

Mentor English: One of My Frog Role Models

You might not know this about me—you probably don't know this about me—but one of my dream careers when I was younger was to work for Jim Henson's Muppets. In college, I actually bought a video camera and made my own puppets and tried to make short movies like the ones the Muppets made. . . well, believe it or not: I'm not as good as the Muppets.

Still, today we're going to hear about one of my role models: Jim Henson. I look up to him, because he was smart and funny. . . but mostly because his work is always 'fun' and, in a strange way, more 'human' than the live action films that Hollywood produces.

The recording is from the [spoken Wikipedia article](#) on Jim Henson. I have shortened it to about five minutes (it's only enough of his life to get up to the Muppet Show). You can listen to the whole thing at Wikipedia. There are a lot of [spoken Wikipedia articles](#) available. . . they're all good listening practice!

Before You Start the Recording

It should be clear by now that you're going to hear the story of someone's life. The speaker of this article speaks very clearly, but thinking about the information he will *probably* give you could make it easier to understand. How much do you know about Jim Henson in your own language? Keep that in your mind, as well.

Start the recording.

After You've Heard the Recording

What did you think? Was there anything in there that surprised you? I was interested to find out that he was compared to Kermit the Frog, it makes me wonder how much of 'Kermit' is the same as 'Jim' when I see him on TV.

Who are your role models? Why do you look up to them? Let us know!

Here's some of the vocabulary that may have been difficult for you in the recording. If there's any I missed, please let me know!

Vocabulary

Attending: When you are in a school, you *attend* a school. You can use the verb attend for the time you spend there each day: "I attend school from eight to four every day." Or for the time you spent there in your life: "I attended school from 1985 to 1998."

Graduating: The ceremony at the end of school in the U.S. is called 'graduation.' To 'graduate'

school is to finish with it. 'Graduating school,' is a fancy way of saying 'finishing school.'

Wider array: A 'wider array' is a 'wider variety' or a 'wider selection.' It simply means more different kinds of something.

Downplay: I have a friend who's a very talented poet, but he doesn't like to talk about it. It's like he's embarrassed of being very good. So, when we talk about it, he tries to minimize—or *downplay*—his talent. To 'downplay' something is to try to make it seem smaller than it really is.

Abandon: To abandon something is to leave it. . . and not to come back. When a ship starts sinking, the crew will call “Abandon ship!” An abandoned project is one you're not going to start working on again. And 'abandoned children' are a very sad case: their parents have left them and won't come back!

Whim: Normally, a 'whim' means a sudden idea. But in this recording, a better translation would be 'will' or 'desire.' If you know a person who won't give up, that person has—like Jim Henson in this recording—a 'whim of steel.'