

**I BELIEVE I CAN FLY** by R. Kelly**A lesson about the modals *can* and *could* (Chapter 12)****Notes for the Teacher****1. The song**

Do a search on the Internet to find the song “I Believe I Can Fly” by R. Kelly. When you search, be sure to include the title and the name of the artist.

2. Song background

R. Kelly is an R & B (rhythm and blues) singer and songwriter. He first sang in subway stations in Chicago, Illinois, but now he is very famous. In fact, he was one of the most successful R & B performers of the 1990s.

R. Kelly first sang this song, “I Believe I Can Fly,” in 1996. R. Kelly says that he wrote the song for Michael Jordan, a very famous basketball player who jumps very high. The song is inspirational -- it tries to help people succeed in life.

3. Grammar background

This song uses the modal verb *can* to express ability.

Write these examples on the board. Point out to students that ***can*** is followed by the **simple form** of the verb.

*A bird **can fly**, but a cow **cannot fly**.
A fish **can swim**, but a cow **can't swim**.*

Could is the past tense of *can*. In this song, it is used to express ability in the past. Write these examples on the board:

*When I was a very small baby, I **couldn't talk**.
I am an adult now, so I **can talk**.*

*When I was a child, I **couldn't drive** a car.
I am adult now, so I **can drive** a car.*

You can find information on *can* and *could* on pages 354 and 362 in Chapter 12 of *Basic English Grammar*.



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4. Vocabulary

These are just a few of the vocabulary words you might want to discuss during your lesson.

- **used to:** when a person did something in the past, but does not do it now.
- **go on:** continue (in life)
- **lean on:** use as support
- **everlasting:** continuing forever
- **There's nothing to it.** "It's easy."
- **wing:** the part of a bird or insect's body used for flying
- **soar:** fly high
- **be on the verge:** be going to happen very soon
- **miracle:** something really special and unusual
- **achieve:** do successfully



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Student Worksheet

While you listen

1. Listen to the song once.
How does the song make you feel?
Does it make you feel more than one emotion?
Write down all the emotions you felt when you heard the song.
2. Now listen again. Try to hear the modals *can* and *could*.
Make a mark under *can* every time you hear *can*.
Make a mark under *could* every time you hear *could*.

Can	Could

3. Now listen again. Read the lyrics as you listen. Did you hear all the verbs?

After you listen

1. **Things to think about and discuss**
In pairs, small groups, or as a whole class, share your answers to these questions.
 - The singer says that he is different than he was in the past.
In your opinion, why did he change?
 - The singer talks about miracles.
What do you think he means when he says that it must start inside of him?
 - The singer is a person, so he can't really fly.
What do you think he means when he says he can fly?



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Student Worksheet page 2

2. Grammar

Find the sentence where the singer uses *could*. Why do you think the singer used *could* instead of *can* in this sentence?

3. Speaking & Writing

In pairs, small groups, or as a whole class, share your answers to these questions:

Think about a difficult problem that you had in your life.

What did you do about the problem?

Did someone help you?

How did they help you?

Share your story with another student or small group.

Now write a paragraph about your problem and how you solved it.

Use this title:

A Difficult Problem in my Life