

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHERS

Lyrics and Learning: The Standards through Song

with
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of
WILD CARROT

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Section I. Introduction

Workshop Leader

Pam Temple is a professional songwriter-performer-musician who works with the award-winning contemporary Folk duo, wild carrot. For the past four years one of the many facets of her professional work has been working with teachers and students in classrooms with arts integration for The Muse Machine, Cincinnati Arts Association and The Greater Columbus Arts Council. In that short time, her work in schools with wild carrot has gained much attention, becoming a favorite choice for arts integration among teachers.

Pam graduated with honors from Ohio State University with a BS in Occupational Therapy (OT) and a minor in music. She practiced OT as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Costa Rica and, later, in schools in the U.S. Since October, 2000 she has worked as a full-time musician. Her original songs have been featured on numerous compilation CDs for radio and festivals and have won or been nominated for national songwriting awards at The Walnut Valley New Songs Competition and the prestigious Kerrville New Folk Competition. Her duo wild carrot toured in South America two times as “Folk Music Ambassador” with the U.S. State Department and was named “Best Folk Act” and nominated for “Artist of the Year” by the Cincinnati Entertainment Awards.

Purpose of the Workshop

The purpose of this workshop is to demonstrate how teachers can incorporate music and lyric writing into the classroom through activities that are fun, self-assessing, reusable and effective teaching tools which can be easily adapted to any curriculum standard or grade level. In lessons which engage students in rhythm, rhyme and melody, workshop participants will learn and experience:

- A. the elements of music and lyric writing and how those elements can teach academic content,
- B. song construction and craft,
- C. techniques to allow for self-expression and learning through lyric writing in virtually any academic context,
- D. the processes and applications of the workshop strategies.

Rationale – Why use Lyric Writing in the Classroom?

“The arts teach young people how to learn by giving them the first step: the desire to learn.”

– Richard Riley, Former Secretary, Dept. of Education

Although they can remember all the words to the latest pop radio hits, students often have difficulty retaining necessary facts of Math, Science, Grammar or Social Studies. Teachers can help students translate many basic concepts from

across the curriculum into songs that provide a fun, self-assessing, reusable and effective teaching tool.

Use of rhythm, rhyme and music connects with the brain in a unique way that fosters a multiple intelligence-style of learning. This work requires that students be able to identify, verbalize and synthesize the essence of any topic, therefore increasing understanding and retention of the specifics. It results in a powerful sense of ownership and pride in creating something new.

In addition, lyric writing builds students' abilities to work collaboratively and creatively within structured constraints, increases their achievement in music and broadens their repertoire of learning skills across the curriculum. This work also helps students develop social skills, such as the abilities to compromise, cooperate, focus and practice self-discipline.

Section II. Overview

In lessons which engage students in rhythm, rhyme and melody, participants will learn the elements of music and lyric-writing and how those elements can teach academic content. Starting with a simple rhythmic exercise, we will progress through activities; learn about mnemonics, brainstorming, song construction and craft. Using familiar melodies, workshop participants will create new lyrics from various curricular areas. Participants will leave the workshop with an immediately useful tool and the skills and confidence to adapt the activities and process to teach across the curriculum and grade levels.

Objectives of the Workshop

As a result of the workshop *Lyrics and Learning: The Standards through Song*, participants will:

know...

- ❖ the elements of basic song structure.
- ❖ how to organize, lead and facilitate lyric writing and music activities that reinforce curriculum concepts and the joys of music and song.
- ❖ a step-by-step lyric writing process that is easily applied across the curriculum with students of all ages.

be able to...

- ❖ lead lyric writing activities
- ❖ combine rhyme, rhythm and familiar melodies.
- ❖ apply the basic workshop strategies to various areas of study.

appreciate...

- ❖ that lyric writing activities serve a dual purpose: to provide a basic introduction to music and song writing and to provide a way for students to create and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of an area of study.
- ❖ the auditory and kinesthetic power of songs to help students learn and retain information.
- ❖ the creative problem-solving experience.
- ❖ how lyric writing activities develop students' learning and social skills.

The Language of Music: Skills and Terms

The following terms may be helpful to know and use with your students:

Accompaniment – other music added to the melody, which makes the music sound more complete

Articulate – to pronounce words clearly so as to be understood; enunciate

Beat – the accent in the rhythm of lyrics or music; the unit of musical measure (i.e. four beats per measure)

Brainstorming – the unrestrained offering of ideas by all members of a group

Chorus – the part of a song that is repeated within that song; sometimes the most recognizable part of a song; a group of singers singing together, a choir

Ensemble – a group performing together

Expression – representing through art, music, etc

Harmony – two or more notes that when played or sung together are pleasing to the ear

Lyric – words suitable for singing; poetry expressing the poet's emotions or thoughts

Melody – the tune, what you would sing

Mnemonic – a technique for improving memory by the use of certain patterns or formulas; i.e. rhyme, melody

Pattern – an arrangement of form; a series that repeats in a predictable way

Project – to cause one's voice to be heard clearly and at a distance

Rhyme – likeness of sounds at the ends of words or lines of verse

Rhyme Scheme – the pattern of rhymes within a lyric or poem

Rhythm – the arrangement of accented and unaccented long and short beats, which follows a certain pattern

Sing – to produce musical sounds with the voice

Syllable - the number of beats in a word

Verse – the part of a song that tells the story

Vocalize – to express with the voice

Tips for Successful Classroom Experiences

- ❖ **Involve the Whole Group** – An effort should be made to include ideas from as many students as possible in your created song, even if it's a modification of a suggestion or combination of ideas from multiple students. This gives ownership to each student. It is also more effective as a learning tool if everyone is engaged and involved in the process. Look for ways to involve the whole group in the process.
- ❖ **Insist on Appropriate Contributions** – Make it clear from the start of the “Brainstorming” activity that you expect suggestions and contribution of ideas that are appropriate to the topic at hand. Occasionally, a “silly” or “throw away” line or rhyme will be necessary or desired. Rhymes offered, however, should be “real words”, not nonsense words. Make it clear that the point of this work is to impart the most accurate information about your topic in the most efficient way possible.
- ❖ **Make the Students Future Teachers and Performers** – Let your students know that their song may be used to help teach the topic at hand to future classes and/or that they may be performing their song for parents and other students at a future assembly.
- ❖ **Record the Results** – Making a tape or CD recording of the class performing their song is another way to inspire them to do their best work and gives immediate gratification. Students love to hear their own voices. A simple cassette recorder works fine. Computer savvy teachers can record and burn CDs on the computer (see resources for CD recorder information)
- ❖ **Use Time as Needed** – Due to time constraints in your unique classroom situation, it may not be feasible to complete all of the exercises from start to finish in one class period or even one day. Consider teaching each activity on different days. Get your song started with one verse. The next

day or week come back to it and continue. You may want to record each session so everyone can remember what was finished in the previous session. Perhaps, give students the assignment of creating a line or verse on their own or in groups during free time, lunch, recess or at home. Then incorporate those ideas into your song during your next class session.

- ❖ Define the Space to be Used – If possible, make routine use of the same space each time you begin an activity. Younger students may be more attentive and comfortable sitting in a group on the floor; older students at their desks. All students may need to move between standing and sitting. Sit during the “thinking” and “creating” stages and stand to sing and rehearse.
- ❖ Use Leading Questions – These questions, posed by the teacher, lead students to the “right” choice or give them a choice between two workable options.

Example:

Teacher: *“We’re looking for a word that makes sense in our lyric. We are trying to rhyme with the word ‘song’ ...if something’s not right, it’s _____”*
(get them to fill in the blank)

Example:

Teacher: *“Which do you like better, class?
‘Denominators must be the same
Common multiples are the name of the game’*

OR

*‘Denominators must be the same
Common multiples are their names’ “*

The information you need to get across is still there, but it gives the class ownership. Take a vote among the students to help decide, if you like.

- ❖ Create, Rehearse, Repeat – Always review what you’ve created. Repeat each line, first speaking and clapping the beat, then singing. Break down the individual parts and practice. Then put the pieces back together. Students want to “get it right” and “sound good”. The repetition reinforces learning.

Rhythm/Counting Activity

Example 1:

Yankee Doodle went to town
1 *and* 2 *and* 3 *and* 4

Riding on a po - ny
1 *and* 2 *and* 3 4

Stuck a feather in his cap and
1 *and* 2 *and* 3 *and* 4 *and*

Called it mac - a - ro - ni
1 *and* 2 *and* 3 4

Example 2:

Twinkle Twinkle little star
1 *and* 2 *and* 3 *and* 4

How I wonder what you are
1 *and* 2 *and* 3 *and* 4

Up a -bove the world so high
1 *and* 2 *and* 3 *and* 4

Like a diamond in the sky
1 *and* 2 *and* 3 *and* 4

Twinkle Twinkle little star
1 *and* 2 *and* 3 *and* 4

How I wonder what you are
1 *and* 2 *and* 3 *and* 4

(Question: what's a familiar mnemonic song we all know that sounds like this?)

(Answer: The "Alphabet Song")

Reflecting Questions:

- A. What does this activity require of students that classroom work also requires?
- B. What other ways are you using mnemonic devices in your classroom already?

Section IV. Activity #2: Crafting a Song

Purposes:

- A. To engage all students in the process of “brainstorming” to formulate ideas for a song topic.
- B. To discuss and explore divergent thinking, patterns and elements essential to crafting a song, such as, verse/chorus structure and rhyme scheme.
- C. To build students’ ability to work together as a team, compromise and creatively express ideas.

Process:

- A. Teacher has chosen in advance (or can be done with this same brainstorming exercise with class) a topic to address in song.
- B. Brainstorm: Encourage students to not “censor” themselves. Sometimes the most bizarre-sounding idea is the best. These words, ideas and phrases will become the lyrics to your song. Combine similar ideas and try to pare the list down to maybe 5-10 choices.

(See example on next page)

Clustering or **webbing** is a way to **brainstorm**. A goal is to be able to have each student see an element within the song that is a direct result of a contribution they made in this process.

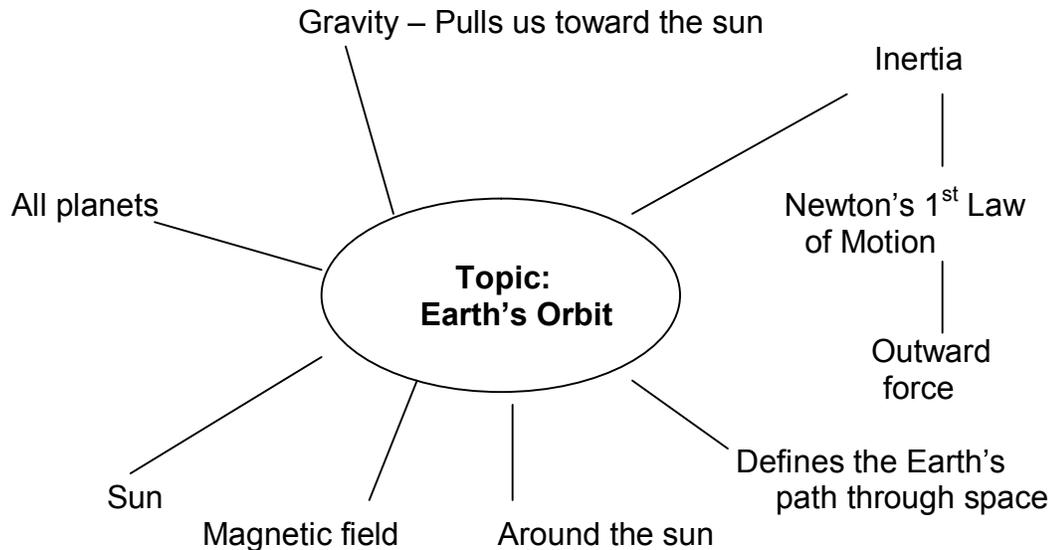


Diagram: Example of Brainstorming Activity

NOTE: this webbing activity is great for many purposes and could be used in other areas of study, when deciding on a research paper topic, for example, in your own personal lesson plan development and is a great tool for students to use in other tasks as well.

- C. Based on the familiar melody you have chosen to use as the foundation of your lyric, discuss the structure of the song (verse/chorus pattern) and the rhyme scheme within the various sections of the song.

Reflecting Questions:

- What educational or social benefits do you think students would get out of participating in this activity?
- What curriculum standard could be addressed with this activity?

Section V. Activity #3: Creating a Song

Purposes:

- To provide an opportunity for and facilitate self-expression and creativity
- To facilitate application of writing skills to produce lyrics and composition
- To discuss and explore editing strategies
- To experience the creative process

Process:

- A. Following a logical sequence of events or ideas, fit the words, phrases, and ideas generated in the brainstorm activity into the form defined by your chosen melody. (This can be done as one large group or in small groups).
- B. Practice your new song as a group.
- C. Record your new song on tape or CD. (This recording can be used again and again by the teacher in future classes when addressing this particular curriculum topic).

Tricks of the Trade

Sometimes a “silly” word or phrase or “throw away line” is just what you need to maintain a rhyme scheme. Students enjoy a little fun or personality in their song. For example:

Fun words that facilitate rhymes:

cool
dude
man
yeah
sweet

Phrases that facilitate rhymes:

...about this we will sing
...ya know
...we all know
...that’s true
...we need to know about

Another trick is the use of “approximate rhymes”. Examples:

“size” and “slide”
“island” and “man”
“century” and “cities”

“sides” and “lines”
“too” or “two” and “use”

Reflecting Questions:

- A. Can you identify other ways you or your students could use some of these same strategies in other areas of work?
- B. Identify ways this work prepares students for “real life” success.

Section VI. Assessment

Lyric Writing Activity Evaluation Form

(See Appendix A)

Accountability Checklist

(See Appendix B)

Section VII. Conclusion

Benefits of Lyric/Song Writing Work

There are a variety of benefits that accrue to students in their work with songwriting and music.

Songwriting and music work enables students to:

- ❖ Learn an appreciation for music as an art form
- ❖ Learn about songwriting, editing and the creative process
- ❖ Develop self-awareness, control and concentration
- ❖ Develop the ability to collaborate
- ❖ Develop a willingness to risk
- ❖ Become active learners
- ❖ Describe and explain events, actions, feelings and abstract concepts
- ❖ Apply and expand their knowledge
- ❖ See things from a variety of perspectives
- ❖ Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their work
- ❖ Reflect on their connections to others who have lived in other times and places
- ❖ Explore their voices and express themselves through song
- ❖ Experience a new learning tool that could be used throughout their educational experience

For teachers, songwriting and music work can:

- ❖ Reinforce and expand learning across the curriculum
- ❖ Actively engage students
- ❖ Provide a playful, structured, creative learning activity
- ❖ Involve students in higher levels of thinking
- ❖ Draw on a variety of learning styles
- ❖ Be adapted to a range of subject areas
- ❖ Require no specialized music or writing training to implement
- ❖ Require no specialized materials – just an idea and your voice
- ❖ Provide a performance assessment tool
- ❖ Provide a teaching tool that can be used again and again

National Content Standards Related to Lyric/Song Writing

Music and songwriting work assists teachers in meeting numerous State and National content standards. Lyric/songwriting work helps teachers learn how to direct the subject matter, allowing the activities to **teach across virtually any State or National content standard from Language Arts and Math to Science and Social Studies.**

Music Standards (K-6)

Content Standard 1: Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts – Students will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a variety of music styles and cultures and the context of musical expression or events, both past and present. Students will identify significant contributions of composers and performers to music heritage. Students analyze the historical, social and political forces that have influenced the function and role of music in the lives of people.

Content Standard 2: Students sing, play instruments, improvise, compose, read and notate music.

Content Standard 3: Analyzing and Responding – Students listen to a varied repertoire of music and respond by analyzing and describing music using correct terminology. Students evaluate the creating and performing of music by using appropriate criteria.

Content Standard 4: Valuing Music/Aesthetic Reflection – Students demonstrate an understanding of reasons why people value music and respect for diverse opinions regarding music preferences. Students articulate the significance of music in their lives.

Content Standard 5: Connections, Relationships and Applications – Students identify similarities and differences between music and other arts disciplines. Students recognize the relationship between concepts and skills learned through music with knowledge learned in other curricular subjects, life experiences and potential careers in and outside the arts. Students develop a desire for lifelong learning in music.

Ohio Language Arts Standards (K-6)

Content Standard 6: Writing Processes – Using the steps of prewriting, drafting, revising and editing to publish different types of writing.

Content Standard 7: Writing Applications – Learning about, using and choosing appropriate words for different kinds of writing, from letters to scientific reports, and for different audiences.

Content Standard 8: Writing Conventions – Understanding and applying punctuation, grammar and spelling rules.

Content Standard 9: Research – Knowing how to gather information in all subjects using different kinds of tools and communicate what is found.

Content Standard 10: Communication: Oral and Visual – Delivering presentations on different topics for different types of audiences.

National Language Arts/Writing Standards

Writing Process Standard: Learn to plan writing for different purposes and audiences.

Writing Process Standard: Learn to apply their writing skills in increasingly sophisticated ways to create and produce compositions that reflect effective word and grammatical choices.

Writing Process Standard (K-2): Use revision strategies and ideas to improve ideas and content, organization, word choice and detail.

Writing Process Standard (K-2): Edit to improve sentence fluency, grammar and usage.

Writing Process Standard (3-4): Spend the necessary amount of time to revisit, rework and refine pieces of writing.

Writing Process Standard (K-4): Edit to improve sentence fluency, grammar and usage.

Writing Process Standard (5-7): Generate writing topics and establish a purpose appropriate for the audience.

Writing Process Standard (5-7): Use revision strategies to improve the overall organization, the clarity and consistency of ideas and the logic and effectiveness of word choices.

Writing Process Standard (8-10): Use revision strategies to improve the style, variety of sentence structure, clarity of the controlling idea, logic, effectiveness of word choice and transitions between paragraphs, passages or ideas.

To order a copy of the National Standards for Arts Education, call Music Educators National Conference (MENC) at 703-60-4000 or 800-828-0229.

Section VIII. Additional Activities and Resources

Additional Activities

- A. Write another song about an event/topic/person you're studying. Involve the music teacher in coming up with the melody and rhythm activities.
- B. Give a performance! Once you've written a few songs, or have multiple teachers in your school doing this work, put on a variety show! Invite the PTO, faculty, major donors, and the public. Make it a fund raiser. Guide the students in performing their songs for the public and/or student body. The art teacher could help with props and/or costumes too!
- C. Now try writing your own melody! Instead of using a familiar melody, try making one up. It's as simple as humming. Give it a verse/chorus pattern and four lines per verse. Come up with a rhythm (make it match the mood of your topic; fast for something upbeat or funny or something that requires a lot of words; slow for something more somber or less vocabulary intensive). Begin with the brainstorm you're now familiar with for ideas, vocabulary, phrases you want to include. Then add a rhyme scheme. Away you go!

Resources

- A. You have been provided with a CD of some popular melodies. All of these are in the public domain. You are free to use them as you like.
- B. List of additional familiar melodies (Appendix C)
- C. Another source for popular melodies: *Get America Singing...Again!* Series. To purchase songbooks or compact discs, visit your local music or bookstore, or call 800-554-0626 or visit www.musicdispatch.com.

- D. PBS Series "American Roots". Available for purchase or from your public library. It's available on Video or DVD and has an accompanying CD of music of many styles and a great book. Great for General Music or Social Studies classes.
- E. The John F. Kennedy Center For the Performing Arts – web site:
www.kennedy-center.org
- F. *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership, 2000. www.aep-arts.org
- G. Rhyming Dictionary
- H. CD or Tape recorder. SuperScope makes the most popular portable CD recorder. www.superscopetechnologies.com. An "old fashioned" tape recorder will work as well.

Contact Information

As you work with these activities, if you find you have questions, need help or advise, please contact me at:

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Appendix A.

Lyric Writing Activity Evaluation Form

Student's Name _____

During Elemental, Crafting and Creating activities, the student...	Consistently 3	Often 2	Occasionally 1	Not at All 0
(ELEMENTS OF MUSIC)				
...is able to repeat 4-count beat .				
...is able to model variations on the rhythm by clapping.				
...demonstrates understanding of rhyme or rhyming pattern .				
...is able to imitate melody .				
(CRAFTING/CREATING)				
...contributes ideas that reflect content being addressed in song.				
...understands the concept of "divergent thinking" or " brainstorming ".				
...demonstrates understanding of the curriculum topic.				
...is able to put abstract ideas into lyric form.				
...demonstrates understanding of rhyme scheme /pattern.				
...demonstrates understanding of verse/chorus pattern				
...displays increased understanding of content during/after activity.				
(COOPERATION)				
...works as a member of an ensemble or chorus – is a team player.				
(CONCENTRATION)				
...focuses on the given activity.				
...is able to sing and use motions to the song (if appropriate for age group).				

(VOICE)				
...agrees to sing .				
...is able to sing the melody .				
...creates and delivers lyrics with vocal expression .				
... projects – speaks and sings loudly enough to be heard.				
... articulates – speaks and sings clearly so as to be understood.				

TOTAL _____

Appendix B.

Accountability Checklists

Through skillful use, songwriting can help students master aspects of curriculum and to do so in a personal and vital way.

Songwriting provides opportunities for students to function frequently at higher levels of thinking. It also assists students in achieving learning and social skills and to find personal satisfaction in their work.

At the same time, teachers can, through appropriate use of songwriting, show accountability for mandated curriculum and standards.

Selected Social Skills

- Cooperating
- Leading/following
- Working as a team
- Accepting responsibility
- Compromising honorably
- Resolving conflicts
- Sharing the spotlight
- Practicing self-discipline
- Practicing tolerance
- Using appropriate assertiveness
- Giving/receiving praise
- Helping others
- Respecting ideas/opinions of others
- Being a good audience member
- Using appropriate nonverbal behavior

Selected Learning Skills

- Brainstorming
- Editing
- Using convergent and divergent thinking
- Discovering/making patterns
- Generalizing/specifying
- Focusing on/completing tasks
- Gathering/prioritizing data
- Observing
- Comparing/contrasting
- Sequencing
- Listening/speaking/reading/singing
- Following directions
- Making choices/decisions
- Attending to time restrictions
- Anticipating
- Categorizing
- Thinking symbolically/metaphorically

Areas of Personal Satisfaction

- Doing a job well
- Realizing potential
- Recognizing capability
- Motivating self
- Performing well in front of others
- Thinking on ones' feet
- Enjoying work/learning

Appendix C.

Additional Familiar Melodies

Amazing Grace
America (My Country 'Tis of Thee)
America the Beautiful
Arkansas Traveler ("Bringing Home a Baby Bumble Bee")
Banks of the Ohio
Battle Hymn of the Republic
Buffalo Gals
Camptown Races
(Get Along Home) Cindy, Cindy
Clementine
Crowdad Song ("You Get a Line, I'll Get a Pole, Honey")
Danny Boy
Down by the Riverside
Down in the Valley
Erie Canal
Frere Jaques
Home on the Range
I've Been Working on the Railroad
If I Had a Hammer
Little Liza Jane
Michael (Row the Boat Ashore)
My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean
Oh! Susanna
Old MacDonald
Polly Wolly Doodle
Red River Valley
Red Wing (Union Maid)
Row, Row, Row Your Boat
She'll Be Comin' 'Round the Mountain
Simple Gifts
Swing Low, Sweet Chariot
This Land is Your Land
This Little Light of Mine
This Old Man
Twinkle, Twinkle (Little Star)
When the Saints Go Marching In
Yankee Doodle
You Are My Sunshine