

Activity 1

Name:



What is funny about this cartoon?

Can't get you out of my head

Adapted from:

Rhithu ChatterjeePRI's *The World* 7 March 2012. Found at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine>

<https://www.magzter.com/ZA/Panorama-Media-Corp/Very-InterestingAnd>: Can't get you out of my head by Hayley Birch.

ACTIVITY 1:

Read the following passage carefully, and then answer the questions which follow.

The dead of night was upon Barry Murray. The ultra- marathoner had been running for 18 hours- give or take. Right now he was experiencing one of his "earworms" – tunes that would play over and over in the jukebox of his mind , giving him a lift and driving him through the difficult miles.

While the mental and physical effort required to run 200 kms is unimaginable to most, we are all familiar with a song that gets stuck in your head – whether it is helpful or just plain annoying. More than 90% of us, according to estimates, suffer from an earworm at least once a week.

Music has a tendency to get stuck in our heads. You know the experience - a tune intrudes on your thoughts and plays, and replays, in a never-ending loop. It happened recently to me. So, as a science reporter, I thought I'd try to find out why. Several weeks ago, I was at home on a Sunday morning when, for no apparent

reason, three words popped into my head - "Funky Cold Medina". That's the name of a song performed by rapper Tone Loc. I hadn't heard it until the night before when a friend sang it at a karaoke bar.

I kept hearing the lyrics - "Cold coolin' at a bar, and I'm looking for some action. But like Mick Jagger said, I can't get no satisfaction." When the song reappeared in my head, I could hear my friend singing it again and again... and again. I was stuck with it for nearly a day and a half, before it finally went away.

But it left behind a nagging question. Why do we get songs stuck in our heads in the first place? "I personally couldn't believe how little there was in terms of research on this phenomenon," says Dr Vicky Williamson, a music psychologist who started studying it a few years ago. She now has more than 2,500 earworm experiences on record. She identified a set of triggers that had apparently caused these tunes to pop into people's heads and stay there.

"The first one is music exposure, which means the person has heard the music recently," she says. Another unsurprising finding was that if you hear a song repeatedly, you're more likely to get stuck with it. But sometimes songs pop into our heads even when we haven't heard them for a long time. In this case, something in our current environment may trigger the memory. Williamson experienced this recently herself, when she was in her office and noticed an old shoebox. "It's from a shop called Faith," she says. "And just by reading the word 'Faith', my memory went down a line of dominoes and eventually reached the song 'Faith' by George Michael. And then he was in my head for the rest of the afternoon." She has now removed that shoe box from her office. Another trigger she identified was stress. One woman in Williamson's online survey said a song - Nathan Jones, by Bananarama - first got stuck in her head when she was 16 and taking a big exam. "She now gets that song at every single moment of stress in her life," says Williamson. "Wedding, childbirth, everything."

Other experts suggest music may get lodged in our heads because of the way humans developed. "For a very long period of time, we needed to remember information," says Daniel Levitin of McGill University in Montreal, an expert in the neuroscience of music. "Information like where the well is, or which foods are poisonous and which aren't, and how to care for wounds so they won't become infected." Modern humans have been around for some 200,000 years, but written language may have been invented only around 5,000 years ago, Levitin says. So through much of human history people memorised important information through songs.

Read the passage again before answering these questions.

Activity 1: Comprehension Questions

1. Give a suitable synonym or meaning for each of the underlined words as they have been used in the passage.

WORD	SYNONYM or MEANING
tendency	
intrudes	
karaoke	
lyrics	
phenomenon	
trigger	
exposure	
environment	
survey	
neuroscience	

(10 MARKS).

2. In your own words describe an earworm. (2).

3. Is earworm literal or figurative language? Explain your answer. (2).

4. Find 3 examples of figurative language in paragraph 1. (3).

5. List 5 possible “triggers” for earworms. (5).

6. The passage above quotes two experts on the subject of earworms. Who are they and why does the writer quote them? (3).

TOTAL: 25 MARKS.