Bob Dylan meets Pope Leo in Rome

LEVEL A2/B1


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I. WARM-UP

1. Have you ever visited a famous church or palace? Where?
2. Which songs by Bob Dylan or other classic artists do you know?
3. What gift would you bring to a formal visit? Why?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

host
to receive and welcome a guest at your place

residence
the official home of an important person

tour
a series of performances in different places

brief
short in time

gift
something you give to someone, a present

performance
a music, dance or play shown to an audience

peace
a time without war or violence

lyrics
the words of a song

III. READING

Bob Dylan, 85, met Pope Leo XIV at the Apostolic Palace in Vatican City during his Italian tour. The pope hosted the singer at his official residence, and the meeting was brief. Dylan was wearing a black hoodie and gloves, while the pope was in white. They exchanged gifts.

Leo gave Dylan a rosary, and Dylan gave him his autobiography, Chronicles: Volume One. Dylan was due to give a performance at the Palazzo dello Sport in Rome the next day, one of several stops on his Rough and Rowdy Ways tour. Leo has quoted Dylan's work before.

In a book about peace, he used lines from an unreleased anti-nuclear song, Go Away You Bomb, written in 1963. The typed lyrics were later found in 2013 and put up for auction. It was Dylan's second meeting with a pope; in 1997 he performed for Pope John Paul II and a huge crowd in Bologna.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **BBC News**: *"Pope Leo hosts Bob Dylan at official residence...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where did Bob Dylan meet Pope Leo XIV?
2. What gifts did the two men exchange?
3. What was Dylan going to do the next day in Rome?
4. Which unreleased Dylan song did Leo quote in his book?
5. When had Dylan met a pope before this visit?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Why do famous artists sometimes meet world leaders?
2. What makes a good gift for a formal visit? Explain your choice.
3. Do song lyrics help people think about peace? Why or why not?
4. Would you like to visit Vatican City? Why or why not?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Past continuous

Use was/were + verb-ing to show an action in progress at a time in the past, often with when/while for background.

*"Dylan **was wearing** a black hoodie and gloves."*
*"At the palace, they **were exchanging** gifts."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the past continuous form of the verb.

1. When the meeting began, assistants (prepare) ___ tea. _____
2. While Dylan (meet) ___ Pope Leo, photographers waited. _____
3. At the Palazzo, crews (set) ___ up the stage while fans arrived. _____
4. While visitors queued at the Vatican, a guard (watch) ___ the door. _____
5. During the tour, buses (travel) ___ between cities. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 8–10 minutes vocabulary, 10–12 minutes reading, 8–10 minutes comprehension, 8–10 minutes discussion. Fold grammar into reading/comprehension time if needed.
- Pre-teach names and terms from the text (Dylan, Leo XIV, Vatican City, rosary, autobiography). Drill pronunciation and check meaning with simple examples.
- Run a quick gist read (Who met whom? Where?), then a detail read for gifts, place and tour info. Sensitivity: the story involves religion and a pope; keep talk on the public event, not personal beliefs, and let students pass on any question.
- Differentiation: stronger students summarise each paragraph; others underline answers in the text first. Fast finishers list other peaceful songs they know and share why.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Elicit quick ideas, then ask for one benefit and one risk of such meetings.
2. Have students list two suitable gifts and justify them; compare in pairs.
3. If answers are short, prompt with examples from the text (song, book, peace).
4. Show a map to spark ideas; ask what they would look for on a short visit.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Writing: In pairs, write a 60–70 word news brief about the meeting for a school website.

Role-play: Student A is Dylan's aide, Student B is the pope's aide; plan the 5-minute gift exchange.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Past continuous

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where did Bob Dylan meet Pope Leo XIV?
   At the Apostolic Palace in Vatican City.
2. What gifts did the two men exchange?
   Leo gave a rosary; Dylan gave his autobiography.
3. What was Dylan going to do the next day in Rome?
   Give a performance at the Palazzo dello Sport.
4. Which unreleased Dylan song did Leo quote in his book?
   Go Away You Bomb.
5. When had Dylan met a pope before this visit?
   In 1997, performing for Pope John Paul II in Bologna.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use was/were + verb-ing to show an action in progress at a time in the past, often with when/while for background. (Example 2 constructed.)

> *"Dylan* **was wearing** *a black hoodie and gloves."*
> *"At the palace, they* **were exchanging** *gifts."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the past continuous form of the verb.

1. When the meeting began, assistants ___ tea. **were preparing**
2. While Dylan ___ Pope Leo, photographers waited. **was meeting**
3. At the Palazzo, crews ___ up the stage while fans arrived. **were setting**
4. While visitors queued at the Vatican, a guard ___ the door. **was watching**
5. During the tour, buses ___ between cities. **were travelling**