**Big Yellow Taxi**

Joni Mitchell

***https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94bdMSCdw20***

**Teacher’s Notes**

**Focus:** Listening, vocabulary, discussion

**Level:** Intermediate, Upper-Intermediate

**Length:** 45 minutes

**Stage 1: Warmer**

Dictate the following words to the class for them to write down:

*paradise; museum; hotel; dollar; taxi; farmer; apples; parking; old man*

In pairs, students check they have the correct words and correct spelling.

Students predict the content of the song, especially the connections between the words.

**Stage 2: Listening for Key Words**

Listen to the whole song. Students number the words from exercise 1 in the order in which they appear in the song.

NB warn students that some words are present more than once – they should only number each word the first time they hear it.

Answers: *paradise (1); museum (4); hotel (3); dollar (5); taxi (8); farmer (6); apples (7); parking (2); old man (9)*

**Stage 3: Listening for Detail**

Give out the handout. Listen to the song again, and students check whether the underlined words are correct or not, changing the ones which are wrong.

(NB to give extra challenge to a higher-level class, you could remove the underlining so students just have to listen for all the incorrect words, without any clues about where they might be.)

Answers: *big -> pink; gone -> got; got -> gone; cut -> took; hand -> half; stars -> spots; bears -> birds; thought -> heard; take -> took*

**Stage 4: Understanding the Meaning**

Ask students to discuss what the song means. You could assign different sections to different groups or pairs, as follows:

Group 1: They paved … hot spot

Group 2: They took … see ‘em

Group 3: Hey farmer … Please!

Group 4: Late last night … my old man

Group 5: Don’t it always … it’s gone

Monitor and help nudge students towards a reasonable interpretation of their section. After 10 minutes or so, each group explains their section to the rest of the class.

Fast finishers can move on to discussing the other sections once they feel confident with explaining their own section.

**Stage 5: Discussion**

Give students the discussion questions (or put them on the board) to discuss in small groups. You may need to deal with vocabulary queries before starting the discussion, e.g. spoilt; organic food; take for granted; endangered; raise awareness

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***Listen to the song and check whether the underlined words are correct or not.***

They paved paradise, and put up a parking lot

With a big hotel, a boutique, and a swinging hot spot

Don't it always seem to go

That you don't know what you've gone ‘til it's got

They paved paradise, and put up a parking lot.

They cut all the trees and put them in a tree museum

Then they charged the people a dollar and a hand just to see 'em

Don't it always seem to go

That you don't know what you've gone ‘til it's got

They paved paradise, and put up a parking lot.

Hey farmer, farmer, put away that DDT now

Give me stars on my apples but leave me the bears and the bees

Please!

Don't it always seem to go

That you don't know what you've gone ‘til it's got

They paved paradise, and put up a parking lot.

Late last night, I thought the screen door slam

And a big yellow taxi take away my old man

Don't it always seem to go

That you don't know what you've gone ‘til it's got

They paved paradise, and put up a parking lot.

I said,

Don't it always seem to go

That you don't know what you've gone ‘til it's got

They paved paradise, and put up a parking lot.

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**Discussion Questions:**

“*They paved paradise, and put up a parking lot*” Are there any places in your country where areas of natural beauty have been spoilt by ugly buildings?

*“Give me spots on my apples, but leave me the birds and the bees”* Do you ever buy organic food? Why or why not?

*“You don’t know what you’ve got till it’s gone”* What kinds of things do people often take for granted?

The “*tree museum*” sounds a bit like a zoo. Do you think zoos are a good way to protect endangered animals? What are the alternatives?

Do you know any other songs about the environment or other social issues?

Can you think of other fun ways to raise people’s awareness of the environment?