

## THE KING OF POP

25<sup>th</sup> June 2009

After being away from the stage for years, Michael Jackson, one of the most famous American pop stars ever, is preparing for a new world tour called 'This is it'. Everybody is waiting for his comeback. The tour has been organised to solve his serious financial problems and will attract over one million people all over the world. But suddenly a shocking piece of news cancels the excitement for this great event: just a few weeks before starting the tour, at the age of 50, Michael Jackson is dead. A heart attack, probably caused by a drug overdose, has put an end to his 40-year-long career.

Michael Jackson was a musician and a dancer. He was called 'the King of Pop', as he was the most successful singer and one of the best selling artists in history. He was born near Chicago in 1958 in a family of nine children. During his childhood he had a difficult relationship with his father, who abused him both physically and emotionally. But it was probably thanks to him that he became so successful and proved to be a pop genius. Like no one else, he contributed a lot to the world of music, dance and fashion.

He was already talented at a very young age and started singing when he was just 6 years old. He and some of his brothers formed a group called 'the Jackson Five'. He was not only the youngest member of the group, but also the **lead singer**<sup>1</sup>. They were very successful, especially in the U.S.A.. In 1971 he started his solo career that made him famous all over the world.

His musical and vocal styles were exceptional and his innovative dance techniques (such as the well-known 'robot' and the 'moonwalk') influenced a great number of artists after him. Jackson was not only very successful for his songs, but also for being the first artist in the music industry to turn music videos and live performances into a form of art. More than that, it was thanks to him that many black singers and musicians were able to put an end to racial, generational and cultural barriers.

His personal life was always followed by the media. He lived in a ranch called 'Neverland' that was very similar to an amusement park. Since the 1970s a great number of plastic surgery operations changed the shape of his nose and chin and probably the colour of his skin. In 1993 he was accused of child sexual abuse. He married Lisa Marie Presley, Elvis Presley's daughter but they divorced soon after, and then he got married to a nurse, who was the mother of two of his children. He won a great number of awards and was also known for supporting different

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<sup>1</sup> Voce principale.

**charities**<sup>2</sup> and foundations. In 1985 he even co-wrote the charity song *We are the World* with Lionel Ritchie, to help poor people in Africa.

### **READING COMPREHENSION**

- **DECIDE IF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ARE TRUE OR FALSE. CORRECT THE FALSE ONES.**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Michael Jackson's world tour 'This is it' started on 25 <sup>th</sup> June 2009. | T | F |
| 2. He had a happy and serene childhood.   | T | F |
| 3. He was a model for future black artists.   | T | F |
| 4. His personal life didn't attract the media.                                      | T | F |
| 5. He had nothing to do with charity.   | T | F |

- **ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

1. Why was Michael Jackson's world tour 'This is it' cancelled?
2. Why was he called 'the King of Pop'?
3. When did his career start? When did he start to be a solo artist?
4. Was he a good dancer? Why?
5. What is 'Neverland'?
6. Have you ever listened to Michael Jackson's songs? Do you like listening to music? What kind of music do you like? Why? Have you ever been to a live concert?

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<sup>2</sup> Organizzazioni benefiche.