

## CURRICULUM GUIDE



# LISTENING SKILLS

## African Pen Pals

### DEVELOPING ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

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[www.woub.org/africanpenpals](http://www.woub.org/africanpenpals)

## DEVELOPING ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

### OVERVIEW

In this unit, students will become acquainted with one or more of the ten episodes in the African Pen Pals series. They will work to improve their active listening skills and their ability to observe visual media.

“We are all the same; we are all different.” People may agree with this statement in theory, but often the immediate response to ‘others’ is to focus on the second part of the statement – “we are all different.” Bridges between peoples and cultures begin to be built when sameness or likenesses are recognized and differences are valued. Find more background information on this topic in Lesson 1, Setting the Tone: “We Are All the Same.”

Be sure to preview any African Pen Pal episode(s) before sharing it/them with your students. Some episodes contain more mature themes.

### UNIT GOALS

By the conclusion of this unit students will be able to:

- Note differences between the structures of American English (vowel sounds, rhythm, phrasing, etc.) as spoken by fluent vs. non-fluent speakers.
- Note differences of phrasing and word choice between native and non-native American English speakers.
- Use prediction to focus listening skills.
- Use visual clues such as body language, facial expression, background scenes, etc. to collect additional information from multi-media presentations.
- Write a reflection comparing and contrasting predictions vs. actual content of an African Pen Pal episode.

### GRADE LEVEL INDICATORS

#### LANGUAGE ARTS

- Demonstrate active listening strategies.
- Draw logical inferences from presentations and visual media.
- Interpret the speaker’s purpose in presentation and visual media.
- Use organizational strategies to plan writing.
- Produce informal writings for various purposes.
- Deliver formal and informal descriptive presentations.

#### WORK AND FAMILY LIFE

- Create strategies for relating to people of different ages, abilities, genders and cultures.
- Communicate effectively.
- Cooperate with others to achieve group goals.
- Use planning processes to establish and achieve individual and group goals.
- Demonstrate respect for diversity with sensitivity to anti-bias, gender, equity, age, culture, and ethnicity.

## TIME FRAME

**Preparing to Learn:** 5 minutes or less

### Activities

- **1 & 2**...10 to 15 minutes (Understanding Pen Pals)
- **3**.....5 to 10 minutes (Predicting Content)
- **4**.....15 to 30 minutes (First Viewing)
- **5**.....15 to 20 minutes (Reflecting on Predictions)
- **6 & 7**....25 to 45 minutes (Listening & Visual Skills, 2nd Viewing)
- **8**.....20 to 40 minutes (Increase Understanding by Sharing)

## MATERIALS

### African Pen Pal Episode(s):

- Egypt: Sharif Am El-Atawi (First 5 minutes)
- (Optional) A different Pen Pal episode (your choice)

**DVD player and TV** - or Computer with DVD player and presentation system

**Paper and pencil/pen**

### Handouts:

- Sharif Am El-Atawi, Egypt
- African Pen Pals KWL Chart

## PREPARE TO LEARN:

### *Alert Students to Special Listening Skills Needed for African Pen Pals*

Begin by telling the students about the general nature of the African Pen Pals series. Ten young people between the ages 9 and 14, out of millions who live on the African continent, were chosen to share a typical day of their lives. Each child was also given the chance to take viewers to one or two nearby locations that he or she considered important or significant. See “About the Series” in the Introduction section of this guide for more details.

Explain to the students that most of the narrators for the African Pen Pal series are young people for whom English is a second or even a third language. Mastering a language is not as simple as being able to read it. Ask for a show of hands to see how many in the class are able to carry on conversations with a native speaker of one language other than English or two languages other than English. Help your students realize that speaking more than one language fluently enough to be able to converse with others is an admirable accomplishment.

Explain to the students that, although the African Pen Pal narration(s) will be in English, they will need to listen carefully to determine everything the speaker wants them to know. Even a British speaker of English sounds quite a bit different from an American English speaker.

Tell them to expect to hear differences in word selection, vowel sounds, pitch and stress. For example: Vowel and consonant sounds may be different or missing in some languages. The subject may always follow the action in sentences. Pitch and stress may be integral to the meaning of a word so that the same word means two different things depending upon how it is pronounced. These differences occur because other languages have different structures than American-accented English. Some linguists call listening to the smallest structures of a language “Bottom Up” listening.

Nine year old South African Christopher's first language is English. He speaks with a British accent and may be the most easily understood Pen Pal.

The Kenyan youths, Moses and Grace, both age 13, may be the most difficult to understand.

See a list of web links on Listening Skills and Activities at the end of this unit.

Focusing on the meaning of oral input is called “Top Down” listening. Top Down listening skills include such strategies as **guessing from context**, using prior knowledge and inferring.

*The students will use both bottom up and top down listening skills in the following activities.*

## ACTIVITIES

### 1 Bottom Up and Top Down Listening: Understanding an African Pen Pal

Give the each student a copy of the handout, “Sharif” (pronounced SHARE eef).

**Tell the student that Sharif is a boy who lives in Cairo, Egypt. He was 14 when this video was filmed.**

Explain to the class that they will interpret what Sharif says and that the goal of this activity is to help them develop skills to more fully understand him and other African Pen Pals.

- Ask a student to show the class on a map or to tell the class the location of Egypt and Cairo. You may have students share what they already know about Egypt. What is the official language of Egypt? (Arabic)
- You – or a student with very good reading/English speaking skills – will read the English words and phrases on the handout aloud. Explain to the students that they are to listen for the listed words and phrases as they watch the first five minutes of African Pen Pal, Sharif’s video.
- When the student hears and understands the listed word or phrase, s/he is to place a check mark in the middle column under “Understandable.”
- Students may add additional check marks if a word or phrase is repeated.
- Students will fill out the blanks in the final column after viewing the video.

### 2 View the first five minutes of Egyptian 14-year-old, Sharif Am El-Atawi.

*(SHARE eef – AHM – l uh TOWEL ee)*

After viewing the first five minutes of the video, have the students fill in the blanks in the last column of the Sharif handout. Ask students to share what they feel a fluent American-English speaking student might have said for each of the phrases.

See the Sharif answer sheet at the end of this unit.

Ask the students if they feel that the differences they have heard would prevent them from understanding the content of the video. If the majority of the students feel that they cannot understand the content, you may need to view African Pen Pal episodes in short segments and rephrase/restate the content for each segment. You may wish to view episodes more than once.

### 3 Predict Content: What is life like for an African Pen Pal?

Select one of the ten African Pen Pals episodes for your students to view. You may choose to use Sharif’s episode or you may decide that some other episode will be more appropriate for your students. Use the African Pen Pal Synopses to help you make your selection. You may choose to watch an entire episode (about 25 minutes) including the “wrap-around” – the producer’s commentary section following the Pen Pal’s day. You may choose to view only the Pen Pal’s day (about 15 minutes). Preview the episode before using it with your students. Some episodes have more mature content.

Ask the students to think about what they usually do on a school day. Ask them to predict what a day would be like for a young person in the African country you chose above. In what kinds of activities would Egyptian (Kenyan, Nigerian, South African, Tanzanian) young people engage? What kinds of nearby locations might they want to show viewers across the world? Ask the students to make brief notes of their personal predictions on paper. Have students share their predictions with the class. Tell them that they will review their predictions following the video.

*Briefly introduce the students to the Pen Pal from the episode you chose, if you are not using Sharif's episode.*

#### **4 View the African Pen Pal episode – 1st viewing**

#### **5 Reflect on Predictions:**

Following the viewing, have each student write a reflection of what s/he has seen and heard. Have them consider the following questions and statements before they begin to write.

**Students should refer to their recorded predictions.**

- What was the African Pen Pal video's purpose? Inform? Persuade? Entertain?
- Were the activities in the Pen Pal's day the kinds of activities you predicted you would see?
- If the activities were unexpected, list what you expected to see and explain why you were surprised.
- If expected, explain how you were able to make accurate predictions.

**Include your reactions to the location(s) chosen by the Pen Pal.**

- Were you surprised by the Pen Pal's choice(s)?
- Why/Why not?

**Record questions, comments, or ideas about Egypt (Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania) you have after viewing the video that you did not have before.**

#### **6 Add Visual Communication Skills to Active Listening Skills**

Students will focus on the following communication skills in this activity: Listening to the same information more than once, focusing on a narrower topic, and gathering additional information from visual observation skills.

Choose how you will group your students for the activity. Small mixed ability groups are suggested. Pre-assign topics from the list below to each group or allow them to choose their own. Make sure the students understand the topics. Have one or more student(s) in each group give examples of objects or behaviors that would fit their topic(s). After the students have met and have a topic, ask them to return to their seats. Explain that they will meet with their groups again before they view the African Pen Pals episode for a second time.

Targeted topics might include:

- School, academics, teaching and learning styles
- Fine Arts: music, dance, art, drama and the role that any of these arts play in daily life
- Clothing: traditional, leisure, school, other
- Parents: occupations, parent activities, expectations for children
- Gender Roles/Gender-related tasks

- Leisure time activities including school extracurricular activities
- Friends/Friendship: activities, amount of time spent with, pen pal comments
- Food – including shopping for food, markets, mealtime routines
- Religion: activities, amount of time spent, pen pal comments
- Family: makeup of family, family activities or routine
- Home: dwelling type, furnishings, appliances, decorations

## **KWL Chart (Known, Wanted, Learned)**

Students will begin this activity individually and then meet with their teams to compare notes and make further plans.

### **KNOWN:**

**Students list information they already know about a topic.**

Distribute the African Pen Pals KWL chart and have each student fill in the Pen Pal’s name, country, and the topic to which they were assigned – or which they choose. Have them fill out the first column (Known) before they meet with their team.

### **WANTED:**

**Students write questions or comments about the topic for which or about which they would like to find information or answers.**

Break the class into their groups and have the students in each group compare what they listed as “Known.” Ask each group to set goals or make a plan about what they think they can learn or want to learn about their topic from an additional viewing of the episode.

Explain to students that additional information can often be discerned by listening to information a second time and by looking more closely at visual content. Direct the students to look for visual content clues such as the Pen Pal’s body language and facial expression, the body language and facial expressions of other people in the scene, and the background itself. Make sure the students understand each of these concepts before continuing. You may help them practice understanding the concepts through role-playing.

Students may decide that their group members should divide the work so that individuals may focus on particular skills. For example, one member might concentrate on background scenes, another on spoken words, another on body language and facial expressions of the Pen Pal and others in the video, while one takes a global view and works to note everything at once. They may decide that all members of the group will look at and listen to everything at once.

Give them time to establish their plans/goals and to review each group member’s task or role. Have them add to the middle column (Wanted) based on the group’s goals and/or plans before the viewing.

## 7 2nd Viewing - View the same African Pen Pal episode again.

### LEARNED:

Students note what they have learned about the chosen or assigned cultural topic.

Have each student make his/her own notes in the final column (Learned) as s/he watches the episode.

## 8 Increase Understanding Through Group Discussion and Sharing

Following the viewing, groups will meet again to discuss their findings. Have the group plan a short oral presentation about the cultural topic. They will share what they have learned and compare the information they knew following the first viewing with the information gained from the second, more focused viewing. Each group may make its own decision on the number of spokespersons. Each group member should contribute to the content of the presentation even if s/he is not a spokesperson. Each should also help the presenter understand the content and offer tips for effective presentations. Tips might include: speak clearly, speak loudly enough for all to hear, demonstrate respect for the African pen pal, vary language choices, and so on.

Other African Pen Pals units continue to develop ideas and information encountered in this unit.

## BOTTOM UP AND TOP DOWN LISTENING AND LISTENING ACTIVITIES:

### BACKGROUND FOR TEACHERS

#### CRITICAL THINKING CONSORTIUM

- Tactics that Encourage Active Listening
- <http://www.criticalthinking.org/K12/k12class/tactics.html>

#### BILINGUAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

- Carrier, Karen A. "Improving High School English Language Learner's Second Language Listening Through Strategy Instruction." Fall, 2003
- [http://brj.asu.edu/content/vol27\\_no3/art2.pdf](http://brj.asu.edu/content/vol27_no3/art2.pdf)
  - This is a downloadable Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) file.
  - Adobe's free Acrobat Reader is pre-installed on most computers.
  - If Acrobat Reader is not on your computer, go to
- <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>,  
to download the free application to your computer and install it.

#### UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

- English for Speakers of Other Languages FCE (First Certificate in English)
- <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/teach/fce/index.cfm>

# Sharif Am El-Atawi, Egypt

(SHARE-eef AHM l-uh-TOWEL-ee)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Place a checkmark in the middle column if you are able to understand the word or phrase. Write the words an American English speaker might have said for the phrases.

Sharif said:	Understandable	An American who speaks English as his/her native language might have said...
sixth		the same thing.
October		the same thing.
1987		the same thing.
...who owns a company for trade and transport services.		
My mother is called		
two		the same thing.
sisters		the same thing.
older		the same thing.
seventeen		the same thing.
years		the same thing.
old		the same thing.
little		the same thing.
twelve		the same thing.
As I have a German grandmother, my sisters and I can speak German.		
...as well as Arabic, our mother tongue.		
English		the same thing.
tenth		the same thing.

(SHARE-ee AHM l-uh-TOWEL-ee)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Place a checkmark in the middle column if you are able to understand the word or phrase. Write the words an American English speaker might have said for the phrases.

Sharif said:	Understandable	An American who speaks English as his/her native language might have said...
sixth		the same thing.
October		the same thing.
1987		the same thing.
...who owns a company for trade and transport services.		My dad owns an import/export business (or) My dad owns a company that sells ___ and transports the goods to the buyers.
My mother is called		My mother's name is
two		the same thing.
sisters		the same thing.
older		the same thing.
seventeen		the same thing.
years		the same thing.
old		the same thing.
little		the same thing.
twelve		the same thing.
As I have a German grandmother, my sisters and I can speak German.		My sisters and I are can speak German because my grandmother is from Germany.
...as well as Arabic, our <u>mother tongue</u> .		Our <u>native language</u> is Arabic. OR Arabic, the <u>first language</u> we learned.
English		the same thing.
tenth		the same thing.

# African Pen Pals K-W-L Chart

Name:

Date:

Pen Pal's Name:

Targeted Topic:

**KNOWN:**

**WANTED:**

**LEARNED:**

		
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