Suggestion for use in the classroom

This dictation is appropriate for classes at Upper Intermediate level or above. Although the dictation is only about 1 minute long, the ideas below will need about one hour of class time if you use them all!

1. Lead-in

You can prepare the students for the dictation by using one or both of the following activities:

Ask the students if they have ever watched a Miss World or Miss Universe (or similar) competition (pageant) on TV. Ask them what they think of such competitions. You could prompt the students with some of the following questions:

- Why do you think that beauty pageants are so popular?
- Are beauty pageants sexist? Do they degrade women?
- What do you think about the women who take part in such competitions?
- What do you think about Mr Universe (and similar) competitions?

Ask the students if they have seen or heard about the film Little Miss Sunshine. Ask them what they know about it, and what they liked / disliked about it (if they have seen it). (Little Miss Sunshine is a dramatic comedy that won two Oscars in 2007 [Michael Arndt for best screenplay, and Alan Arkin for best supporting actor]. It tells the story of a seven-year old girl who dreams of winning a beauty pageant for children. When she unexpectedly gets her big chance, her dysfunctional family have to do all they can to help her.)

Tell the students that they are going to listen to the parent of a girl who takes part in beauty pageants for children. The girl is five years old. Tell the students that child pageants are very popular in the United States, particularly the south, with over 250,000 children taking part each year.
Put the students in small groups. Tell them that you are going to read aloud four statements. (They do not need to write the statements down, but you can repeat the statement if necessary.) The students must decide collectively if

1 they strongly agree  
2 they agree  
3 they’re not sure  
4 they disagree  
5 they strongly disagree

Ask them to justify their opinions. After the students have had sufficient time to discuss the first statement, ask the class for feedback before reading out the next.

• Most little girls like dressing up and looking pretty, so there’s nothing wrong with pageants that allow them to do that.
• There’s no difference between encouraging your daughter to take part in beauty pageants and encouraging to take part in other competitive activities such as spelling competitions or sport.
• The children in pageants are not old enough to make decisions for themselves. The parents of these children are pushy, ambitious and irresponsible.
• Child pageants exploit children. They are a form of child abuse, are highly offensive and should be banned.

2. The dictation

It is usually best for students to listen to the complete text at least once without stopping before they are asked to take notes. When they listen again, you will need to pause from time to time to allow students to write. The script above has suggested pause marks. One of the values of dictations is to train the students’ short-term memory, so the sections between pauses should be short enough for the exercise to be do-able, but long enough to be challenging.

You can use one of the suggestions on the following page to vary this procedure.
Teacher’s notes

Before the students listen for the first time, write the following adjectives on the board.

**BALANCED  IRRESPONSIBLE  MISGUIDED  REASONABLE  STUPID**

After they have listened, ask the class which adjective(s) best describes the speaker. *Answer: The answer to this question is a matter of opinion.*

Allow a student / the students to decide when to pause the recording.

Make the students listen to the dictation once (without stopping).

Then attach a copy of the recording script to the board or a wall of the classroom. In order for students to be able to see this, they will need to get up from their desks.

Students work in pairs: one student is a ‘dictater’, the other is a ‘scribe’. The ‘dictaters’ get up from their desks, go to the script, remember as much as they can and then return to their ‘scribe’ and dictate what they can remember. They return to the script as often as necessary until their ‘scribe’ has completed the text.

When a pair of students have completed their text, tell them to sit down together and check for errors. If they feel they need to, one of them can get up to look at the script on the board or wall to double-check.

Depending on the size of the class, you may need more than one copy of the script in strategic positions.

**Variations**

- Some teachers like to turn this procedure into a race. This can be both fun and motivating, but runs the risk of becoming a little chaotic with larger classes.
- You can tell the ‘dictaters’ to keep their hands behind their backs at all times. This will force them to use more language (as opposed to pointing with their fingers) when explaining to their partner what needs to be written.

Students work in pairs: one student is a ‘dictater’, the other is a ‘scribe’. The ‘dictaters’ get up from their desks, go to the script, remember as much as they can and then return to their ‘scribe’ and dictate what they can remember. They return to the script as often as necessary until their ‘scribe’ has completed the text.
3. Follow-up
You can use one or both of the exercises below to explore some of the language in the dictation.

Tell the students to find and underline in the text the words from the two columns below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REALISTIC</th>
<th>DETERMINATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOUGH</td>
<td>PLEASURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROGRESS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROUD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TALENT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then ask them to circle adjacent words. For the words on the left (realistic / tough), they should circle the **following** word; for the words on the right (determination, etc.) they should circle the **preceding** words.

Put the students into pairs or small groups and ask them to think of as many alternatives as possible to the words that they have circled.

Finally, tell them to find the words from the columns in their dictionaries. They should look at the ‘Collocation’ sections in pink to find the most common collocations for these words. Ask them to decide if any of these words would be possible in the context of the dictation.

Give the students the information below about metaphors in English. You could either photocopy this information or dictate the sentences. All page references are from the second edition of the **Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners**.

### Metaphor

- **Forcing** someone to do something is like putting **physical pressure** on them, or **pulling** or **pushing** them. [p585]
- Happiness and hope are like **bright light** or **bright colours**. Sadness and lack of hope are like **darkness** or **dark colours**. [p685]
- Helping people is like **supporting** them **physically**, for example with your body or with something that you build. [p706]
- Having an opportunity to do something is like having a **door** or **way of getting into a building**. [pp1050 and 1051]
- Being successful is like being **high up**. Failing is like **falling** or being **low down**. [pp1494 and 1495]
- Wanting something is like being **hungry** or **thirsty**, and doing or having something you want is like **eating** it. [p1676]
Ask them to look at their dictation scripts and find one example of metaphorical language use for each of the categories above.

**Answers:**

- pressure her
- her little face light up
- give a helping hand
- what kind of doors may open
- make it to the top
- lost a taste for it all

Tell the students to look up the underlined words (above) in their dictionaries and find the pink ‘Metaphor’ boxes. Ask them to work in pairs or small groups and:
1. to decide if the these metaphors work the same way in their own language
2. to choose two or three of the examples that are given in the dictionary and to translate these into their own language.

Students will probably need at least ten minutes for this activity. When they are ready, conduct feedback with the whole class.