

Shooting Stars



Text Type: Speech
Suggested finishing time: 25 mins



Listen!

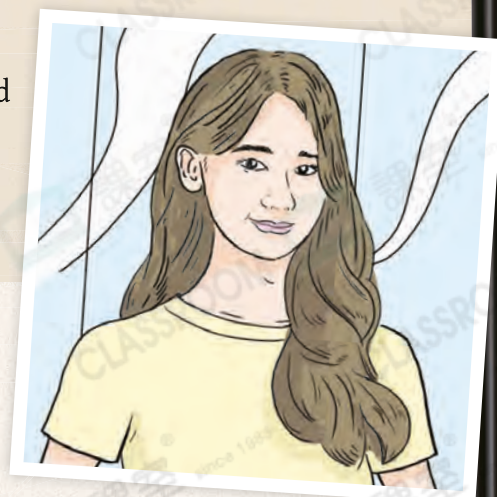
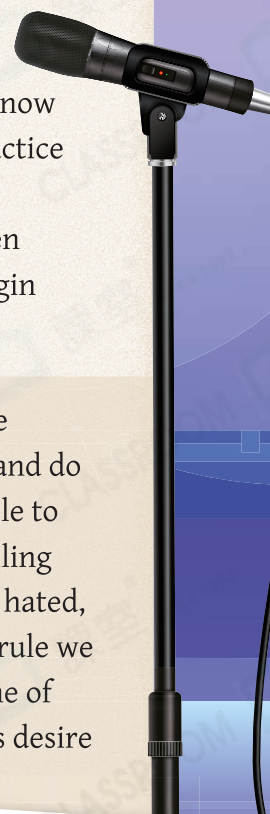
Let's think! 

1. Are you a fan of K-pop?
2. What do you think of K-pop?

Good morning, everyone. I'm Lee Soo-jin. I bet most of you've probably heard of the tough training every K-pop trainee needs to undergo before their debut, that is, their first public appearance in which they perform a piece of work. Having once been a K-pop trainee, I'd like to explore with you how stars are made and moulded in the music industry, as well as to pinpoint some common
5 misconceptions about these youngsters' lives and their arduous path to stardom.

First of all, I'd like to familiarise you with their daily routine. I reckon many of you wouldn't know that most of them are still full-time students. But indeed, they are. So, they can't go to the practice sessions until after school. And, while in the practice rooms, they would have various classes, ranging from one-on-one vocal and choreography classes to classes of English, sometimes even
10 Japanese and Mandarin. The treadmill of learning and practising ends at midnight, only to begin anew at eight the next day.

I can still remember the Herculean battles, not with others but myself, I fought in one of those rooms. My instructor used to assign an apparently simple task to us as vocal training: to sing and do sit-ups concurrently. There were five sets of tasks of a similar kind each day, and it's impossible to
15 finish them without huffing and puffing. Besides, we would never want to be late for class. Failing to be punctual meant not only accusations of disobedience, but also something we feared and hated, that is, the punishment of singing and running laps at once. But of course, that's not the only rule we need to follow. To stay 'in good shape', everyone's body fat percentage is measured daily. Some of my fellow classmates even went to extremes, by skipping meals, just to satisfy the instructor's desire
20 for 'a good number'. Despite the hard work, throughout the three years of my uncompleted training none of us knew when exactly our debut would be, and our future career pathways were like untravelled tunnels. You'll never know how long they are or where they lead to. Uncertainties of this kind were what deterred me from pressing
25 ahead.



Moral

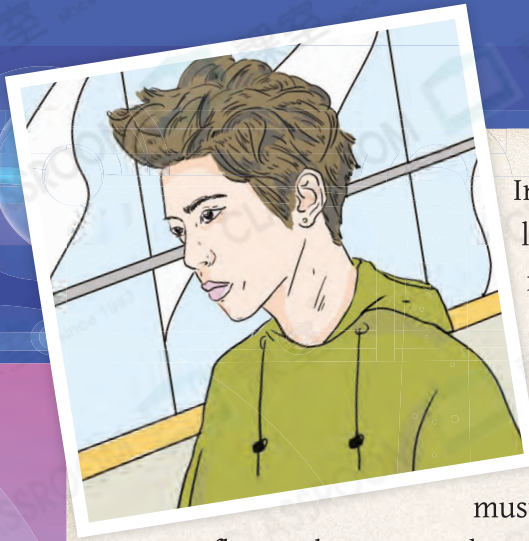


'Energy and persistence conquer all things.'

Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States

More to Take Away

The popularisation of K-pop is known as 'Hallyu', which means 'Korean wave' in Korean.



In addition, one's success in a debut doesn't necessarily guarantee one long-term commercial success as that greatly depends on the positive reception of the public. As a matter of fact, most of us won't make it to the top and become as renowned as Girls' Generation, the leading Korean girl band. Therefore, artists, whether solo or groups, need to work out some effective marketing strategies for self-promotion. 30

Moreover, to ensure a song will hit it big on the record charts, they must hire or be assigned to well-connected agents who are friends with influential music producers. Ironically, artists themselves are rarely given free rein to choose which genres their music is to stick to or in what direction their own career is to go. To many, whether those in the business or those looking in from the outside, this may sound nonsensical: how can it be the rich and powerful who help an artist hit the headlines, rather than the artist's own attractive appearance, exceptional talent or hard graft? 35

By now, it should be clear that whether a K-pop trainee is able to steal the limelight and rise to fame, be it national or international, depends on many variables. The pursuit of perfection. The ridiculously hectic work schedules. The overriding need to have business connections. These are only some of the things that have proven deadly to the physical and mental health of not only K-pop trainees but also artists in general. Even worse, they usually have narrow social circles as their time is principally spent in the classroom or the practice room. Off the camera, they are very much alone. What the late Jonghyun, former member of the boy band SHINee, experienced is a telling example of how immense pressure from all sides and depression could eat away at stars. In December 2017, he took his own life at the age of 27, leaving behind the message that he had been 'consumed' by depression and could no longer fight against it. For a short while considerable attention had been paid to pop stars' mental health, but the influence of the saddening news diminished pretty soon. 40 45

I'm not speaking to dissuade anyone from dreaming to become an idol at all as we all have the right to set our own goals and to realise them. But that doesn't mean we don't deserve minimum respect or freedom from people on whom our goal pursuit is dependent. From this perspective, the frustrations of aspiring idols seem appalling. Is there anything we can do? Nothing much, I regret to say. Let's keep our fingers crossed that the strict and gruelling training regimen of the music industry would become less demoralising one day. 50

~800 words

55

Looking into Grammar

The connectives 'besides', 'in addition', 'furthermore' and 'moreover' are used to signal the adding of new information. Note that these connectives are usually put at the beginning of a sentence and followed by a comma.

✗ The article is poorly structured moreover (✓. **Moreover**), it is full of grammatical mistakes.

🔍 Circle an example each of 'besides' and 'moreover' in paragraphs 2-5.

Part A Multiple Choice Questions

Answer the following questions based on the information provided in the speech. Choose the best answer by blackening the appropriate circle.

1. Being a K-pop trainee is not easy due to _____.

- A. the required physical training
- B. the need to strike a balance between studies and training
- C. the lack of spare time
- D. the pressure from music producers

1 Eliminate irrelevant options first.

2. In paragraph 3, 'Herculean battles' refers to _____.

- A. training that challenged Lee physically
- B. Lee's expectations of herself
- C. the language classes
- D. the attempts to avoid being punished

3. In line 19, 'went to extremes' can best be replaced by '_____'.
Strategy

- A. were forced to overreact
- B. experienced strong emotions
- C. were unable to think logically
- D. took drastic measures

4. Lee stated that _____ can promise any trainee a great career.

- A. total obedience to instructors
- B. an athletic build
- C. no commercial tactics
- D. neither effort nor a successful debut

5. In line 34, 'free rein' means _____.

- A. time for leisure
- B. the permission to do what one wants
- C. personal privacy
- D. financial support that enables one to implement a plan

5 How does having 'free rein' affect artists?

6. In line 44, 'Off the camera' can best be replaced by '_____'.
Strategy

- A. When not in a practice room
- B. When not facing the public
- C. When not carrying a camera
- D. When not being interviewed

7. What is the main idea of paragraph 5?
Strategy

- A. The desire for perfection leads to mental illnesses.
- B. Suicide is common in the industry.
- C. The prospect of success in the industry is uncertain and some artists are not mentally fit.
- D. Music producers determine artists' success.

8. In the last paragraph, Lee's tone can best be described as _____.
Strategy

- A. indifferent
- B. respectful
- C. disrespectful
- D. neutral



Self-evaluation Checklist

Please scan the QR code on P.6 to access the checklist for evaluating your own reading progress.

Part B Pre-HKDSE Questions

Answer the following questions based on the information provided in the speech. For questions 1 and 2, answer in complete sentences.

1. In paragraph 3, what exactly does ‘a good number’ mean? Why is it important to trainees?

2. Why did Lee compare trainees’ career pathways to untravelled tunnels? Explain your answer.

2 Think about what Lee was trying to point out with the use of simile.

3. Look for words in the speech to match the definitions below.

- | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|--------|-------------------------------------|
| (i) | _____ (para. 1-2) | (adv.) | again |
| (ii) | _____ (para. 2-3) | (v.) | made one decide not to do something |
| (iii) | _____ (para. 4-5) | (n.) | work |
| (iv) | _____ (para. 5-6) | (adj.) | showing the truth about a situation |



4. Match the subheadings below to the corresponding paragraphs in the speech. Write the correct numbers in the boxes.

(i) Hold on, hope for the best

(ii) A brief idea about the talk

(iii) Efforts made in vain

(iv) Suffocating work schedules

(v) Reality behind the scenes

(vi) Stress and tragedies



5. Match each of the following quotes in the left-hand column with the corresponding tone in which it is delivered in the right-hand column.

(i) ‘Work hard? Don’t be silly. Who’s going to notice and acknowledge your efforts?’

•

• anxious

(ii) ‘I owe it to my mum, who encouraged me to take a step back and focus on my studies.’

•

• grim

(iii) ‘What will my fans think if they know I have such a troubled mind? I’m doomed...’

•

• grateful

5 Who may be the speaker of each of the following quotes?

6. Look for a phrase in paragraph 3 that means ‘breathing loudly and heavily, especially when one does something that involves a lot of physical effort’.

Part C Vocabulary Bank

Label the photos below with the professions related to the entertainment industry from the word box.

make-up artist

boy band

stuntman

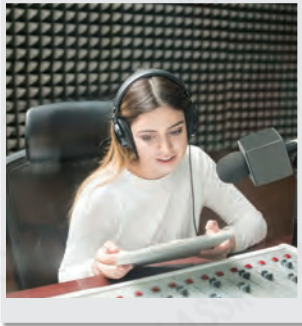
comedian

girl band

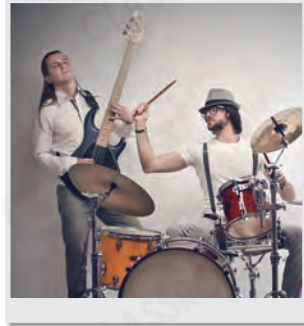
radio host

hair stylist

emcee



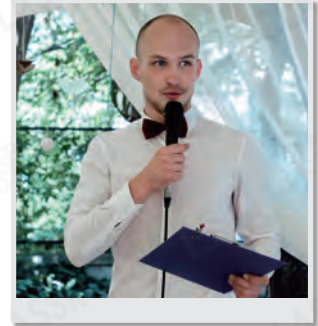
1. _____



2. _____



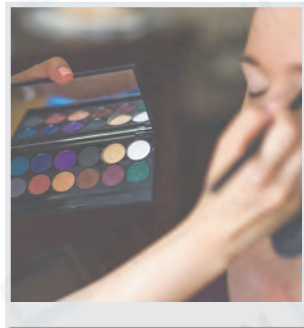
3. _____



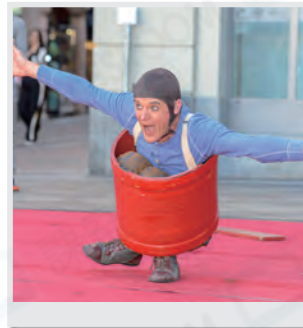
4. _____



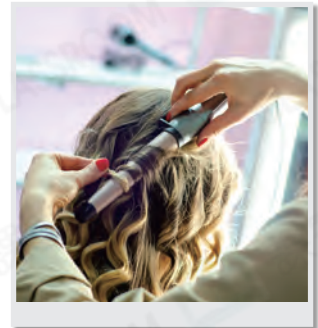
5. _____



6. _____



7. _____



8. _____

Word Craft

Anew (Refer to P.20.)

The prefix **a-** can be added to words to form adverbs or adjectives with the meaning 'of' or 'in a particular state or manner'.

e.g. aglow	(=shining with light and colour)
afresh	(=in a new way)
alive	(=living)
alight	(=burning)

Let's Discuss!

1. Do you know about the intense competition among K-pop artists?
2. In your opinion, is competition beneficial or detrimental? Explain your answer.

Part D Cloze Passage

Complete the thank-you speech below with the appropriate nouns introduced on the previous page.

Thank you, Jennifer, for presenting me with this award. Thank y'all. You can't imagine how privileged I feel standing now on this stage as an award-winner. I used to think being a (1) _____, though it may bring joy and laughter to the world, is a considerably lesser achievement than being a 'serious' film actor. Thank you for proving me wrong. This award is an affirmation of my life-long goal of making as many people happy as I could.

It'd take a whole day just to name all the people I'd like to thank, so I'll take a different approach. I'll take the opportunity to thank those I've not had the occasion to thank. The first person I must direct my sincerest gratitude to is Joe, my (2) _____. He was a close collaborator in the TV series *The Black Dragon*. Whenever you see me doing something risky—like jumping off a bridge or smashing a window with bare hands—it was actually he who did it. He's the only reason why I'm here tonight with all four of my limbs. He took all the risks, yet none of the rewards.

But just having a functioning body is not enough to make you a star. You must also look gorgeous. So my second and third 'thank you' go to Janice, my (3) _____, who performed the daily miracle of bringing back the hay on my head to life; and yes, to Scarlett too, my (4) _____. She has perfected the art of making me feel more handsome than I am.

I've had few chances in the past to work with little kids, so this experience is especially memorable. To Chloe Choir and Baby Shark Choir, incredible (5) _____ and (6) _____, I give my highest praise. It was the amazing singing voices of these young talents in the soundtracks that first made the series an instant hit. This award belongs to you little ones!

On this occasion, a special mention must be made of Michael, today's (7) _____. As his close friend, I know how much effort a conscientious person like him must have spent preparing for tonight's ceremony. Still, it must be a great challenge for a (8) _____ to arrange the performance schedule and keep a large audience entertained. These things are out of the scope of his day job. Let's give him a round of applause for the great job he's done so far!