

The Case for Quiet

C1 | Adults / Teens | Reading + Vocabulary + Discussion | 60-75 minutes

BEFORE YOU READ

Talk with a partner. Is noise merely an annoyance, or should cities treat quiet as a shared public resource?

1. Match the words (1-6) with the definitions (A-F).

- | | | |
|--------------|-------|--|
| 1. ambient | _____ | A. make sure a rule is obeyed |
| 2. chronic | _____ | B. continuing for a long time |
| 3. intervene | _____ | C. a peaceful place that offers protection or relief |
| 4. enforce | _____ | D. fair to different people or groups |
| 5. equitable | _____ | E. present in the surrounding environment |
| 6. sanctuary | _____ | F. become involved in order to change a situation |

2. Read the article. The bold words are the vocabulary from Activity 1.

1. City noise is often discussed as a minor irritation: traffic at night, a delivery scooter, music from a nearby bar. Yet the constant **ambient** sound of urban life can be difficult to escape. Unlike an occasional loud event, it enters homes, classrooms and workplaces without requiring anyone's permission.

2. Research on **chronic** noise has encouraged planners to take the issue more seriously. A person may adapt to a familiar sound and stop noticing it consciously, while still finding it harder to rest, concentrate or recover from stress. The effects are uneven because people with more money can often choose quieter housing or leave the city at weekends.

3. There is no simple answer. Cities need transport, construction and places where people can meet. A strict ban on sound could make public life less lively and could harm small businesses. The question is where public authorities should **intervene**, especially when one group's enjoyment becomes another group's lack of sleep.

4. Possible measures include quieter road surfaces, limits on late-night deliveries, more trees and designated quiet areas in parks and libraries. But a rule has little value unless it can be reasonably **enforced**. Residents may also disagree about what counts as unreasonable noise in a busy neighbourhood.

5. The most useful approach may be an **equitable** one: not silence everywhere, but reliable access to calm spaces. A local library, a park or a well-designed public room can become a **sanctuary** for people who do not have one at home. Quiet, then, is not a luxury; it is part of a liveable city.

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UNDERSTAND, DISCUSS AND WRITE

3. Comprehension. Answer in complete sentences. Use the article to help you.

1. Why does the article distinguish chronic noise from an occasional loud event?

2. Why are the effects of urban noise unequal?

3. What tension does the article identify for city authorities?

4. Why is enforcement important?

5. What does the article mean by an equitable approach?

4. Discuss. Talk in small groups. Give reasons and examples.

- What sounds make a place feel alive rather than stressful?
- Should a city protect quiet neighbourhoods more strongly?
- Who should decide what counts as unreasonable noise?
- Where could your community create a quiet public space?

5. Homework: Write an opinion paragraph.

Write 180-220 words proposing one change that would make your local area quieter or more restful. Explain both the benefit and a possible objection.

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ANSWER KEY AND TEACHING NOTE

Vocabulary matching

1. ambient - E
2. chronic - B
3. intervene - F
4. enforce - A
5. equitable - D
6. sanctuary - C

Comprehension answers

1. Why does the article distinguish chronic noise from an occasional loud event?

Chronic noise is persistent and can affect homes and work without people choosing it, even when they stop consciously noticing it.

2. Why are the effects of urban noise unequal?

People with more money may be able to choose quieter homes or leave the city, while others may not.

3. What tension does the article identify for city authorities?

They must allow transport, construction and lively public life while protecting people from harmful disturbance.

4. Why is enforcement important?

Rules about noise have little practical value if they cannot be reasonably enforced.

5. What does the article mean by an equitable approach?

It means giving everyone reliable access to calm spaces rather than demanding silence everywhere.

Teaching note

Compare vocabulary answers before reading. Help learners plan a quieter shared space: practical measures and a possible objection. Accept accurate comprehension paraphrases and supported personal responses.