 88 when he died. One of his wives was called Oona. He had a lot of children (more than six). He made 30 films.

E.1. Charlie Chaplin was a celebrity = He was famous all over the world / all around the world.

Everybody liked him = He was very popular.

Charlie Chaplin loved music = Music played an important part in his life.

Everybody knew the Little Tramp = The Little Tramp was instantly recognisable all around the world.

Modern Times had a lot of success = It was a triumph.

2. He was funny.

He was a good musician and a good dancer, as well as a clown.

His films were silent, so everybody in the world could understand them even if they

didn't speak English.

He made satires which concerned everybody at the time.

OPTIONAL

1. He's in a lion's cage in a circus. It's very dangerous. The lion is asleep at the beginning.

2. He wants to go out of the cage but he needs some help. He wants someone to help him get out of the lion's cage. That's why he waves his handkerchief. He wants someone to see it and come to rescue him.

3. He tries to go out but he locks the door by mistake / he locks himself in. He tries to go into the next cage but there's a tiger in it so he goes back into the lion's cage because the tiger is awake and wants to eat him. Then a dog barks and the Little Tramp thinks the lion will wake up, so he's frightened. A girl comes but she faints when she sees the danger. He tries to wake her up with some water and the lion wakes up, comes up to him but isn't interested and goes back to sleep. Finally the girl opens the door and Charlie runs away quickly. He's so happy that he climbs up a pole and does acrobatics. The girl laughs, she thinks he's a real clown.

4. The music shows the danger of the situation, it also shows Charlie's feelings, it takes the place of words sometimes. It becomes louder when the lion opens its mouth for instance.