



Songs Are Poems Too!

Contributor


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Objective

Students seldom think of themselves as connoisseurs of poetry. They think of it only as something to be studied in English classes and don't realize that it is part of their daily lives. This lesson is designed to reveal that students are discerning consumers of poetry. They are surprised to discover that they listen to and evaluate poetry constantly. This lesson taps into students' intrinsic love of music to help them analyze poetry.

The lesson asks students to determine the rhyme scheme, identify figurative language and determine the tone of a selected song. Students will learn to appreciate how poetry, in song form, has greatly influenced society. They will discover how poetry in music not only features current topics and issues but also effectively portrays historical events, people and places. Students discover how their own frames of reference color their impressions and interpretations of poems and songs.

This lesson is intended to provide opportunities to understand how individuals can effect economic, political and social change as well as learn to appreciate poetry in one of its many forms—music. It can be integrated with Topic B in Social Studies 9 to make it a rich humanities lesson.

 **Time** Minimum of one 120-minute class (typically a double-period block in junior high)

Material

- Post-it Note—3 per student
- Student Handout 1 “John Lennon’s ‘Imagine’ close exercise. Students will fill in the blanks as they listen to the song.

*** Instruct students to bring a CD or tape of their favorite song at least one week prior to beginning this lesson.**

Getting Started

Knowledge Now

This lesson builds on specific knowledge outcomes learned in previous English and social studies classes. In English classes, they will need to have studied definitions and examples of figurative language and practised deciphering the rhyme scheme of poems.

In social studies, students will have studied the lives and philosophies of Marx and Lenin. They will understand how Lenin's interpretation of Marx's theory of communism led to the Russian Revolution and how it influenced the USSR's New Economic Policy. Review these basic ideas with students by brainstorming key facts or making a mind map.

Pre-survey the class by asking:

- How many of you enjoy poetry every day? Once a week?
- Do you have a favorite poet?
- Record and save their answers.

Engaging Interest

According to Dr. Sue Teele's research on multiple intelligences (see Supplementary Resources), students in this age group are strongest in the interpersonal, spatial, bodily kinesthetic and musical intelligences. They have a strong interest in music and spend a lot of time listening to it. They know what they like and have strong opinions about what constitutes "good" music.

Learning Activities

Prior to the lesson, ask students to bring in the lyrics to a favorite song. The lyrics of their favorite song must be "G" (General) rated and should have a positive theme or message. Students will analyze the songs they have chosen to bring. They may work in pairs or small groups to assist one another.

Ask students to refer to the handout with definitions and examples of figurative language (given in a previous class). Their task is to

- determine whether or not the song has a rhyme scheme or if it is written in free verse
- highlight (or underline) and then label the figurative language used in the song
- determine the tone or mood of the song (poem)
- How do the qualities of music, such as beat, tempo, tone and speed, affect the meaning of the song?
- How would the mood of the song differ if it had a different melody?
- share their analyses with a partner or in a small group

Make a whole class Affinity Chart to categorize the data/information. To do this, distribute three Post-it Notes to each student. Ask each student to think of three ways his or her song incorporates the characteristics of poetry (identify figurative language and example) and write one example of figurative language on each note. For example, write the term *metaphor* and then explain how metaphor is used in the song "Good-bye England's Rose." When each student has three terms and an example of each written, ask three or four students to approach a large sheet of flip chart and post their Notes in a row across the paper. Other students will then take turns coming up and placing their notes under the existing Post-it Notes in columns that have the same or similar characteristic or they will create new rows if their Notes suggest different ideas. Columns will emerge that show examples of metaphors, similes, repetitions, onomatopoeia, personification, rhyme and so on. When all students have placed their Post-it Notes along a row, summarize the content or ask volunteers to do this. Title each column and have students draw conclusions that draw parallels between *traditional* poetry and the popular songs. Students

should begin to realize that songs are poems too. Ask them to record their thoughts and impressions by making a mind map.

Lead the class in the following discussion:

- Which literary technique did students identify most often when analyzing their songs?
- How many songs were free verse?
- Do you think about your favorite song differently?
- Do you pay attention to the lyrics when you listen to a song?
- What makes a good song?
- How is your song similar to poetry?
- Identify the elements of poetry that your song contains.

Assessment/Analysis

Listen to Amanda Marshall's song "Everybody's Got a Story"

Ask the whole class:

- What is the message?
- Does the song tell a story? What is it?
- List biases or stereotypes the song illustrates for you.

In a following lesson, pair students up and use the Three-Step Interview to further help students understand how songs reflect and shape the values that are considered important in society and how they can influence decisions and beliefs. After the interviews have been conducted, draw the class together to highlight important ideas.

Tell students that they will be listening to the music of an influential artist and songwriter. Play John Lennon's "Imagine" three times. Provide the following instructions for each time that it is played:

1st play: Just listen to the song.

2nd play: Ask students to fill in the blanks on Student Handout 1 "Imagine." After the exercise go over the handout using the overhead. Fill in the correct answers to check listening skills.

3rd play: Could this have been Karl Marx's theme song? How does "Imagine" illustrate/connect to Marx's ideas about communism? Provide specific examples.

If "Imagine" is a possible theme song for Karl Marx, suggest an appropriate theme song for Vladimir Ilyich Lenin? Brainstorm for ideas in groups. Ask each group to choose their top choice for Lenin's theme song and explain the reasons for their selection. If it has not been suggested, tell the students that the song "Revolution" by the Beatles might work. Show them the lyrics or play the song. Place an overhead of the lyrics up for the students to follow as they listen to the song. Ask the question, Does this song illustrate Lenin's values and beliefs? Explain why or why not.

Conclude by saying that most songs are poems; the lyrics contain the same elements that poets use. When music is combined with poetry, the message conveyed can be very powerful. Music can enhance the writer's meaning. For example, quick music may suggest urgency or slow music may be calming. What other ways can music be used to bring meaning to a song? Many

songwriters use music to deliver their messages because they know that music appeals to most people.

Re-survey the class asking the same questions that were asked at the beginning of the lesson. Add some new questions such as:

- How many of you enjoy poetry every day? Once a week?
- Do you have a favorite poet (songwriter or group)?
- Do any of your favorite songs tell a story?

Compare the results from the pre-survey with the post-survey. What do the differences mean?

Application

In-Class Closing Assignment: “Thesis-Support Micro-theme”

Create a micro-theme by distributing a 4 by 6 inch index card to each student. Students create a thesis statement that answer one of the following questions: Do songs reflect society? or Can songs influence/change society? Students write three statements to support their thesis. Then they write a concluding sentence. Hand in the cards with the micro-theme before leaving class. The card is their ticket out the door.

Homework

Ask students to write their own poem or song. Urge them to write one with a positive message about something they care about. It can be something personal, a societal issue or a social condition in the community (school, home, neighborhood and so on). The poem must include figurative language, strong verbs and powerful adjectives and adverbs. It may be free verse or have a rhyme scheme. Ask students to determine appropriate music for their poem: upbeat, somber, quick, slow, melodic, lots of bass, hip hop, rap, pop, rock, country and so on. Ask students which singer/group they would like to perform the song. Students will type their poems/songs on 8 1/2-by-11 inch paper, with a 2 cm motif in the border. Indicate the type of music and the artist(s) at the bottom of the sheet (use 8-point font for this information). Students will be asked to present or perform their pieces either verbally or with music. Some students may feel more comfortable doing this assignment with a partner or in a small group.

Follow-Up Lessons:

Analyze national anthems (For example, Canadian, Russian and American). What is the most powerful message being conveyed in each? How is tone/mood used to enhance the message in each?

English Language Arts 9 Learner Outcomes

- 1.1.1. Express ideas
Question and reflect on personal responses and interpretations; apply personal viewpoints to diverse situations or circumstances.
- 1.1.2. Consider others' ideas
Acknowledge the value of others' ideas and opinions in exploring and extending personal interpretations and viewpoints.
- 1.1.3. Experiment with language and forms
Use memorable language effectively and experiment with different personas for dynamic self-expression.
- 1.1.4. Express preferences
Discuss preferences for texts and genres by particular writers, artists, storytellers, and filmmakers.
- 2.2 Respond to Texts
Discuss and explain various interpretations of the same oral, print or other media text
Relate the themes, emotions and experiences portrayed in oral, print or other media text to issues of personal interest or significance
- 2.3.5. Create original texts
- 2.3 Understand Forms, Elements and Techniques
Evaluate the effectiveness of different types of media texts or presenting ideas and information
- 3.3.4. Develop new understanding
Reflect on new knowledge and its value to self and the wider community; determine personal inquiry and research strengths and learning goals.
- 4.4.3. Demonstrate attentive listening and viewing
Demonstrate critical listening and viewing behaviors and show respect for the presenter.
- 5.1 Respect Others and Strengthen Community
Explore and experiment with various ways in which language arts are used to honor and celebrate people and events
- 5.2.2. Relate texts to culture
Explain ways in which oral, print and other media texts reflect topics and themes in life
- 5.2.3. Appreciate diversity
Reflect on ways in which the choices and motives of individuals presented in oral, print and other media texts provide insight into those of self and others.

Social Studies 9 Learner Outcomes

Topic B – Economic Growth: A case study of the former USSR

Knowledge

Significant change results from industrialization

- 1917 Revolution (causes and effects)
- New Economic Policy

In a centrally planned economy, the quality of life is influenced by an emphasis on collectivism and public ownership.

Skills

- Acquire information to find answers to questions through listening.
- Determine values underlying a position (identify, define, describe—value priorities, value conflicts)
- Observe the courtesies of group discussion, such as speaking in turn, using appropriate tone and giving feedback in a non-threatening manner.

Attitudes

- Appreciation of the contribution of individuals and groups to improving the quality of life.
- Willingness to consider opinions and interpretations different from our own.

SACS Topics and Concepts

Living Respectfully

Understanding Conflict, Peace, Justice and Violence

- Examining messages received about conflict, peace, justice and violence
- Studying peaceful role models

Exploring the Role of Communication Skills in Building a Safe and Caring Classroom

- Identifying the impact of listening on communication

Working Cooperatively in Groups

- Listening carefully
- Respecting and appreciating others' ideas, insights, solutions and contributions

Respecting Diversity and Preventing Prejudice

Stereotypes Limit Our Perception and Understanding of Other People

Stereotyping Leads to Prejudice, Discrimination and Conflict

Teaching Strategies

Go to www.sacsc.ca for strategy descriptions	Cooperative Learning	Inquiry Learning	Direct Instruction
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Think-Pair-Share• Three-Step Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cognitive Coaching /Metacognition	

Generalization and Transfer	Peer Teaching	Empathy/Affective Education	General Teaching Activities/Ideas
			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brainstorming• Affinity Charting

Supplementary Resources

- Coles Notes *Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Toronto: Coles, 1992.
- Gardner, H. *Intelligence Reframed*. New York: Basic Books, 1999.
- <http://www.unex.ucr.edu/education/MI/reforming.html> “Reforming the Educational System to Enable All Students to Succeed, Dr. Sue Teele, Director of Education Extension, University of California, Riverside, Director, The Renaissance Project”
- CD or tape and lyrics of John Lennon’s “Imagine” the Beatles’ “Revolution” (reprint lyrics of all songs on an overhead)
- “Imagine” and “Revolution” are available at www.kbapps.com/jam/imagine.htm and www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Alley/5118/beatles/revolution-ly.html)
- Amanda Marshall’s “Everybody’s Got a Story” www.amandamarshall.com

John Lennon's "Imagine"

From the album *Imagine*

Imagine there's no _____,
It's easy if you try,
No hell below us,
_____ us only sky,
Imagine all the people
living for _____ . . .

Imagine there's no _____,
It isn't hard to do,
Nothing to kill or die for,
No religion too,
Imagine all the _____
living life in _____ . . .

Imagine no _____,
I wonder if you can,
No need for _____ or hunger,
A brotherhood of man,
Imagine all the _____
Sharing all the world . . .

You may say I'm a _____,
But I'm not the only one, I hope some day you'll join us,
And _____ will live as one.

Song/Poetry Assignment Evaluation

Name _____

Content	/10
Figurative language	/10
Vocabulary	/10
Border/Motif/Title	/5
Artist/Type of music	/5
Mechanics	/5
Professional appearance	/5
TOTAL:	/50

Comments