



COULD'VE BEEN by Tiffany

A lesson on possibility in the past (Chapter 10)

Notes for the Teacher

1. The Song

Do a search on the Internet to find the song “Could’ve Been” by Tiffany.

2. Song background

You are going to hear a song from the 1980s. At that time, a type of music called “teen pop” was very popular. Teen pop music is meant for young people from about 9 years old to about 18 years old. These songs are usually very light (not serious) and easy to dance to. The topic of these songs is usually romantic relationships.

Tell students that they are going to hear a ballad, which is a slow, romantic song. A woman sings about her sadness after her boyfriend breaks up with her. She dreams about a life with her boyfriend. That life is not possible now, because she will not see him again.

3. Grammar background

This song uses the past tense modal *could have*. **Could have + past participle** is used to express **possibility in the past**. Write these examples on the board:

*I wish I had taken the job. It **could have been** a great opportunity for me.*
(There was the possibility of having a great opportunity, but you didn’t take it.)

*Why did you buy a new dress? You **could’ve bought** a computer with that money.*
(There was the possibility of buying a new computer, but you didn’t buy one.)

*If I had studied, I **could have gotten** an A on the test.*
(There was the possibility of getting an A, but I didn’t get an A.)

Help students see that *could have* + past participle means that the situation did not happen. The speaker imagines a different path for his or her life than the one that he or she has taken.

Point out the lines of the song that use “*Could’ve been*” with no subject. Ask students to make these sentences full English sentences. Remind students that they need to add a subject like this:

My life *could’ve been wonderful.*

OR a pronoun, like this:

It *could’ve been wonderful.*



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Explain that sometimes in songs and poetry, writers may not use full sentences; they change the structure of sentences to fit the music. In this song, the singer left out the subject because it was clear from the context. This usually only works in music, though. Tell students not to leave the subjects out of their writing.

4. Vocabulary

These are just some of the words you may want to discuss during your lesson.

- **linger:** remain, stay
- **faint:** barely noticeable
- **get your hopes up:** become hopeful about something



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Student Worksheet

While you listen

1. Listen to the song once. Why is the singer sad?
2. Now listen again and focus on the grammar. Listen for sentences with *could have* + past participle. Write them down.
3. Compare your list to another student's. Do you have all the same answers? Now listen again and try to hear the answers your partner found (the ones that you didn't hear).

After you listen

1. Things to think about and discuss

In pairs, small groups, or as a whole class, share your answers to these questions:

- What things remind the singer of the past?
- Do you think that the singer chose to end the relationship, or do you think that her boyfriend chose to end it? Find evidence for your answer in the song.

2. Grammar

The singer in this song believes that her life could have been wonderful if her boyfriend had stayed with her. Write three sentences that describe this belief. Use *if*-clauses and *would have* + past participle. See the examples below.

If her boyfriend had stayed, she would have had a beautiful life.

If her boyfriend had stayed, they would have been very happy together.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



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3. Speaking & Writing

In pairs, small groups, or as a whole class, share your answers to these questions.

Have you ever thought about something that could have happened, but didn't? This can be a good thing or a bad thing. For instance, consider these two examples:

- *Last year, I was driving my car when I drove over some ice. My car spun around in circles and I went off the road. I could've hit a tree or I could've died, but fortunately the car just stopped and I was okay.*
- *I was offered a job last year in Australia. It was a really good job, but I didn't want to live in Australia because it is so far away. I could've had a really good career, and I could've learned a lot of things, but I was too afraid to take the job.*

Think of something in your life that could have happened differently. Share your story with a partner or small group.

Now write one paragraph about the situation that you have told about. Use *could have* in your paragraph.