

English Language Arts 4: Poetic and Social Elements of Song Lyrics

Aim/Rationale

Cycle 1: Students will begin to understand poetic devices and apply them to song lyrics. Students will be asked to consider the larger social issues at work in music and exercise critical media literacy skills in their approach.

Cycle 2: Students will elicit mastery in recognizing formal elements of poetry in song lyrics. Students will understand the ability of song to address specific social issues and concerns.

Cycle 1 Competencies

- 1) *Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn*
- 2) *Represents their literacy in different media*
- 3) *Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts*
- 4) *Writes a variety of genres for personal and social*

Cycle 2 Competencies

- 1) *Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn*
- 2) *Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts*
- 3) *Produces texts for personal and social purposes*

Lesson

Materials

Cycle 1 and Cycle 2:

- Pre-selected song and lyrics -each student should have their own as well as the teacher
- Reflective journals
- Writing materials (pen, pencil, and paper)

Hook [5-10 min]

Cycle 1 and Cycle 2:

Begin class by playing a pre-selected song. Choose an age appropriate song with a sexual message. Choose something familiar to the students and relevant to their experience.

Guide group discussions based on the following questions:

What kind of message is present? Who is delivering it?

From prior knowledge, what poetic elements can you identify? How are they effective in addressing/highlighting the specific social concern?

Development/Teaching Methods [50 min]

Cycle 1 Learning Activity (30 min)

Using the pre-selected song the teacher will go over the formal elements of poetry. They will illustrate how these techniques are used effectively and how poetry and song can resemble one another.

Consider such elements as

Subject and Theme (implicit idea)

Diction: connotation/denotation abstract/concrete

Medium: dialogue, narrative, description, song lyrics

Parts: stanza, verse/line, refrain, octet/octave, quatrain, couplet

Rhythm: (stress/pause) iambic/ trochaic/ dactylic/ anapaest/ spondee meter

Rhyme: blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter), internal rhyme, enjambment.

Form: open, closed, prose poem.

Persona and point-of-view: who is writing the poem?

Tone: attitude of poem communicated to audience)

Imagery: visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory)

Figures of speech: alliteration, assonance, symbol, allusion, simile, pun, metaphor

Cycle 1 Class Discussion (20 min)

The teacher will ask the students to consider the enhanced ability of music to spread ideological messages. Focus specifically on issues of sex and gender.

Discussion Questions:

What kind of messages about sex are in the songs students have chosen?

How might the songs reproduce and maintain stereotypes? How can they challenge them?

What sort of messages are propagated? Is there a noticeable difference from one genre of music to the next?

Who has a vested interest in the lyrical content of popular music?

Who is represented by those messages? Who is excluded?

How can our own social, cultural, historical, and political positioning affect our own understanding of the social concern communicated by the writer/producer of a song?

In discussion groups students will review some of the lyrics they have chosen. They should consider the sexual or gender specific message and the poetic devices being used.

Adaptations for Cycle 2

In small discussion groups have students research songs from a specific era with a specific ideological message about sex and/or HIV. **Opportunity for cross curricular links to History and Civilization**

Examples of songs which address HIV:
Streets of Philadelphia - Bruce Springsteen
The Last Song - Elton John
Hush, Hush - Paula Cole ft. Peter Gabriel

Guiding Questions:

How did this song speak about sex issues at the time of its release?
What poetic devices are used in the lyrics?
Do the poetic devices used enhance the meaning of the message?
Whom does this song represent? Who is not represented?
Can any contemporary comparisons be made?

Journal Entry (15 minutes)

In their reflective journals, students will write about how another song composer might have approached the specific social issue(s) addressed. Would they have used the same poetic elements to elucidate their social concern? Why or why not?

Culmination [5-10 min]

Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

Discussion groups will elect one member from the group to present their song lyrics and explain its social concern and use of poetic elements to the class.

Performance Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

Cycle 1:

- Begin to understand/further their understanding of poetic devices
- Understand song lyrics as poetry
- Exercise and further develop critical literacy skills

Cycle 2:

- Evaluate the use of poetic devices in song
- Identify characteristics of writer/producer and how this influences the purpose of the text, its meaning(s)/message(s) and other aspects of the context in which it is produced and read
- Analyze implications and/or impact and/or influence of stereotyping or cliché, false representation, gender bias and/or power relations within a song

Assessment Ideas

Have students write a research essay about a song with an ideological message. Have them analyse the poetic devices and their effectiveness as well as the historical context.

Have students analyse a music video. How does this differ from simply hearing the song? How is the message altered by the video?



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