Focused Lyric-Writing Day

OBJECTIVES
Students will reflect on the writing they have done over the course of the unit.

Students will write all or part of a song that incorporates what they have written and what they have learned in previous lessons.

STANDARDS
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.5
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4

VOCABULARY
Intellectual property, plagiarism

PREPARATION
• Make copies of Songwriting Checklist and “What If I’m Stuck?” Handout for all students.

• Additionally, at your own discretion, make copies of the following templates and handouts according to the needs of your students:
  - For students who want or need additional support for outlining a song, make copies of Songwriting Outline Handout.
  - For students who may have problems generating song ideas or supporting details, make copies of Brainstorm Wheel and Sensory and Emotion Brainstorm (in Supplemental Materials).
  - For students who need extra support, make copies of Songwriting Template (in Supplemental Materials).
  - Note: Providing this template to all students may result in formulaic songs.
  - For students who finish early and have time to write another song, make copies of Story Song Template (in Supplemental Materials).

FREE WRITE (5 minutes)

DISCUSS HOMEWORK (2 minutes)
Divide students into pairs and ask them to share some strong imagery and supporting details from their writing.

BRAINSTORM (3 minutes)
Divide class into pairs to review what they have learned about songwriting. Ask students to discuss what they intend to include in their songs. You should walk around and listen to student conversations, making sure they mention the following concepts from previous lessons. You may wish to briefly review some or all of them with the entire class, depending on the thoroughness of the conversations you hear:

• Parts of a song: A song must have a title, verses, a chorus, and a hook. Some songs have a bridge, which usually occurs before the last chorus and introduces an unexpected twist.

• Title and hook: In most songs, the title appears at least once in the chorus. The title is often the hook, the catchy phrase that makes the song easy to remember. The hook and the title usually communicate the theme.

• Theme and message: The theme is the song’s main subject. The message is what the song communicates about that theme. A song needs a message about one theme.

• Rhythm and syllables: Each line of the verse should have about the same number of syllables. Each line of the chorus should have about the same number of syllables. For songwriting novices, having between five and eight syllables per line produces the most successful songs.

• Rhyme: Most songs follow a rhyme scheme. Rhymes can be exact or approximate.

• Details and images: Lyrics paint mental pictures to communicate their theme and convey emotions.
ACTIVITY (35 minutes)

1. Ask students to reflect on their journal writing to prepare for their final songwriting day. By this point, students should have a bank of writing and ideas to draw inspiration from. Many students may have already started their songs.

2. Share the following information about plagiarism and songwriting before sending students off to write:

   All songwriters draw inspiration from many different sources, including other songs and songwriters. Many songwriters create songs together by co-writing. It is fine to get inspiration or help from other songwriters and friends, but it is never OK to copy a song or part of a song and turn it in as your own work. If you copy all or part of a song and turn it in as your work, it is considered cheating, and you will receive a failing grade. If professional songwriters copy part of a song and sell it as their own work, they have committed plagiarism, and thus broken the law. Plagiarism is defined as the theft of intellectual property, which is any work that is the result of creativity, besides music, other examples of intellectual property include books, artwork, and inventions. People who commit plagiarism are breaking the law and can be sued by the material’s original creators.

3. Give students the following prompt:

   You have done a lot of writing over the last few days. For the next ten minutes, look through your journal and read over what you have done so far. Highlight or underline anything that you are proud of or anything that you think you want to use in your final song. When you are finished reflecting on your work, start working on your song.

TEACHER TIP

Allowing students to co-write their songs is an excellent way to support ESL students and students who are struggling alone. ESL students may also wish to write a song in their first language and try translating it into English.

4. Distribute and review the Songwriting Checklist and the “What If I’m Stuck?” Handout. Reserve most of class time for students to work quietly on their songs. Distribute additional templates and handouts as needs arise. If students finish quickly, they should write extra verses so they can pick the best ones for their final draft. Or they also may try to write an additional song. (For additional curriculum on story songs, see Story Song Mini-Lesson in Supplemental Materials.)

   At this point, students will be in different stages of writing. Some will have completed an outline, some may have a verse and chorus, while others might have journal entries and an idea of what they want to write. Encourage students to use the Songwriting Checklist to help them move forward.

5. As you offer support to students, consider the following points of focus:

   • The content of the song is most important.
   • Songs should follow a standard structure.
   • Students should attempt to rhyme so their song is catchy and memorable.
   • Songs with a uniform pattern of syllables per line are easiest to be put to music.
TEACHER TIP

Here are some of the most common obstacles students encounter and strategies for overcoming them:

**Not enough ideas**: Refer students back to their journals for more ideas. Provide Brainstorm Wheel (in Supplemental Materials) to students to generate more ideas. Provide Sensory and Emotion Brainstorm Handout (in Supplemental Materials) to help students generate more supporting details.

**Too many ideas**: Remind students to focus on one central idea or theme and then add in supporting details about that central theme.

**Ideas are scattered or disorganized**: Encourage students to approach their one theme in three different ways. Provide the Songwriting Outline Worksheet to students who are struggling with organizing their ideas.

**Song looks more like a paragraph**: Praise students for having so many ideas and details. Prompt students to try dividing the ideas found in their paragraph into four lines for the verses and four lines for the chorus. Remind students that each line should have the same number of syllables.

**Generally “stuck”**: Remind students who feel genuinely overwhelmed that their song does not have to be the best ever written and that it takes lots of time and practice to become a good songwriter. Every song or part of a song that they write will make them better at writing their next song.

Provide the Songwriting Template (in Supplemental Materials) only to students who are truly failing at their attempts.

HOMEWORK

By the end of the class period, students should have at least one verse and a chorus. For homework, students should attempt to finish their songs. A finished song will mean something different for each student, but let students know they will share their songs with the class during the next lesson. If students finish their chorus and all their verses, they should write extra verses for their homework. Or they also may try to write another song.

Bob Dylan built his name as a folk singer in New York City with tunes like "Blowin' in the Wind." His rock career exploded in 1965 with the electrified track "Like a Rolling Stone."