



# Luka – Suzanne Vega – Notes



- **Activity types:** discussion, vocabulary, writing.
- **Time/Level:** approx. 30 mins + optional further work / intermediate (B1.1-B1.2).
- **Key words:** child abuse / domestic violence
- **Note 1:** This worksheet gives students the opportunity to discuss and reflect on the topic of child abuse and domestic violence. As a teacher, be sensitive to students who may find this a difficult or unsuitable subject to talk about. The exercises include a gap-fill, reading for gist and making predictions, vocabulary work and inference, expressing personal opinions and some writing practice.
- **Note 2:** This was one of the earliest songs in the 80s about the topic of child abuse and domestic violence. The melody is deceptively happy, so you think you're listening to something beautiful and peaceful but in fact the songwriter is telling you something devastating. In a similar way, many abuse victims also try to hide or deny their abuse. The song appears on Suzanne Vega's 1987 album "Solitude Standing" – you and your students can read about the writing process at <http://measureformeasure.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/06/18/surviving-the-hits/>

1) Give each student a folded copy of the worksheet and ask them to work on Activity 1, individually or in pairs/groups. Use this exercise as a lead-in and then get students to reflect briefly on the topic (e.g. via statistics they may know about, TV programmes, films, news or the situation in their country.) Check the meaning of any difficult words with the students.

**Key:** of, and, is, in, to, on (see Note 2 above)

2) Tell students to listen to the first 9 lines of the song (don't let them read the lyrics yet) and ask them to choose the best summary in exercise two. Use the follow-up questions to generate further discussion. Elicit and give feedback on one or two of your students' ideas.

**Key:** (a)

3) Ask students to unfold the page. In exercise three, let the students read the lyrics while they listen to the next part of the song. When you pause the song, get them to check their answers with a partner. Then check the answers with the whole class. Let them listen again if necessary.

**Key:** clumsy, proud, (to) argue, it's not your business, (to) guess.

"They" probably refers to Luka's parents or the people he lives with.

"You" refers to Luka and perhaps all abused children.

4) In the last exercise, let students listen to the last part of the song, lines 28-41. Give students 2-3 minutes to discuss the 3 questions in pairs or small groups. Monitor your students. Get their feedback. Play the whole song again, and sing along.

**Key:** Students' own answers.

**Further work:** Writing. This can be used as a basis for project work or can be set as homework. Encourage students to do their own research on the Internet.

- What would you do if a classmate told you about an abuse case? What local organisations or charities are there which deal with child abuse?

or

- Luka is the name of a child living in Suzanne Vega's building. In an interview she said: "In the song, the boy Luka is an abused child – in real life I don't think he was. I think he was just different." Should we allow diversity amongst teenagers or should we try to be the same as each other? Why?/Why not?



# Luka – Suzanne Vega



## Exercise 1 - Complete the missing words in this text about the song.

This was one \_\_\_ the earliest songs in the 80s about the topic of child abuse \_\_\_ domestic violence. The melody \_\_\_ deceptively happy, so you think you're listening to something beautiful and peaceful but \_\_\_ fact the songwriter is telling you something devastating. In a similar way, many abuse victims also try \_\_\_ hide or deny their abuse. The song appears \_\_\_ Suzanne Vega's 1987 album "Solitude Standing."

- adapted from Wikipedia

## Exercise 2 - Listen to lines 1-9 and choose the best summary.

- The song is written from the point of view of an abused child.
  - The song is about a woman who is a victim of domestic violence.
  - A child is describing his/her house.
  - A neighbour is complaining about noisy neighbours.
- How do you think the story continues?  
- Will there be a happy ending? Why?/Why not? Tell your partner.

FOLD

## Exercise 3 - Listen to and read lines 10-27 and find a word for these definitions:

- (adj.) someone who bumps into things or breaks things easily.
  - (adj.) pleased with yourself or very confident.
  - (verb) to disagree and fight with someone about something.
  - (phrase) This doesn't concern you.
  - (verb) to suppose
- In line 14, who does "They" refer to?  
- In lines 15-16, who does "you" refer to?



1	My name is Luka	19	Yes, I think I'm okay
2	I live on the second floor	20	Walked into the door again,
3	I live upstairs from you	21	If you ask, that's what I'll say
4	Yes, I think you've seen me before.	22	And it's not your business anyway
5	If you hear something late at night,	23	I guess I'd like to be alone
6	Some kind of trouble some kind of fight	24	With nothing broken, nothing thrown
7	Just don't ask me what it was,	25	Just don't ask me how I am,
8	Just don't ask me what it was,	26	Just don't ask me how I am,
9	Just don't ask me what it was.	27	Just don't ask me how I am.
10	I think it's 'cos I'm clumsy	28	My name is Luka
11	I try not to talk too loud,	29	I live on the second floor
12	Maybe it's because I'm crazy	30	I live upstairs from you
13	I try not to act too proud,	31	Yes, I think you've seen me before.
14	They only hit until you cry,	32	If you hear something late at night
15	After that you don't ask why	33	Some kind of trouble some kind of fight
16	You just don't argue anymore,	34	Just don't ask me what it was,
17	Just don't argue anymore,	35	Just don't ask me what it was,
18	Just don't argue anymore.	36	Just don't ask me what it was
		37	They only hit until you cry,
		38	After that you don't ask why
		39	You just don't argue anymore,
		40	Just don't argue anymore,
		41	Just don't argue any more.

## Exercise 4 - Listen to the last part of the song. Discuss these questions.

- Do you think the songwriter intentionally repeated the first part of the song?
- What effect does this have on someone who's listening to the song?
- What's your opinion of the song?