

Music and Poetry

Grade Level: 9-10

Introduction

The publication of the Anthology of Rap by Yale University Press and the presentation of the 2016 Nobel Prize in Literature to Bob Dylan are recent examples of the revitalization of conceptual connections between music and poetry. Though traditional poems have been adapted into songs for centuries, critics have begun to view work originally composed for musical purposes as a form of literature itself, thus opening a gateway to poetry for students by relating the form to the familiar medium of music.

This multi-day lesson, which integrates EBSCO's Poetry & Short Story Reference Source database, would best serve as a wrap-up to an introductory unit on poetry and poetic devices. It asks students to apply their knowledge of various poetic techniques to popular song lyrics and draw connections between the two forms.

Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1, 2, 4, 7, 9; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1, 4-6, 9; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1, 2, 4-6; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.1-6 | NCTE 1, 3-6, 12

- R.4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- R.7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- SL.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- NCTE 3: Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics)
- NCTE 6: Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

Essential Questions

1. What is the relationship between music and poetry?
2. How has the relationship between music and poetry evolved in recent years?

3. Is music a form of literature? Why or why not?

Objectives

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

1. Recognize metrical rhythm in poetry.
2. Identify poetic devices in song lyrics.
3. Analyze themes of song lyrics and poetry.
4. Determine the relationship between music and poetry.
5. Judge the poetic merit of a song.
6. Compare approaches to theme in poetry and song.

Materials

- Computer/laptop
- Access to Poetry & Short Story Reference Source
- Song Analysis Worksheet (attached)
- Access to YouTube
- Access to Canva, Prezi or PowerPoint (Optional)

Procedure

Part 1

1. Before this lesson, students should be familiar with poetic devices such as rhyme, imagery, onomatopoeia, simile, metaphor, assonance, consonance, alliteration, personification, etc. These terms will be necessary for their analysis of song lyrics at the end of the lesson.
2. Engagement. Open class with a poll that asks: What genre of music do you like? Is music a form of poetry? Review poll responses with students. Review the above terms with the class and discuss.
 - Which of these terms do you think are most important in the formation of poetry?
 - What makes a poem a poem? Does a poem need to have all of these devices? Can it have none of them?
3. Read a selection of rhythmic/musical poems aloud as a class. Poems should either be projected for the whole class or provided on handouts. Some suggested poems available on Poetry & Short Story Reference Source are:
 - "Sonnet 130" by William Shakespeare
 - "Tears" by Walt Whitman
 - "A Narrow Fellow in the Grass" by Emily Dickinson

- “Love Armed” by Aphra Behn
 - “maggie and milly and molly and may” by e. e. cummings
 - “Eagle Poem” by Joy Harjo
 - “City Midnight Junk Stains” by Allen Ginsberg
 - “The Jumblies” by Edward Lear
4. Discuss the poems.
 - What do you see or hear when reading these poems?
 - Can you feel the meter of the poems? How does this relate to music?
 5. Choose one of the poems that was read aloud and project it on the board. Model meter-marking for students using stressed and unstressed syllables.
 6. Provide an example (or two) of a traditional poem that has been turned into a song. Some examples with full text available on Poetry & Short Story Reference Source include:
 - “Auld Lang Syne” by Robert Burns, performed by Julie Andrews (YouTube)
 - “Amazing Grace” by John Newton, performed by Judy Collins (YouTube)
 - “Jabberwocky” by Lewis Carroll, performed by Donovan (YouTube)
 - “A Poison Tree” by William Blake, performed by Max Heinegg (YouTube)
 7. Discuss the song(s). How does the music or style influence the mood of the piece?
 8. Show students a brief video discussing the publishing of the Anthology of Rap by Yale University Press. This video is available on Poetry & Short Story Reference Source. Access this video by selecting “Video” in the “More” drop-down menu in the top banner of the interface. Then, search for the video either by title (“Anthology Traces Rap’s Lyrical Journey”) or via its accession number (“AN PRFVD0027”). Note: If you are signed in, this video can be added to your folder with the button for easy access later.
 9. Discuss the video.
 - What does the creation of a scholarly anthology do for the rap genre?
 - How is rap related to poetry in relation to the discussion of poetry that took place earlier?
 10. Ask students to send song suggestions that will be used in the next portion of the class activity. Songs should be school appropriate (no foul language, no overly violent or disturbing content) and should have lyrics (i.e., not instrumental).

Part 2

1. Divide students into small groups. Review the students’ song suggestions and select 4-6 songs (depending on number of small groups) for students to analyze.
2. Groups may either be assigned a song or be given an opportunity to play a game/answer questions for first choice of the songs. Lyrics should be printed out along with the [worksheet](#), or students may use computers to find lyrics and conduct their analysis in a word processing document.

3. Students examine the lyrics for poetic sound devices (onomatopoeia, rhyme, assonance, consonance, alliteration, etc.) and figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification, imagery, etc.) and consider the influence of the title on the song.
4. Students should complete the worksheet and present their findings to the class, as well as their decision about the song's relation to poetry.

Assessment

Formative Assessment

Conduct smaller evaluations that track progress towards final unit goal. Conduct observations on the small group presentations, focusing on equal division of presentation time between the students. Have groups pass in their worksheets for completion and understanding checks.

Summative Assessment

Conduct a measurable evaluation of student achievement in the form of quizzes, discussions, and/or written responses depending on unit plan. Suggested mini-project: Students each pick a song to analyze in a similar manner as done in class. The song should also be school appropriate and have lyrics but can be any genre that the student likes. The student should compare the lyrics of the song with a poem that addresses a similar theme or has a similar tone. Students may browse poems by theme on Poetry & Short Story Reference Center by using the "Poetic Forms, Themes & Techniques" section found on the homepage sidebar. The song and poem may be compared in a traditional essay or in a visual format, such as a traditional poster or through a digital presentation tool like Canva, Prezi, or PowerPoint. The comparison should demonstrate cumulative knowledge about poetry and poetic devices, citing instances of figurative language and sound devices, and explaining how these elements support the common theme or tone.

Name(s): _____

Date: _____ Class Period: _____

Song Analysis

Song title: _____ Artist: _____

Start by reading through the song lyrics without listening to the music and answer the following questions.

1. How does the title relate to the content of the song? Does it influence the meaning or message?

2. Find three poetic sound devices in the lyrics (onomatopoeia, rhyme, assonance, consonance, alliteration, etc.). Try to find three different devices, if possible. Write the lines in which you find each device and explain.

3. Find two figurative devices in the lyrics (simile, metaphor, personification, imagery, etc.). Try to find two different devices, if possible. Write the lines in which you find each device and explain.

