

LEARN ENGLISH WITH MUSIC

Karma Chameleon

Culture Club

COMPLETE LEARNING WORKBOOK

Go beyond the song

Commitment, contradiction and colour-rich 1980s storytelling.

18 verified learning cards / Level B1 / guided practice

SECTION 00

Your learning journey

Watch first, explore second, practise from memory and finish with the complete card library.

1 WATCH	Follow the official lyric video and synced cards.
2 EXPLORE	Study language, extended vocabulary, culture and sound.
3 PRACTISE	Complete the guided challenges without looking back.
4 REVIEW	Use the final 18-card library by category.

Three sources of value

Song language gives you patterns to reuse. **Extended vocabulary** helps you discuss the themes and music. **Context** helps you understand cultural references and form your own interpretation.

Lyrics on video

[Open the lyric video used for this lesson](#)

Listen, read and return to the workbook whenever you want to explore a language point in greater depth.

SECTION 01

Map the song

Follow the mismatch between affectionate signals and inconsistent behaviour.

STAGE	LEARNING LENS
Opening	Identify the speaker, situation and first useful pattern.
Development	Track the main contrast, image or relationship problem.
Hook	Notice how repetition changes emphasis and memory.
Late return	Retrieve earlier language under new vocal or narrative pressure.

Listening challenge

For each stage, write one word for the sound and one for the speaker's emotional position. Then explain which language choice helped create that impression.

SECTION 02

Language Lab

Move beyond the quick cards: compare structures, notice register and learn how to avoid common mistakes.

LANGUAGE POINT	GO DEEPER	USE IT WELL
conviction, confidence and certainty	Conviction is a firm belief; confidence may concern ability; certainty is absence of doubt.	A confident speaker can still lack conviction about a moral choice.
come and go vs come or go	And presents the repeated cycle as one pattern; or presents alternatives.	Trends come and go. You can come or go - decide now.
used to, be used to, get used to	Used to describes a discontinued past; be used to means accustomed; get used to means become accustomed.	Only the first takes a base verb; the other two take a noun or -ing form.
colour metaphors	English uses green for envy or inexperience, red for anger or danger, and gold for value. Meanings depend on culture.	Treat colour associations as conventions, not universal facts.

SECTION 03

Extended vocabulary: go beyond the lyrics

This bonus language expands what you can say about the narrative, emotion, performance and production.

chameleon	noun	An animal that changes colour to match its surroundings; used figuratively for a person who changes their behaviour to fit in. <i>At work he's a total chameleon, adapting his tone to whoever he's talking to.</i>
karma	noun	The idea that a person's actions, good or bad, eventually come back to them. <i>She always says taking credit for other people's work is bad karma.</i>
to blend in	phrasal verb	To look or act like everyone around you so you don't attract attention. <i>He dyed his hair brown to blend in at the new office.</i>
to stand out	phrasal verb	To be clearly different from, and more noticeable than, everything around it. <i>Her bright red coat made her stand out in the grey crowd.</i>
two-faced	adjective	Behaving one way with some people and a completely different, dishonest way with others. <i>I stopped trusting him once I realised how two-faced he could be.</i>
camouflage	noun	Colouring or a pattern used to hide something by making it look like its surroundings. <i>The soldiers wore camouflage to move unseen through the forest.</i>
rival	noun	Someone competing with you for the same thing, especially for someone's love or attention. <i>He always felt like her ex was still a rival for her affection.</i>
to come and go	expression	To appear for a while and then disappear, repeatedly, without any permanence. <i>His good moods come and go depending on how work is going.</i>
devotion	noun	Deep, steady love and loyalty shown through consistent behaviour. <i>Their devotion to each other never wavered, even during hard years.</i>
to give yourself away	phrasal verb	To accidentally reveal your real feelings, thoughts or identity. <i>She tried to hide her nerves, but her shaking hands gave her away.</i>
fickle	adjective	Changing opinions, loyalties or feelings often and unpredictably. <i>Fashion is famously fickle - today's trend is tomorrow's mistake.</i>
loud	adjective, informal	Extremely bright, bold or attention-grabbing, used especially about colours or clothing. <i>He turned up to the party in the loudest yellow jacket I'd ever seen.</i>

SECTION 04

Idioms and expressive English

Use these additional expressions to discuss the song's situations and themes in natural English.

to show your true colours	extension	To reveal your real character or intentions, often after hiding them. <i>He seemed friendly at first, but he showed his true colours the moment things got difficult.</i>
to sit on the fence	extension	To avoid choosing a side or committing to an opinion. <i>The mayor kept sitting on the fence instead of backing either plan.</i>
to play it safe	extension	To avoid risk by choosing the least controversial option. <i>Instead of pitching his own idea, he played it safe and agreed with the boss.</i>
to wear your heart on your sleeve	extension	To show your emotions openly instead of hiding them. <i>My brother wears his heart on his sleeve - you always know exactly how he feels.</i>
to come out of your shell	extension	To stop being shy or hidden and start showing your real personality. <i>After a few weeks at the new school, she really came out of her shell.</i>

Make the language yours

Complete the exercises later in the workbook to check meaning, structure and register.

SECTION 05

Pronunciation as performance

A sung voice is not a neutral accent sample. Listen for concrete features, then compare theatrical delivery with everyday speech.

Non-rhotic R across the board	Like most England accents, Boy George drops the R after vowels: 'your', 'colour' and 'karma' all lose their r-sound, which only lengthens the vowel before it - very different from the hard American R.
Pop-reggae vowel bending	Culture Club grew out of early-80s London club and sound-system culture, and you can hear it in how George slides and stretches certain vowels rather than hitting them cleanly, giving the vocal its distinctive lilt over the song's reggae-tinged beat.
Dropped final G in sung phrasing	Words ending in '-ing' - like 'loving' and 'coming' - collapse into 'lovin' and 'comin' in the vocal line, a common feature of relaxed sung British English that disappears when the same words are spoken formally.
The London glottal stop on T	Raised in south-east London, Boy George often swaps a clear 't' for a small catch in the throat mid-word or at the end of a line, so a word like 'that' can sound closer to 'tha' before the next word starts.

Three-pass shadowing

1. Tap only the stressed beats.
2. Reproduce the phrase slowly and clearly.
3. Contrast a natural spoken version with the musical performance.

SECTION 06

Context and creative choices

Discover the cultural and creative decisions that shaped the song, then listen again with this context in mind.

"Karma Chameleon" was released as a single in the UK in September 1983, ahead of Culture Club's second studio album, *Colour by Numbers*, which followed that October. Boy George sketched out much of the song's melody and lyrics while on holiday in Egypt, bringing the idea back to the band to finish together.

The song almost didn't make the record. The rest of the group - Jon Moss, Mikey Craig and Roy Hay - were initially unconvinced, feeling its country-and-western-tinged melody didn't fit Culture Club's sound. Boy George pushed hard for the track and, by his own later account, was prepared to leave the band over it. Co-writer Phil Pickett, a multi-instrumentalist who had worked with the group before, helped shape the final arrangement, while session musician Judd Lander supplied the song's instantly recognisable harmonica line.

The gamble paid off. "Karma Chameleon" became Culture Club's second UK number one after "Do You Really Want to Hurt Me," topping the chart for six weeks and finishing 1983 as Britain's best-selling single of the year. Early in 1984 it also spent three weeks at number one on the US Billboard Hot 100, the group's only US chart-topper.

The song picked up serious industry recognition too: it won Ivor Novello Awards for Best Pop Song and Best-Selling A-Side, and at the 1984 Brit Awards Culture Club took home Best British Group and Best British Single.

Its music video, directed by Peter Sinclair, leaned into theatrical costume drama: the band and a large cast played 1870s Mississippi riverboat passengers aboard a vessel named "The Chameleon" - actually filmed on the River Thames near Weybridge, England, rather than the American South. The flamboyant red, gold and green styling echoed the song's own theme of hiding behind a colourful disguise, something Boy George later described as being about the fear of standing up for one thing.

More than four decades on, the song remains one of the best-selling singles in UK chart history, having sold over 1.5 million copies domestically and more than five million worldwide. In this catalogue it's the most theatrical entry in British English: a pop-reggae hybrid grown out of early-80s London club culture, a world away from the gentle balladry of Ed Sheeran's *Perfect* or Sam Smith's *Stay With Me*.

SECTION 07

Practice zone

Complete every activity without looking back, then use the answer key to correct your work independently.

A. Extended vocabulary in context

1. Choose the best term for this meaning: *An animal that changes colour to match its surroundings; used figuratively for a person who changes their behaviour to fit in.*

chameleon / karma

2. Choose the best term for this meaning: *The idea that a person's actions, good or bad, eventually come back to them.*

karma / to blend in

3. Choose the best term for this meaning: *To look or act like everyone around you so you don't attract attention.*

to blend in / to stand out

4. Choose the best term for this meaning: *To be clearly different from, and more noticeable than, everything around it.*

to stand out / two-faced

5. Choose the best term for this meaning: *Behaving one way with some people and a completely different, dishonest way with others.*

two-faced / camouflage

6. Choose the best term for this meaning: *Colouring or a pattern used to hide something by making it look like its surroundings.*

camouflage / chameleon

B. Retrieve the expression

7. Which expression matches this meaning: *To reveal your real character or intentions, often after hiding them.?*

8. Which expression matches this meaning: *To avoid choosing a side or committing to an opinion.?*

9. Which expression matches this meaning: *To avoid risk by choosing the least controversial option.?*

10. Which expression matches this meaning: *To show your emotions openly instead of hiding them.?*

C. Accuracy check

11. Correct the form: **I listened the song carefully.**

12. Choose the careful form: **The contrast lead to a new meaning / leads to a new meaning.**

SECTION 08

Answer key

Check each answer and return to the Language Lab when a form or distinction is still unclear.

1. chameleon
2. karma
3. to blend in
4. to stand out
5. two-faced
6. camouflage
7. to show your true colours
8. to sit on the fence
9. to play it safe
10. to wear your heart on your sleeve
11. I listened to the song carefully
12. The contrast leads to a new meaning

Review again

Cover the answers and repeat the activities after a few days. A delayed second attempt is a better test of learning than immediate rereading.

SECTION 09

Complete 18-card library

Use this compact summary for quick revision or return to the video cue when you want to hear a point again.

Vocabulary / 5 cards

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 0:15

loving in your eyes

Loving can work as an adjective meaning showing affection. The phrase describes an observable quality rather than the action love.

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 0:30

conviction

Conviction means a firmly held belief or certainty. A person without conviction appears indecisive or unwilling to commit.

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 1:06

red, gold and green

The colour sequence is vivid sound symbolism and visual branding. In context it helps turn an abstract accusation into an unforgettable refrain.

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 1:36

love was an addiction

Addiction is used metaphorically for an attachment that feels compulsive. The metaphor is powerful but should not trivialise clinical addiction.

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 2:27

rival

A rival is a person or group competing for the same goal. The word turns a relationship into a contest.

Grammar / 6 cards

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 0:24

If I listen ... would you say?

The lyric mixes an if-clause with would in a question. It frames the answer as uncertain or hypothetical, not guaranteed.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 0:36

does not know: third-person agreement

With he, she or it, do becomes does and the main verb returns to its base form: does not know, not does not knows.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 1:18

did not hear: past negative

Past negatives use did not plus the base form: did not hear. The past is carried by did, so hear does not change to heard.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 1:57

string someone along

String someone along is a separable phrasal verb meaning keep someone interested without sincere commitment.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 2:12

every day vs everyday

Every day is a two-word time expression meaning each day. Everyday is an adjective meaning ordinary: everyday life.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 2:48

contradiction

A contradiction is an incompatibility between statements or behaviour. Sell a contradiction suggests presenting inconsistency as believable.

Idioms / 2 cards

IDIOM / VIDEO 0:42

come and go

Come and go describes repeated arrival and departure. Figuratively, feelings, trends and opportunities may also come and go.

IDIOM / VIDEO 1:24

used to be so sweet

Used to + base verb describes a past state or habit that is no longer true. It contrasts earlier affection with present disappointment.

Culture / 2 cards

CULTURE / VIDEO 0:54

karma and the chameleon

Karma suggests consequences returning to a person; a chameleon suggests changing identity. Combined, they characterise inconsistent behaviour.

CULTURE / VIDEO 3:30

colour returns as identity

The late return of the colour refrain reinforces the chameleon image: visual change becomes a metaphor for unreliable emotional identity.

Pronunciation / 3 cards

PHONETICS / VIDEO 1:48

karma: first-syllable stress

Karma is stressed on the first syllable: KAR-ma. The repeated rhythm makes the weak second vowel especially clear.

PHONETICS / VIDEO 3:09

come and go: linking and reduction

And is normally unstressed and may reduce to /n/. The phrase is heard as one rhythmic unit rather than three isolated words.

PHONETICS / VIDEO 3:48

final refrain: retrieval under layering

Use the final repetitions to shadow the stressed syllables while keeping and weak. Accurate rhythm matters more than pronouncing every word heavily.

Keep learning

[Return to the synced learning experience.](#)