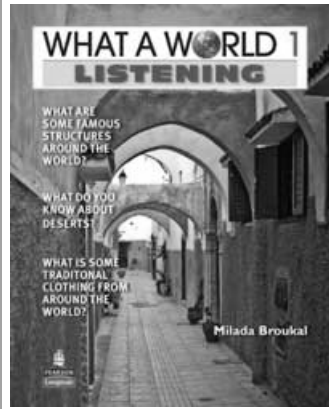


**What a World, Listening 1: Amazing Stories from Around the Globe**

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What a World, Listening 1: Amazing Stories from Around the Globe		
<b>Author:</b>	Milada Broukal (2011)	
<b>Publisher:</b>	White Plains, NY: Pearson Education, Inc.	
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In the context of increasing global communication, students in ESL and EFL classrooms are interested in learning more about the world and communicating with others. Current trends in teaching listening reflect these goals through the integration of communicative, task-based, and learner-strategy approaches (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). Milada Broukal’s textbook, *What a World, Listening 1* is a high-interest listening textbook for beginners. This textbook series integrates listening for details, considering overall context, and developing critical listening through discussion.

When teachers are seen as experts in the topics in an ESL/EFL course, students may expect those teachers to do much of the talking. However, in *What a World, Listening 1*, Broukal has chosen topics that beginning ESL/EFL students from around the world may themselves be experts on. *What a World, Listening 1* poses specific questions relating to students’ lives in pre-, during- and post- listening activities, challenging beginning students to engage in discussion with their peers and address specific questions. Asking students to listen and respond to genuine questions may push students to stretch their interlanguage, or the language system between their native and target languages, which Folse (2006) argues is an important goal of language learning activities.

The textbook uses vibrant, full-page pictures to pique students' interests before they begin listening. Some topics most students may have experience with; there are others will be new for many. In a class representing students from several countries, these topics could set the stage for lively conversations comparing traditions from different countries. Topics that most students are likely to be familiar with include popular kinds of books, New Year's greetings, gift giving, typical foods, bad weather, houses, and clothing. Topics that are likely to be new for many students include Northern Europe, famous philanthropists, manufactured islands, ancient Greeks, and the Nobel Peace Prize.

At the beginning of the unit, students are asked a few pre-listening questions about their lives in relations to the upcoming topic, such as: *Where does the leader of your country live? What kinds of gifts do you like to receive? What does a desert look like?* The *Long Talk*, a two-minute audio recording related to the unit theme, guides the *Vocabulary and Comprehension* sections. Each *Long Talk* has a different communicative purpose and context. For example, the *Long Talk* in a unit may be a conversation between peers, the dialogue of a guided tour, or part of a lecture from a fashion class. This recording introduces students to the new vocabulary words highlighted at the beginning of the chapter. Students infer the meanings of vocabulary as well as collocations in the talk in order to complete sentences and work with a partner to ask and answer open-ended questions.

The *Comprehension* section asks students to recall and interpret the content of the *Long Talk*. Students build on ideas from the previous sections by listening to two additional recordings. The tasks that accompany these recordings include note-taking and identifying important information about the participants in conversations. The book then provides several discussion and critical thinking questions to encourage students to weigh options, form opinions, and present arguments. Next, the *Language Focus* section presents segments of language from the *Long Talk* that is used to introduce and practice specific grammar and pronunciation points. The final section of each unit is *Conversation*. In this section, students listen, infer, and then practice using English expressions that could be useful in contexts outside of the unit theme. The 20-unit textbook also includes two self-tests for students to evaluate what they have learned. The *Internet Activities* appendix at the back of the book includes additional activities for research.

The activities described above do more than expose students to a variety of tasks; they serve as a context for teaching listening strategies. Each unit asks students to infer meaning, remember details, take notes, and develop critical listening skills. However, while the textbook and accompanying CD provide students with exposure to listening tasks, they do not provide students with explicit instruction on listening comprehension or explicit discussion of listening strategies. Mendelsohn (1995) suggests teaching students to recognize signals such as lexical items and intonation and then to teach students how to use those signals to infer meaning. If teachers are prepared to supplement listening tasks with strategy instruction, this textbook sets students up to acquire a toolbox of

listening strategies as well as an understanding of when these strategies will benefit them. As students progress through the textbook, their understanding of the strategies they have learned may become cemented as they practice them in each unit.

Based on current literature, we suggest the following ideas for the best use of this textbook: (1) decrease the amount of vocabulary taught at the beginning of the lesson, (2) set a context for listening texts, (3) implement more tasks to supplement fill-in-the-blank and multiple choice questions, and (4) consider the effects of non-authentic recordings on students' actual competence. Field (2008) notes that in the real world, students encounter words they do not know, so rather than teaching all unknown words, teachers should pre-teach only a few critical words. *What a World, Listening 1* presents eight new words for each unit, so teachers may narrow down that list and focus on four or five words. Field (2008) also argues that teachers should consider what listeners in the real world would already know about the listening context, such as who the speakers are and where they are conversing, and then provide students with basic information about the context. Neither the textbook nor the CD offers this information, so teachers should be prepared to discuss the context. Third, rather than simply listening and responding, students should interact with listening tasks (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). Although this textbook provides a variety of tasks, most tasks follow a listen and respond format. Teachers may create additional activities that allow students to complete a task interactively, such as information gap or information transfer exercises. Finally, teachers should consider that the CD recordings are not authentic speech. The slow speed and enunciation heard in the recordings, while appropriate for beginners, is different from the English that students might encounter outside the classroom. Teachers can look to resources linking listening comprehension with pronunciation instruction (e.g., Gilbert, 1995) to effectively supplement these recordings with authentic speech samples.

Overall, *What a World, Listening 1* is a successful effort to provide teachers and students with a variety of topics, recordings, tasks, and strategies in order to develop basic strategic and critical listening skills. The variety of topics provides students with opportunities to learn new things about the world as well as to teach others by sharing their own experiences and opinions. Moreover, the basic activities could guide even novice teachers in teaching listening strategies. Finally, since each unit provides teachers and students with several activities and recordings, teachers can customize each unit to fit time constraints and meet students' individual needs.

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