

John's Crazy Socks

Name _____ Date _____

Task 1

You are going to read a text about a young entrepreneur. This is the title, and a picture:

Socks 'let me be me', says John Cronin



Predict what you are going to read about in the article:

Task 2

These are words or phrases you will read in the text. Write a meaning or an example next to each one. The first one has been done for you.

to pull up your socks	<i>to make an effort / try hard</i>
nearby	
initiatives	
awareness	
it is imperative that...	
untapped	
to boost	
to garner	
a learning curve	
wholesale	
to hold someone back	

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Task 3

Now read the article. Answer these questions:

1. Where was John Cronin born?	
2. What is the name of his business?	
3. How many different kinds of socks does he sell?	
4. Name 3 things that John does in the business.	
5. What does John's father, Mark, do in the business?	
6. How many employees of the business have a disability?	
7. Mark thinks firms should employ people with disabilities. Why?	
8. What was the value of the world sock market in 2016?	
9. John's business is popular on social media. Find two examples in the text of this.	
10. What will John and Mark be doing next year?	

Task 4

There are six headings missing from the article. Choose from these eight headings, and write one in each space.

Colourful socks	Perfect partner
Spreading happiness	What a disaster!
'Thank-you' notes	A growing market
Giving opportunity	Ten years in business

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Task 5

Look again at your notes in Task 1. Talk with a partner about your prediction and the article. Was your prediction accurate? Did anything surprise you?

Task 6 (Homework)

Write a message on social media to John. Tell him what you like about his business. Ask him three questions about his business.

Text

Socks 'let me be me', says John Cronin



"Pull up your socks" isn't just a phrase to John Cronin. It's been the key to his entrepreneurial success.

Back in 2016, the 21-year-old told his dad, Mark, that he wanted them to start a business when he graduated from high school, but he wasn't sure what kind. "My first suggestion was a fun store, but we didn't know what to sell," says John, a native of New York's Long Island. Next he considered a food truck, but there was one problem: "We really can't cook!" jokes Mark.

Eventually, they settled on an idea. "John had worn crazy and colourful socks his whole life, so it was something he loved and he suggested we should sell socks," says Mark. "Socks are fun and creative and colourful, and they let me be me," says John, who has Down's syndrome. And with that, John's Crazy Socks was born. A year on, they say they've made \$1.4m (£1.03m) in revenue, raised \$30,000 for charity, and shipped socks to customers including Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and former US President, George HW Bush.

The online store has around 1,400 different kinds of socks, featuring everything from cats and dogs to barbeques to Donald Trump. Each order is shipped the same day with a pack of sweets and a hand-written 'thank you' note, and John will deliver them himself if you live **nearby**. As the face of the business, John also attends trade events, speaks with customers and suppliers, and comes up with **initiatives** like their "Monday madness mystery bag" and "Sock of the month" club.

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Adapted from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-42353259> by Joshua Cheetham



Mark deals with the technical aspects of running their business. "John really is an inspiration," says Mark, adding that he never gets any special treatment. "He works very hard in this business. We're usually in the office before 9am and frequently don't leave until after eight at night." In just over a year, the pair have shipped over 30,000 orders.

They donate 5% of all profits to the Special Olympics, which holds sports events for people with learning disabilities. John competes in the games in sports such as basketball, soccer and hockey. He also designs "**awareness** socks" to raise money for charities including the National Down Syndrome Society and the Autism Society of America.

"We have a social mission and a retail mission, and they're indivisible," says Mark. "I don't think it's enough anymore to just produce a service or produce a product. I think there have to be values attached to that, and we have a model that's showing that." "What we're doing is spreading happiness," adds John. The company wants to get more disabled people into work, and nearly a third of its staff have a disability. "We're working to show what people with disabilities and learning disabilities can do," says Mark. "When I talk to employers I tell them it is absolutely **imperative** that they hire people with disabilities. "Not because it's the right thing to do, not because they're nice guys, but because everybody is looking for good workers. "This is a vast, **untapped** pool of great workers."

The pair say one of their biggest challenges has been keeping up with demand. In their first month, John's Crazy Socks delivered 452 orders. Three months later this had risen to over 10,000 and they soon had to move into larger premises to cope with the pressure. "We've been a little surprised at how fast it's grown," says Mark. The wider socks market is growing too. Globally it was worth more \$42bn in 2016 and is expected to reach more than \$75bn by the end of 2025, according to Transparency Marketing Research.

"Most of us wear some sort of uniform to work - it might be a suit, it might be khakis and a polo shirt, it might be an orange jumpsuit," says Mark. "Yet you can wear a pair of socks and express yourself, adding some colour and flair, and you can do that for \$10 or less." Their sock-success has also been **boosted** by increasing attention from news outlets and their growing popularity on social media. They've **garnered** more than 90,000 likes and over a million video views on Facebook.

John's Crazy Socks **Answers and curriculum mapping**

Functional Skills English mapping

Coverage and range statements provide an indication of the type of content candidates are expected to apply in functional contexts. Relevant content can also be drawn from equivalent (school) National Curriculum levels and the Adult Literacy standards. ✓ indicates the main coverage and range skills that are (or can be) covered in this resource. However, these will vary with the student group and how the resource is used by the teacher. **Reference:** Ofqual (2009), *Functional Skills criteria for English: Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, level 1 and level 2*. <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/>

Entry 2 Reading Read and understand straightforward texts that explain, inform or recount information.

- a) Understand the main events in chronological texts ✓ T3 T4
- b) Read and understand simple instructions and directions ✓ T1
- c) Read / understand high frequency words & words with common spelling patterns ✓ T1
- d) Use knowledge of alphabetical order to locate information

Entry 2 Writing Write short texts with some awareness of the intended audience.

- a) Use written words and phrases to record and present information ✓ T6
- b) Construct compound sentences using common conjunctions
- c) Punctuate correctly, using upper and lower case, full stops and question marks ✓ T6
- a) Spell correctly all high frequency words and words with common spelling patterns

Entry 2 Speaking, listening & communication Participate in discussions / exchanges about familiar topics, making active contributions, with one or more people in familiar situations

- a) Identify the main points of short explanations and instructions
- b) Make appropriate contributions that are clearly understood ✓ T5
- c) Express, simply, feelings or opinions and understand those expressed by others ✓ T5
- d) Communicate information so that the meaning is clear ✓ T5
- e) Ask and respond to straightforward questions ✓ T5
- f) Follow the gist of discussions ✓ T5

Entry 3 Reading Read and understand the purpose and content of straightforward texts that explain, inform and recount information.

- a) Understand the main points of texts ✓ T3
- b) Obtain specific information through detailed reading ✓ T2 T3
- c) Use organisational features to locate information ✓ T4
- d) Read and understand texts in different formats using strategies and techniques appropriate to task ✓ T1 T2 T4

Entry 3 Writing Write texts with some adaptation to the intended audience

- a) Plan, draft and organise writing ✓ T6
- b) Sequence writing logically and clearly ✓ T6
- c) Use basic grammar including appropriate verb-tense and subject-verb agreement
- d) Check work for accuracy, including spelling

Entry 3 Speaking, listening & communication Respond appropriately to others and make some extended contributions in familiar formal and informal discussions and exchanges.

- a) Follow the main points of discussions
- b) Use techniques to clarify and confirm understanding
- c) Give own point of view and respond appropriately to others' point of view ✓ T5
- d) Use appropriate language in formal discussions and exchanges
- e) Make relevant contributions, allowing for and responding to others' input ✓ T5

Level 1 Reading Read and understand a range of straightforward texts

- a) Identify the main points and ideas and how they are presented in a variety of texts ✓ T2 T4
- b) Read and understand texts in detail ✓ T2 T4
- c) Utilise information contained in texts ✓ T2 T4
- d) Identify suitable responses to texts ✓ T1 T4

Level 1 Writing Write a range of texts to communicate information, ideas and opinions, using formats and styles suitable for their purpose and audience

- a) Write clearly and coherently, including an appropriate level of detail ✓ T6
- b) Present information in a logical sequence
- c) Use language, format and structure suitable for purpose and audience ✓ T6
- d) Use correct grammar, including correct and consistent use of tense
- e) Ensure written work includes generally accurate punctuation / spelling & that meaning is clear

Level 1 Speaking, listening & communication Take full part in formal and informal discussions and exchanges that include unfamiliar subjects

- a) Make relevant and extended contributions to discussions, allowing for and responding to others' input ✓ T5
- b) Prepare for and contribute to the formal discussion of ideas and opinions
- c) Make different kinds of contributions to discussions
- d) Present information/points of view clearly and in appropriate language

Task 1 - prediction

Encourage learners to use "I think", "I predict", "Maybe it's about...", and relative pronouns e.g. "a young man who..."

Task 2 - vocabulary

to pull up your socks	<i>to make an effort / try hard</i>
nearby	<i>not far / near "I live nearby". No object - "I live nearby the college."</i>
initiatives	<i>ideas, new ideas, something new, enterprise</i>
awareness	<i>things you know, knowing about something, knowledge "disability awareness"</i>
it is imperative that...	<i>you must / you need to / it is very important that</i>
untapped	<i>not used, not accessed, "an untapped resource"</i>
to boost	<i>encourage, make bigger, push, make something grow</i>
to garner	<i>gather, pick, collect</i>
a learning curve	<i>a time when you learn a lot, getting better, learning more</i>
wholesale	<i>selling to other businesses, in a large quantity. The opposite of "retail" – selling to the public.</i>
to hold someone back	<i>stop someone from making progress, from doing something</i>

Task 3 - comprehension

1. Where was John Cronin born?	<i>Long Island, New York</i>
2. What is the name of his business?	<i>John's Crazy Socks</i>
3. How many different kinds of socks does he sell?	<i>1,400</i>
4. Name 3 things that John does in the business.	<i>He attends trade events. He speaks with customers and suppliers He comes up with new ideas. He delivers socks in the local area. He works hard. He is the face of the business.</i>
5. What does John's father, Mark, do in the business?	<i>He deals with the technical aspects.</i>
6. How many employees of the business have a disability?	<i>nearly a third / one in three / 30%</i>
7. Mark thinks firms should employ people with disabilities. Why?	<i>because they are great workers / businesses need good workers</i>
8. What was the value of the world sock market in 2016?	<i>\$42bn / 42 billion dollars</i>
9. John's business is popular on social media. Find two examples in the text of this.	<i>"more than 90,000 likes and over a million video views on Facebook"</i>
10. What will John and Mark be doing next year?	<i>They'll be offering custom socks. They'll be opening a wholesale line to sell onto other small businesses. They want to build a studio in their offices for a "John's Crazy Socks Network" to produce more social media content.</i>

John's Crazy Socks **Answers and curriculum mapping**

Task 4 - headings

There are six headings missing from the article. Choose from these eight headings, and write one in each space.

For this task, encourage learners to look for key words in each paragraph – most of the headings are repeated in the body of the paragraph. Elicit reasons why the two dummy headings cannot be used, to encourage the learners to state the gist of the text (no disaster) and a specific detail (the business is one year old, so not ten years in business)

Colourful socks 1	Perfect partner 5
Spreading happiness 3	What a disaster!
'Thank-you' notes 2	A growing market 4
Giving opportunity 6	Ten years in business

Task 5

Look again at your notes in Task 1. Talk with a partner about your prediction and the article. Was your prediction accurate? Did anything surprise you?

In this speaking activity, it may be relevant to ask the learners for examples of preconceptions that they may have had about John from the photo and headline, and to draw out surprising details – the success of the business, the emphasis on social responsibility, their success on social media.

Task 6 (Homework)

Write a message on social media to John. Tell him what you like about his business. Ask him three questions about his business.

Encourage learners to use informal, colloquial language and structures, a variety of positive adjectives and correct question forms. Higher level learners – a variety of verb tenses, a hypothetical / second conditional question.

Notes

E2 and some E3 students will need support with reading text and the questions.

This resource also covers many:

Adult literacy curriculum <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf1286> elements.

Adult ESOL curriculum <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf1194> elements