Story Song Mini-Lesson
LESSONS 2 AND/OR 8

OBJECTIVES
Students will analyze two story songs and apply their knowledge to writing one.

STANDARDS
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2

PREPARATION
• Make copies of “Coat of Many Colors” and “Check Yes or No” Lyric Sheets and the Story Song Template (optional).
• Locate audio or video versions of “Coat of Many Colors” performed by Dolly Parton and “Check Yes or No” performed by George Strait.
• Students should have a working knowledge of the terms “theme” and “plot.”

ACTIVITY
1. Share with students:
   Among many types of songs, one popular form is the story song. In story songs, a songwriter crafts a narrative with a beginning, middle, and end.

2. Distribute “Coat of Many Colors” Lyric Sheet and listen to the song. Ask students to discuss the following questions in small groups, then discuss as a class:
   • What is the main point or the moral of the story? Cite evidence from the text to support your opinions.
   • What are the main points in the plot of the story?
   • The lyrics of this song do not tell only the plot of the story—that would make for a boring song! How does Parton tell the story in a way that paints a picture? Cite evidence from the text to support your opinions.

3. Distribute “Check Yes or No” Lyric Sheet and listen to the song. Ask students to discuss the following questions in small groups, then discuss as a class:
   • What are the main points in the plot of “Check Yes or No”? Cite evidence from the text to support your answers.
   • How were these plot points organized to tell the story?
   • What parts of the song tell the story?
   • What parts of the song communicate the theme?
   • What about the lines of the song that are not telling a story? What purpose do they serve?

   Note: The following concepts should have emerged in the discussion. If not, share them with students:
   • The verses usually contain the main plot points.
   • The first verse usually conveys the beginning of the story, the second verse the middle, and the third verse the end.
   • The theme of the story is usually communicated in the chorus.

4. Share the following journal prompt with students. After this activity, you may wish to distribute the Story Song Template for further explanation.
   Think of a story that you could turn into a song. This could be from your memory, from your imagination, from history, or from another work of art like a book or a movie. Write the basic plot points of the story in three parts: the beginning, middle, and end. Next, write one sentence describing the theme of this story.
COAT OF MANY COLORS

Dolly Parton

Back through the years
I go wand’ring once again
Back to the seasons of my youth
I recall a box of rags that someone gave us
And how my mama put the rags to use.
There were rags of many colors
Every piece was small
And I didn’t have a coat
And it was way down in the fall
Mama sewed the rags together
Sewing every piece with love
She made my coat of many colors
That I was so proud of.

As she sewed, she told a story
From the Bible, she had read
About a coat of many colors,
Joseph wore and then she said
Perhaps this coat will bring you
Good luck and happiness
And I just couldn’t wait to wear it
And mama blessed it with a kiss.

My coat of many colors
That my mama made for me,
Made only from rags
But I wore it so proudly.
Although we had no money
I was rich as I could be
In my coat of many colors
My mama made for me.

So with patches on my britches
And holes in both my shoes
In my coat of many colors
I hurried off to school
Just to find the others laughing
And making fun of me
In my coat of many colors
My mama made for me.

And oh I couldn’t understand it
For I felt I was rich
And I told ‘em of the love
My mama sewed in every stitch
And I told ‘em all the story
Mama told me while she sewed
And how my coat of many colors
Was worth more than all their clothes.

But they didn’t understand it
And I tried to make them see
That one is only poor
Only if they choose to be
Now I know we had no money
But I was rich as I could be
In my coat of many colors
My mama made for me
Made just for me.

Dolly Parton wrote "Coat of Many Colors" about a humble jacket that was sewn by her mother because her family couldn't afford a new one. Parton says it is her favorite of the many songs she has written.
CHECK YES OR NO

Dana Oglesby/Danny Wells

It started way back in third grade
I used to sit beside Emmylou Hayes
A pink dress, a matching bow and her ponytail
She kissed me on the school bus, but told me not to tell

Next day I chased her ’round the playground
Across the monkey bars, to the merry-go-round
And Emmylou got caught passing me a note
Before the teacher took it, I read what she wrote,

“Do you love me, do you wanna be my friend?
And if you do, well then don’t be afraid to take me by the hand
If you want to, I think this is how love goes
Check yes or no.”

Now we’re grown up and she’s my wife
Still like two kids with stars in our eyes
Ain’t much changed, I still chase Emmylou
Up and down the hall, around the bed in our room

Last night I took her out in a white limousine
Twenty years together, she still gets to me
Can’t believe it’s been that long ago
When we got started with just a little note,

“Do you love me, do you wanna be my friend?
And if you do, well then don’t be afraid to take me by the hand
If you want to, I think this is how love goes
Check yes or no.”

“Do you love me, do you wanna be my friend?
And if you do, well then don’t be afraid to take me by the hand
If you want to, I think this is how love goes
Check yes or no.”

Check yes or no
Check yes or no
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Check yes or no