

Taking Matters into Their Own Ears

DIRECTIONS: Read the passage. Use context to determine the meaning of each word.

The students sat in the auditorium with an abnormal amount of composure. The speaker, uncomfortable behind the podium with so many eyes fixed on him, squirmed and looked back out at the students. He was used to speaking to students; he was used to the chit-chat, the note-passing, the attention fixed on cell-phones and iPods—he was not accustomed to receiving anyone’s rapt attention. Nervously, he began.

As the students expected, his oration was endless. . . and boring. It was the third such oration they had had to endure this year, and they met it with a tired apathy. Yes, they knew they needed to work hard in school. Yes, they knew their future depended on it. They knew the value of participating in extracurricular activities, both in developing character and in making themselves into desirable prospects for colleges who were looking for well-rounded students. These sessions had been grueling—until Peter had gotten his big idea.

He’d mentioned it to one friend, who had mentioned it to another, and before he knew it, people he didn’t even know were walking up to him in the hall to ask him if he was going to go through with his plan, if “they” were all really going to do it.

His plan? To make the best possible use of the time they were required to sit in the assembly, by listening to some really useful advice: the song “Everybody’s Free (To Wear Sunscreen) by Baz Luhrmann – over and over again.

That morning, the entire seventh grade class brought their iPods to school. And when the scheduled speaker looked out across the intent and thoughtful faces focused up on him, he had no idea that inside every ear there was an earphone.

1. abnormal: _____

2. oration: _____

3. endure: _____

4. apathy: _____

5. grueling: _____



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ANSWERS

1. Not normal
2. a speech
3. to put up with
4. without feeling
5. tiring and demanding