

Set A Poem to Music

Sixth Grade + ELA and Music

CORE SUBJECT AREA

ELA

ART FORM + ELEMENTS

Music

Style

Understanding relationships between music

MSCCR STANDARDS

RL.6.10: By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

MSCCR CREATIVE ARTS STANDARDS

Cn11.0.8a: Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

DURATION

Three-Five 1 hour classes

OBJECTIVES

TLW:

Explore a picture book that began as a song

Discuss song as a form of poetry

Select a poem and dissect it for rhythm and meter

Set the poem to music using previous music skills

Perform their poem (optional)

Create a portion of a picture book incorporating their “singable” poem.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Music teacher

note paper

computers

plenty of books

VOCABULARY

Music

notes

rhythm

beat

syllable

poems

song

LESSON SEQUENCE

1. Read to the class a children’s picture book that originated from a song.

Ask students:

What is this? (Answers could include children’s book, children’s picture book, a song, a poem, lyrical story, etc.)

Are songs poetry? (yes)

Why? (Songs use rhythm, and often rhyme, like some poems.)

Can poems become songs? (yes)

Why do you think this publisher chose to create a picture book using this song? (Answers will vary but could include it’s a popular song that adults and children can enjoy together, the lyrics lent themselves well to illustration, it’s a way to allow non-readers to read by knowing the song, etc.)

What role do the illustrations play in this book? (In picture Sing the song from the book. Most picture books

created from song will have the original song at the end of the book. You may choose to make copies of the song or project it onto a screen for students to see. While singing it, clap to “hear” the rhythm. (You may choose to do this for one verse or chorus.)

Ask students:

What is the time signature for this song? (will vary depending on song)

What key is it in? (will vary depending on the song)

What did the composer do to make the words fit the time signature? (different words/syllables were assigned different note values to match the time signature, words may have been contracted or shortened to meet the rhythm, etc.)

Lesson One

1. Analyze the first four lines of the children’s book/song/poem for rhythm. Using the example of Sunshine on My Shoulders:

Sunshine on my shoulders makes me happy (10 syllables)

Sunshine in my eyes can make me cry (9 syllables)

Sunshine on the water looks so lovely (10 syllables)

Sunshine almost always makes me high (9 syllables)

You may find it helpful to write the lyrics in syllable format.

For example: Sun-shine on my shoul-ders makes me hap-py

2. Ask students:

Do you see a pattern? (In this poem, there is a 10/9/10/9 rhythm established)

Would this poem transfer easily to a musical time signature? (In this poem, if each syllable was given an equal musical note, it would not transfer easily to a song.)

It may be helpful to have students recite the poem aloud at this point, giving each syllable equal time, to hear how this would sound. (It should sound unnatural and awkward.)

What did the composer (John Denver) do to transfer this poem into music? (He gave some syllables/words more time than others.)

3. Share the printed music with students. At this time, if you haven’t done it already, it would be helpful to share the printed music for this song with students so they can see the time signature, count the beats per measure, view musical notation, and see how the poem was transferred into melodic form. Most picture books created from songs include the original music in the book, typically on the last page(s).

What do you think came first, the poem or the music? Allow the learners to debate this. It will create class discussion.

LESSON TWO

1. Explore picture books originating from songs, children’s poetry, and nursery rhymes with a visit to the library.

2. Each student should select a children’s poem or nursery rhyme to set to music. If the student selects a nursery rhyme, he or she should not set it to a melody that is already known.

3. Back in the classroom, analyze the first four lines of the poem or nursery rhyme for syllables and rhythm. Each individual word should be broken into its syllables. For example, the word lesson would appear as les-son. Walk around the room helping each learner with breaking down the syllables.

Ask students:

Do your first four lines establish a rhythm or pattern?

Will they transfer easily into song?

What will you have to do to make the words fit each measure?

Ask students to set the first four lines to music, using musical notes (length, not tones, at this point) to establish the rhythm for the musical time signature. This work can be done on the note paper. For example, if the word in the student's poem is to have two beats, he or she would place a half-note above the word. If two syllables of a single word would both receive one half beat, then one eighth note would be placed above each syllable.

As students complete the work on these first four lines, the instructor should check the work for understanding.

Once the student has the first four lines completed, ask him or her to continue working on the poem using the same format as above. You may want to place a line limit on the original poem selected or have the student select verses for this lesson.

4. Set the remainder of the poem in a similar format.

5. Create a melody for the poem. Working on staff paper and using the musical notes assigned to each syllable of the lyrics, students should assign tonal values to each note. To do this, the student must first select the key in which he or she wishes to compose the song. For students with limited musical composition understanding, it may be helpful to restrict the students to the key of C. Students may find it helpful to create the melody using instruments in the classroom, such as a keyboard or piano, or work on a virtual keyboard.

6. Each student should perform his or her newly- created melody for the class.

EXTENDED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Create a two-page picture book spread using one or more lines from the song. Students may wish to refer to other picture books that originated from songs for guidance or inspiration.

Using two sheets of blank paper per student, students may work either vertically or horizontally on the paper. The two pages can be joined using transparent tape.

2. Create a "singable" picture book display in the classroom or library using published books and the students' work.

SOURCES

This lesson was adapted from ARTSEdge.

www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade6-8/Set-aPoem-to-Music

Online source for Nursery Rhymes if needed. www.rhymes.org.uk

TIPS + FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. It is important to have your music teacher as a resource! He/she will need to help you and the students with

this lesson and how to properly set the poem to music. At our school, TLs are taught how to properly read music so they have a good prior knowledge.

2. Go slowly with your students, if it takes a week, then it takes a week. This should be done at the end of the year.



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
MERIDIAN

