



# DREAMGIRLS

## - EXTRA

### Level 3

This level is suitable for students who have been learning English for at least three years and up to four years. It corresponds with the Common European Framework level B1.

### SYNOPSIS

In Detroit in the early 1960s singing trio, the Dreamettes, enter a talent competition. The girls don't win the competition, but they meet their new manager, Curtis Taylor. He gets the girls a tour and then sets up his own music label, Rainbow Records. He starts a relationship with lead singer, Effie. Soon he transforms the Dreamettes into the Dreams, a successful pop group. Eventually he decides Deena must sing lead because her voice and her looks are more attractive to white audiences. Curtis and Deena start an affair. Curtis then replaces Effie with another singer and she is out of the group. She cuts off contact with her brother C.C. (the group's songwriter) and refuses the money he sends to her.

The years pass. Curtis and Deena move to Los Angeles and get married. Deena is now a big international star. Curtis controls every aspect of her life and she has had enough. She investigates Curtis's private papers and finds incriminating information about him from the early days of Rainbow Records.

The Dreams' songwriter, C. C., is also very disillusioned with Curtis as he keeps taking the soul out of C.C.'s music. C.C. goes back to Detroit to make peace with his sister and writes her a new song. Curtis finds out about the song. He records a disco version with the Dreams and it becomes a huge hit. When Deena later discovers what Curtis has done, she sends the incriminating papers to Effie.

To avoid prison, Curtis agrees to distribute Effie's song and pay all the costs. Deena tells Curtis that she is leaving him. She organises a goodbye concert for the Dreams and invites Effie to sing lead on their final song. The girls sing together again for one last time, free at last.

### THE BACK STORY

*Dreamgirls* was originally a musical. It first appeared on Broadway in New York in 1981. It was based on the history of popular black music during the 1960s and 1970s.

The film version of *Dreamgirls* was written and directed by Bill Condon and came out in 2006. It won three Golden Globe Awards, including Best Picture, and two Oscars, including one for best supporting actress, Jennifer Hudson (Effie).

### MEDIA LINKS

**DVD:** *Dreamgirls* is available on DVD, HD-DVD and Blu-Ray from DreamWorks/Paramount Pictures.

**CD:** A recording of *Dreamgirls* is available to accompany the Richmond reader. The movie soundtrack is also available on CD.

**Internet:** The official website is at [www.dreamgirlsmovie.com](http://www.dreamgirlsmovie.com).

**Book:** A novelization of the film *Dreamgirls* by Denene Millner, based on the screenplay by Bill Condon, is published by Harper Entertainment (HarperCollins US).

## HOW TO USE YOUR RICHMOND MEDIA READER

### Choosing and motivating

Is this the right story for your class? Have they seen the film or any similar films? Motivate students by telling them some background information and by reading aloud the first page of the story with dramatic atmosphere.

### Organising

Plan a class reading schedule. Decide how many pages to set for reading each week. Select exercises from the back of the reader and extra activities from this resource sheet to go with each section of reading. (All answers on page 4.)

### Using the CD

Students can listen and follow in their books. They can listen and then read. They can read and then listen. All these options will enhance their understanding and reading speed. You could also obtain the movie soundtrack and play some of the songs referred to in the book.

### Using the DVD

Select the English language option on the DVD. Watch it yourself first in case there are scenes or language that are not suitable for your class. The film is 125 minutes long. Show it in chunks of, say, 20–25 minutes in parallel with the class reading schedule.

Alternatively, show the whole film in two sessions, perhaps over two lunchtimes when the whole class can get together.

### Glossary

Go to 'New Words' on the inside back cover of the reader. Translate the words with the class or get students to find the meanings at home. The Vocabulary Builder on page 3 of this resource sheet practices the new words in a different context.

### Casual language

Introduce the informal expressions used in *Dreamgirls* (see Vocabulary Builder on page 3 of this resource sheet). Put them into context. Ask students to look out for them as they read.

### Fact Files

These appear at the back of the book. Set them as self-study or use for whole class work. They provide background information about the story, including information about the making of the film, the Civil Rights Movement and an interview with Beyoncé Knowles, who plays Deena in the movie.

### What did they think?

Get everyone to do a written or verbal review of the book and/or the film. Compare opinions. Did *you* like it?

## RESOURCE SHEET STUDENT ACTIVITIES



# DREAMGIRLS

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### People and places

#### 1 Who ...

- a) is a famous singer from Detroit? ..... *Jimmy Early*.....
  - b) is the lead singer of the Dreamettes? .....
  - c) is Jimmy Early's manager? .....
  - d) dreams of becoming a manager in the music business? .....
  - e) writes all the songs for the Dreamettes? .....
  - f) sings back-up for the Dreamettes? .....
- and .....

#### 2 Which ...

- a) city is also known as the 'Motor City'? .....
- b) theatre has a talent show each year? .....

### Chapters 1-2

#### 1 Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)? Correct the wrong sentences.

- a) The talent show organiser doesn't let the girls sing in the show.  *F*
- b) After the girls sing in the show, nobody thinks they will win.
- c) Curtis tries to help the girls because he wants to be a music manager.
- d) Jimmy Early lets the girls sing back-up because he likes Effie's voice.
- e) When the girls go on tour with Jimmy, everything is very easy.
- f) Marty is unhappy when Curtis wants to make a record with Jimmy.
- g) *Cadillac Car* doesn't do very well in the pop charts.

#### 2 Work in pairs. One of you is Marty and one of you is Curtis. What are your plans for Jimmy? Write a few notes and then tell your partner.

### Chapters 3-4

#### 1 Circle the best word(s) in *italics*.

- a) Dave and the Sweethearts (*stole*) / *wrote* C.C.'s song and *copied* / (*changed*) the style.
- b) Curtis and C.C. *sold* / *gave away* all the cars in the showroom in seven days.
- c) Curtis *asked* / *paid* Nicky Cassaro to take the record to radio stations.

- d) C.C. *was* / *wasn't* disappointed that the concert at the Apollo was on June 23rd. He *wanted* / *didn't want* to go to the civil rights march.
- e) Curtis was in a relationship with *Deena* / *Effie*, but he fell in love with *Deena* / *Effie*.
- f) Marty thinks that Jimmy belongs to *him* / *no one*.

#### 2 Complete the sentences with these adjectives.

surprised   happy   sad   ~~angry~~   worried

- a) C.C. was ..... *angry*..... with Curtis because he thought more about money than civil rights.
- b) Marty was ..... after the show at the Apollo because he thought he wouldn't be Jimmy's manager for much longer.
- c) Effie was ..... after the show because she was in love with Curtis.
- d) Curtis was ..... when he saw Deena in her new dress. He hadn't realised she was so beautiful.
- e) Jimmy was ..... when Marty drove away. Marty had been his manager for a long time.

### Chapters 5-6

#### Who says these things? Who to?

- a) 'You're mine, baby. And I'm all yours.' ..... *Jimmy to Lorrell*.....
- b) 'We're all proud of you. Really proud.' .....
- c) 'The only good thing in your band is that beautiful girl.' .....
- d) 'A product. I like that.' .....
- e) '... there's a riot on Twelfth Street!' .....
- f) 'Music is music. Our songs can't be political.' .....
- g) 'You stole my dreams. And you stole my man!' .....

### Chapters 7-8

#### 1 Put the sentences in the correct order.

- a) Wayne, C.C., Brooks and Curtis have a meeting about Cleo.
- b) Curtis asks Deena to marry him in Paris.  *1*
- c) Effie decides to go and see Marty.
- d) Curtis decides to do a TV programme to celebrate Jimmy's anniversary.
- e) Curtis and Deena get married and move to L.A.
- f) Lorrell tells Jimmy that their relationship is finished.
- g) Jimmy decides to sing a different song on the anniversary show.
- h) Deena tells Curtis she doesn't want to make the movie *Cleo*.
- i) Curtis doesn't want Jimmy to record *Patience*.

## RESOURCE SHEET STUDENT ACTIVITIES

### 2 Talk to a partner. What do you think?

- a) What's Effie's life like now?
- b) Why hasn't Effie forgiven C.C.? Do you think she's right?

### Chapters 9–10

#### 1 Make sentences.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Deena wanted to be in</li> <li>b) C.C. is angry because Curtis</li> <li>c) Lorrell is really upset when</li> <li>d) C.C. goes to see Effie in Detroit</li> <li>e) C.C. didn't know that his sister</li> <li>f) Effie didn't know how to</li> <li>g) After Effie forgives C.C. he</li> <li>h) Curtis records a new version</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) keeps changing his songs.</li> <li>ii) to ask her to forgive him.</li> <li>iii) forgive C.C. when she first saw him.</li> <li>iv) writes a hit song for her.</li> <li>v) she finds out that Jimmy is dead.</li> <li>vi) of Effie's song with the Dreams.</li> <li>vii) Harris and Walsh's new movie.</li> <li>viii) had a daughter called Magic.</li> </ol> |
|--|---|

### 2 Talk to a partner about the things that have happened in chapters 9–10. What advice would you give now to C.C., Effie and Deena?

### Chapters 11–12

#### Answer the questions.

- a) Why does Deena look at Curtis's papers? What does she find?
- b) What does C.C. realise when he sees the papers Deena has sent to Effie?
- c) What does Curtis agree to do when he meets C.C. and the lawyer? Why?
- d) What does Effie tell Deena? Why is Deena upset about it?
- e) Where does Deena go after she leaves Curtis? How does Curtis feel about this?
- f) What does Deena ask Effie to do? Does she agree in the end?

### FINAL TASKS

**1** Imagine you are one of the characters in the book. Write about what happens. Use the first person 'I'.

**2** Look at the book with a partner and choose one of the photos from the film. Describe what is happening. Say why it is important in the story. Talk with your partner about what happens before and after this photo.

**3** Write a new final chapter for the story. Think about the following questions. Will Deena stay with Curtis? Will Curtis change his ways? Will the Dreams continue to record and perform? What other new singers will Curtis discover? Will Deena and the girls find new careers?

**4** *Dreamgirls* is about making your dreams come true. Write about your dreams for the future. How will you make them come true?



### VOCABULARY BUILDER

**1** Look at the 'New Words' at the back of *Dreamgirls*. Complete the gaps with words from the list.

1. You sing ..... if you're not the lead singer.
2. The people who watch a concert are the .....
3. The record went to number 5 on the .....
4. It's our ..... today. We've been married for two years.
5. How many songs are there on the new ..... ?
6. We were very ..... when we lost the competition.
7. The singer stood on the ..... and looked at the crowd.
8. She's a great singer. She's really very .....
9. Taking ..... is very bad for your health.
10. They recorded the new song in the .....
11. He cared about black rights. He went on the .....
12. That group have a ..... with my record company.

**2** Complete this text with words from the 'New Words' list. Put any verbs into the correct form.

Effie's life was very difficult. She had no money so she had to receive

- (1) ..... She couldn't forget that Curtis had  
 (2) ..... her with Deena. She was also sad  
 about her (3) ..... with her brother. She felt  
 that C.C. had (4) ..... her.

But then he came back into her life. He (5) .....  
 her to record a new song. Soon after, Deena sent her some interesting  
 papers about Curtis. They showed that Curtis had

- (6) ..... DJs to play records. Maybe her  
 (7) ..... in the music business wasn't over yet.

#### Casual language

- **'a break'** (p. 9). This means 'a chance'. When Curtis is talking to the girls at the talent show, he says, 'You girls need a break, and I'm here to give it to you.' (See also p. 11 and p. 51.)
- **'It didn't work out.'** (p. 14). This means something wasn't successful. Curtis says this when he explains to Effie that his marriage failed.
- **'baby'** (p. 13). People often call their girlfriend or boyfriend 'baby'. (See also pages 22, 23, 25, 29, 31, 33, 39, 43, 44, 53 and 60.)
- **'We're through.'** (p. 44). This means 'our relationship has finished'. Lorrell says this to Jimmy when she finally decides to end their relationship.

**Complete the sentences below with the expressions:**

1. 'You know I love you, ..... Let's get married!'
2. 'I got a job in an office, but .....
3. 'You cheated on me! That's it. .... !'
4. A: 'I'm never going to be a success.'  
 B: 'Don't worry. You just need .....

### **DREAMGIRLS: FROM MUSICAL TO MOVIE (pages 64–5)**

#### **Research and presentation**

Divide the students into small groups. Each group should find out more about a film that was based on a musical (e.g. *Evita*, *Hairspray*, *Chicago*, etc.). Ideally they should try to watch the film as well as finding out more information on the Internet.

The groups then present their findings to the rest of the students.

#### **Questionnaire**

Ask students to prepare a survey about attitudes towards different types of films and film-going, e.g. *Do you like action films? Do you like romantic films? Do you like comedy films? Do you like musical films? How often do you go to the cinema? What was the last film you saw?* etc.

They can then ask as many other students as they like. Students can then compile their results and discuss them with the rest of the class, e.g. *Most people prefer to see films at the cinema.*

### **BEYONCÉ KNOWLES (pages 66–7)**

#### **Interview**

Students read the information about Beyoncé Knowles. Ask students to find more information about her on the Internet. Students work in pairs. One student is a journalist and prepares questions without showing them to his/her partner. The other is Beyoncé and prepares to answer the questions. Pairs role-play the interview.

#### **Profile**

Students write a profile about Beyoncé Knowles or about one of the other stars of *Dreamgirls*. They could include information about their date and place of birth, their career to date, their biggest successes, their family, and any interesting facts.

### **'I HAVE A DREAM' (pages 68–9)**

#### **Newspaper article**

Students find out more information about the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. They imagine that they are a newspaper reporter on this march. They should write a newspaper article describing the experience – the feeling of being in the crowd, seeing Martin Luther King, Jr. and hearing his 'I have a dream' speech for the first time, etc.

#### **Poster**

Ask students, individually, in pairs or in small groups, to prepare a poster about the important groups and artists of this decade (or another decade of their choice). They should research the information and decorate the poster with pictures/photos of the groups and artists. Display the posters in the classroom.

#### **DVD/CD FOLLOW UP**

If you plan to show the film in class, watch it yourself first to check that it is suitable for your students. Identify good places to pause. Explain that students shouldn't be discouraged if they can't understand everything at first.

#### **What happens next? (CD or DVD)**

Stop the DVD/CD just before a dramatic moment. Students say what is about to happen and what has just happened.

#### **Observing (DVD)**

Choose a scene before class and prepare questions on it. Tell the students to watch carefully and note down details about clothes, people in the scene, objects etc. Play the scene a couple of times and then ask questions, e.g. *What is Effie wearing? What happens when she sees C.C.? What does C.C. say to Magic? Can you describe Effie's flat? Who else is there?*

### **ANSWER KEY**

#### **Self-Study Activities (pages 70–2)**

- 1 a) talented b) stage c) (recording) contract d) disappointed e) back-up f) pop charts
- 2 a) record label b) album c) marches
- 3 a) Deena (and her best-friends, Effie and Lorrell) b) Curtis c) Antoine de Cadillac d) because of all the car factories there
- 4 a) Tiny Joe Dixon is the winner.  
b) He's happy because he likes Lorrell.  
c) They want him to record a song that C.C. has written.  
d) Dave and the Sweethearts steal the song.  
e) Curtis pays Nicky Cassaro to bribe radio DJs.  
f) Jimmy doesn't support him when he and Curtis disagree.
- 6 a) ii b) v c) i d) iii e) iv
- 7 a) audience b) riots c) relationship d) racist e) anniversary
- 8 a) True b) False. Effie is upset when Deena is chosen to sing lead. c) False. C.C. wants to write songs about civil rights d) True e) False. Curtis tells Effie to leave the group.  
f) False. Deena and Curtis get married in Los Angeles.  
g) True h) False. Jimmy takes drugs before the anniversary show.
- 10 a) X b) ✓ c) ✓ d) X e) ✓ f) ✓ g) ✓ h) X
- 11 a) Jerry Harris to Deena b) C.C. to Curtis c) Magic to C.C.  
d) Effie to C.C. e) Curtis to Deena f) Lorrell to Deena  
g) Deena to Effie
- 13 The correct order is: e, g, c, a, f, b, h, d.

#### **Resource Sheet Activities**

##### **People and places**

- 1 b) Effie c) Marty d) Curtis e) C.C. f) Lorrell and Deena
- 2 a) Detroit b) The Detroit Theatre

##### **Chapters 1–2**

- 1 a) Curtis persuades the organizer to let the girls sing.  
b) F. Everybody thinks the girls will win. c) T  
d) F. He lets them sing because he likes Lorrell.  
e) F. It isn't easy for the girls or for black musicians in general.  
f) T g) F. It does very well on the pop charts.

##### **Chapters 3–4**

- 1 b) sold c) paid d) was, wanted e) Effie, Deena f) him
- 2 b) worried c) happy d) surprised e) sad

##### **Chapters 5–6**

- b) a waiter at the club to Curtis c) the club manager to Curtis
- d) Curtis to May (Deena's mother) e) C.C. to Effie  
f) Curtis to C.C. g) Effie to Deena

##### **Chapters 7–8**

- 1 The correct order is: b, e, a, d, h, c, i, g, f.

##### **Chapters 9–10**

- 1 b) i c) v d) ii e) viii f) iii g) iv h) vi

##### **Chapters 11–12**

- a) She wants information about Curtis's plans for her future. She finds some interesting papers about the early days of Rainbow Records.  
b) He realises that Curtis bribed DJs. They can use these papers against Curtis.  
c) He agrees to pay for the costs of Effie's record. He does this because he doesn't want to go to prison.  
d) Effie tells Deena that she has a daughter, Magic. Deena is upset because she realises that Magic is Curtis's daughter and he has always refused to have a child with her.  
e) She goes back to Detroit. Curtis feels surprised and angry. He can't believe Deena is leaving him.  
f) Deena asks Effie to sing lead at the Dreams' goodbye concert. She agrees in the end.

#### **Vocabulary Builder**

- 1 1. back-up 2. audience 3. pop charts 4. anniversary 5. album  
6. disappointed 7. stage 8. talented 9. drugs 10. studio  
11. civil rights march 12. (recording) contract
- 2 1. welfare 2. cheated on 3. relationship 4. betrayed  
5. persuaded 6. bribed 7. career

#### **Casual language**

1. baby 2. it didn't work out 3. We're through 4. a break