

Unit 2 - Muhammad Ali

2A Introduction

In the 1960s, a young boxer named Cassius Clay came out of Kentucky, winning lots of fights. He even won the gold medal at the Olympics in Rome when he was only 18 years old. Still, most sports experts didn't think much of Cassius Clay. First, he had the nerve to call himself "the greatest." Second, he had a very strange boxing style, in which he dodged more than he blocked. Third, he would rhyme before a fight – clever freestyles that would later lead people to call him the first rapper ever.

He went on to live up to his self-proclaimed "greatest" title. After switching his name to Muhammad Ali and converting to Islam, the boxer was drafted to fight in the Vietnam War. He refused, arguing that the war was immoral. This got him banned from boxing in the United States for three years, until the Supreme Court decided that Ali should have the right to box. Ali came back in grand style, at an enormous fight, called the Rumble in the Jungle.

2B Song Lyrics

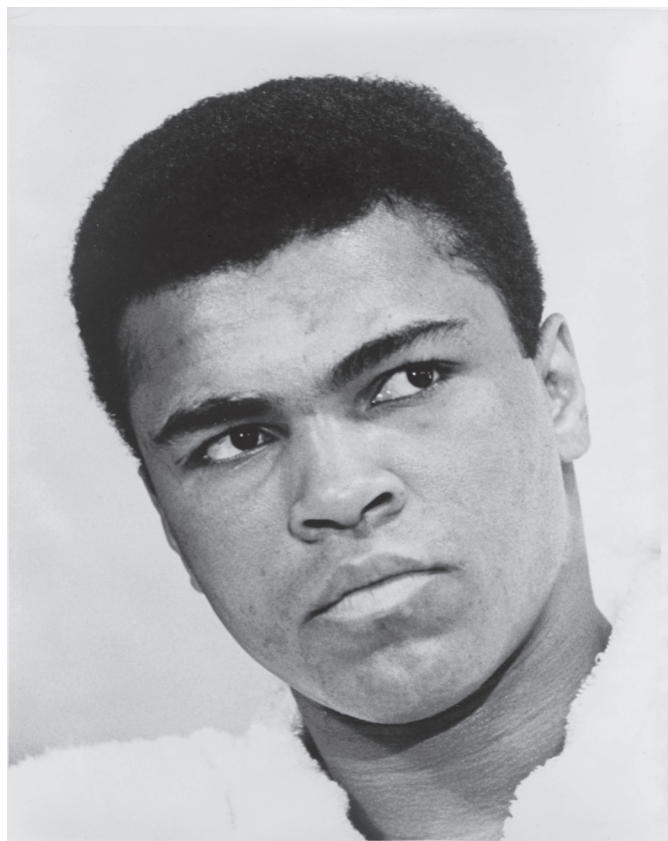
*"Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee,
Your hands can't touch what your eyes can't see."*

Now everybody's going to say his name: "Ali,"
But he was born Cassius Clay.
From day one, he struggled and **grappled** with the fact
That his grades were bad, he's in the back of the class.
But it was inherited, he had a **heritage**,
To keep his head up and never quit,
This boxer spit more rhymes than Chaucer,
Kept it hotter than water when you're cooking lobster.

"Wooh!" You said it, he had
The appearance or **mien** of a man with a dream.
They say to catch the worm, the birdie's got to get up early,
Well, Ali was faster than the Kentucky Derby.
Oh, he was quick and **agile**,
Fast on his feet, the kid had style,
He won Olympic gold, and came home to eat,
The restaurant said, "Sorry, son, whites only."

Oh, He felt so cold and unsettled
That he went to the river and threw in his gold medal.
This was the time and **era** of the Vietnam War,
And Ali got drafted to fight and serve.
But his **stance** on the war? He thought it was wrong,
"I ain't got no quarrel with them Vietcong."
A man who speaks what he thinks? You said it,
Meditate and **muse** on that for a minute, while I...

Hook



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Ali's biggest fight was with George Foreman,
It was **pivotal** in his life, so important.
It went down in Zaire; it was called and **dubbed**
The Rumble in the Jungle.
Foreman was stronger, but Ali was **audacious**,
Fearless and bold, preparing to go round for round.
He had to **muster** and gather the strength
To absorb Foreman's blows.

Nobody knows how Ali had the strength and the **stamina**
To withstand the pain, grab your camera.
'Cause one punch was **exceptional**, it stood out,
And that punch knocked George Foreman down.
The fight was **legendary**, and the story was told
Among the black, the white, and the young and the old.
You could say Ali was on a mission and **crusade**
To prove to the world, "I am the Greatest!"


Hook

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2C Words Defined

agile / audacious / crusade / dub / era / exceptional / grapple / heritage / legendary / mien / muse / muster / pivotal / stamina / stance


Below you'll find each vocabulary word that was used in the song. Each word is followed by the part of speech, a simple definition and a meaningful sentence. Some words will also have synonyms, antonyms and other forms of the word listed.

1. **agile**  (adj.) able to move quickly and easily; flexible

Cheerleaders are very *agile* as evidenced by their fancy stunts and dance moves.

Synonyms: nimble, spry

Other forms: Chimpanzees have a lot of *agility* (noun) since they are able to swing freely and easily from limb to limb without ever falling to the ground.

2. **audacious**  (adj.) bold, daring or uninhibited

The *audacious* young baseball player was eager to work his way up from the minor leagues.


Synonyms: courageous, nifty

Antonyms: timid, cowardly

3. **crusade**  (noun) a military expedition; a campaign for a cause

The king led the *crusade* across the country to take over more land and people.

Other forms: Crusade can also be a verb meaning "to fight for a cause," as in: The sixth graders *crusade* all year long to be able to attend the seventh and eighth grade dances. A *crusader* is one who *crusades*.

4. **dub**  (verb) to choose; to name

The English teacher announced that she was going to *dub* Lawrence the best speller in the entire class.

Synonyms: designate, label

5. **era**  (noun) a period of time marked by distinct events

The invention of the Ford Model T marked a new *era* in travel.

6. **exceptional**  (adj.) unusual, extraordinary

Brittney was such an *exceptional* speller that even our English teacher asked her how to spell words.

Synonyms: atypical, phenomenal, peculiar

7. **grapple**  (verb) to struggle with physically or mentally

Steven *grappled* with the idea of losing both his mom and his brother in the car accident.

8. **heritage**  (noun) legacy or tradition

The family had been located in the town for over one hundred years and were very proud of their *heritage*.

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9. legendary (adj) well-known or famous

Wild Bill, the outlaw, was *legendary* for his bank robbery hold-ups and gun fights.

Antonyms: obscure, unknown

Other forms: A *legend* (noun) is a story passed down through generations or a person who becomes *legendary*.

10. mien (noun) manner or appearance

The king was a man of honorable *mien*, so the townspeople did not fear him.

11. muse (verb) to think about or ponder something

My dad told me that my problem wasn't that I *mused* too much and that an idle mind was the devil's playground.

12. muster (verb) to gather or to summon

Like many teenage students, Gloria has to *muster* a lot of courage to stand in front of her peers and deliver a speech.

Antonyms: disperse, scatter

13. pivotal (adj) important, vital

A pivotal moment in the football game occurred when the opposing team's quarterback fell and broke his arm.

Antonyms: insignificant, minor, incidental

Other forms: A *pivotal* event is like a *pivot* (noun), a pin in the ground around which other things turn.

14. stamina (noun) endurance

Most marathon runners have a lot of *stamina* to run long distances.

Synonyms: staying power, endurance

15. stance (noun) 1. an intellectual or emotional attitude toward something 2. the position of one's feet.

1. Gavin's mom took a negative *stance* on taking drugs because her father had died from a drug addiction.

2. The baseball player's *stance* was awkward, yet he consistently hit home runs when he was at bat.

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2D Fix the Mistake

agile / audacious / crusade / dub / era / exceptional / grapple / heritage / legendary / mien / muse / muster / pivotal / stamina / stance

Each of the sentences below has a mistake. The wrong vocabulary words have been used, so the sentences don't make sense. Rewrite each sentence using the correct vocabulary word from this unit.

1. The ballerina was so **audacious** on the stage that she could start and stop her movements on a dime.

2. It just so happened that during the **exceptional** moment of the play, I had to use the restroom, so I missed most of the plot.

3. Thomas Jefferson was famous for his unending **mien** to give states more power.

4. My baseball coach **grappled** me the "home run kid" because I saved every baseball game with a home run.

5. During the Mesozoic **heritage**, massive dinosaurs roamed parts of the U.S. in Wyoming and Montana

6. "I think I'm happy because I'm so pretty," the model **mustered**.

7. The long distance runners had more **stance** than the sprinters.

8. Barry wanted to break the world record in number of hot dogs eaten in one minute because he wanted to be **agile**, and in people's minds forever.

9. Even the most **pivotal** stuntman would not attempt to jump between the two buildings.

10. Mr. Trump's stern **era** gave away that he was going to fire the employee no matter what she said in her defense.

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11. Rosie's **crusade** was full of famous chefs dating back to the early 1800s.

12. Mr. Simpson **dubbed** with the idea of whether to take a job as a surgeon or pediatrician.

13. Susie was shocked when her teacher announced that she had not just done well on the test, but she had done a(n) **legendary** job.

14. Ozzie had to **muse** the courage to ski down the black diamond slope with his friends.

15. A strong **stamina** against bullying was taken by the school administration during the school day.

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2E Pick the Winner

agile / audacious / crusade / dub / era / exceptional / grapple / heritage / legendary / mien / muse / muster / pivotal / stamina / stance

Circle the word that best fits into the sentence. Then write a sentence below that uses the word you didn't pick in a meaningful way.

1. Some of our family members were embarrassed by our mob-connected (**stamina OR heritage**).

2. When we studied the prehistoric (**era OR crusade**), I learned that early humans made several advancements in tool making.

3. Jerry had to (**muster OR dub**) the courage to ask his secret crush, Maryanne, to dance at the prom.

4. The (**agile OR pivotal**) moment came when Truman decided he wanted to escape.

5. Some bosses are (**exceptional OR audacious**) at motivating their employees to work more efficiently.

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2F Draw the Relationships

agile / audacious / crusade / dub / era / exceptional / grapple / heritage / legendary / mien / muse / muster / pivotal / stamina / stance

In each grouping of eight words below, draw straight lines between the synonyms (words that mean similar things), and draw wiggly lines between any antonyms (words that mean nearly opposite things). Every word should have at least one line connected to it. Some may have more.

1

agile	audacious	crusade	name
battle	nimble	dub	timid

2

era	legacy	grapple	heritage
typical	exceptional	period of time	harmonize

3

legendary	mien	muse	appearance
contemplate	unknown	muster	gather

4

one's personal attitude	stamina	stance	flexible
pivotal	minor	agile	endurance

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2G Understanding What You Read

agile / audacious / crusade / dub / era / exceptional / grapple / heritage / legendary / mien / muse / muster / pivotal / stamina / stance

Read the passage below. Then answer the questions.

Despite his audacious claims that he would win the fight, no one gave Muhammad Ali much of a chance to win the big 1974 fight, the Rumble in the Jungle. His opponent, George Foreman, was the current world champion and had beaten two other legendary fighters, both of whom had defeated Ali previously. Foreman was years younger than Ali, and one of the hardest hitters in boxing. Some people were scared that Foreman might accidentally kill Ali in the ring.

Prior to the fight, Ali had boasted about how agile his fighting style was, and that this style would help him defeat Foreman. He had declared that he would run circles around Foreman until he was exhausted and defeated. He had even written a little rap about it: “Now you see me, now you don’t. George thinks he will, but I know he won’t!” It was with rhymes like that one, not to mention his shining personality, that Ali got many of the fans on his side.

The fight started and seemed to be what everyone predicted: an easy win for Foreman. But Ali, after taking a few punches, didn’t give up. Instead he began to employ an exceptional strategy. He took Foreman on early, connecting with several strong right-handed blows, using all the strength and power that he could muster.

For the rest of the fight, Ali simply outlasted Foreman. He would take a stance against the ropes, allowing him to absorb Foreman’s punches. It was a strategy that commentators called “the rope-a-dope.” In the pivotal eighth round of the fight, Foreman’s stamina was gone. Ali was able to knock him out with a quick punch, winning the match.

While the Rumble in the Jungle had become one of the most important sporting events of its era, Ali had become one of the most important sports figures of all time.

1. Before the fight, Ali told the press that he would beat Foreman because he was more

- (A) powerful
- (B) creative
- (C) intelligent
- (D) nimble

2. According to the passage, George Foreman

- (A) had never actually won a major match before
- (B) was the most famous boxer alive
- (C) had defeated Ali twice before
- (D) was the world champion of boxing

3. According to the text, how was Ali able to gain fans?

- (A) punching
- (B) rhyiming
- (C) dancing
- (D) matching

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4. After getting hit a few times, Ali uses a strategy that is described as

- (A) special
- (B) a long shot
- (C) a sure thing
- (D) bizarre

5. What made Ali victorious?

- (A) He was a stronger puncher.
- (B) He hit Foreman in the head many times.
- (C) He let Foreman tire himself out.
- (D) He threatened to kill Foreman by accident.

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2H Thinking Creatively

agile / audacious / crusade / dub / era / exceptional / grapple / heritage / legendary / mien / muse / muster / pivotal / stamina / stance

Answer each question below. Don't be afraid to think creatively.

1. If you could be **legendary** for something, what would it be?

2. Why might the **mien** of an undercover cop be important?

3. When you get bored in class, what topics do you find yourself **musings** about?

4. If you were the President, what would be your **stance** on immigration?

5. Why do you think they call the metal device a **grappling hook**?

Word Breakdown

In Greek mythology, the Muses were goddesses/sprites that inspired people to create art. The nine major Muses were the daughters of Zeus, and each one embodied and inspired a different art form. They were: Calliope (epic poetry), Clio (history), Erato (lyric poetry), Euterpe (music), Melpomene (tragedy), Polyhymnia (religious music), Terpsichore (dance), Thalia (comedy), and Urania (astronomy). There is no official Muse of rap music. Yet.

The Muses were often called upon to help a struggling song writer or author in a time of need. Thus Dante writes, "O Muses! O high genius! Aid me now!" Nowadays, we call anything that is a source of inspiration a muse. It could be your mom, loneliness, love, or an image in your mind. My Muse when I wrote this song was Muhammad Ali himself.