

Title of Session: Learning From Lyrics

Moderator: Johnathan Chase

Title of File: 20061121lyrics

Date: November 21, 2006

Room: Learning From Lyrics Group

BJB2: Welcome to today's Learning From Lyrics, everyone!

BJB2: We usually start all the Tapped In discussions with introductions. Johnathan Chase is the discussion leader...

BJB2: please tell him where you are located and what brings you to this discussion.

BJB2: I'm a remedial communication teacher in Pennsylvania

DavidWe: I'm David Weksler. I lead a math education and technology discussion in Tapped In. I'm in New Jersey close to New York City

PaulHe: As mentioned above, I am in Sparks, Nevada working in a learning disabled "transition English" class; I used the song "Civil War" by Guns 'N' Roses last week to get kids engaged in language study, and then I found this forum topic and decided to learn more about using music in English class

DavidWe: . o O (cool, Paul)

PaulHe: thanks, David

FredK: I am a tutor for the Push County Literacy Council in SE Oklahoma

KimMe: I'm from Orange County, CA and am an elementary school teacher looking to learn how to ring lyrics into the classroom

VanessaB: Hi, I'm Vanessa from Houston and I teach 4th grade language arts/social studies and am really interested in how i can use lyrics in my teaching

StefanieG: I am in an Computer Education class at the U of Regina (Saskatchewan). We are to experience a "tapped in" session of our choice

FredK: I want to listen in (lurk) for a while

FredK: Called to dinner

JohnathanC: Hi everyone, I teach 7/8 social studies in NY. I just finished a unit on Reformers and Progressivism and thought we could talk about songs that promote student activism and social responsibility. Any song ideas before I get started?

PaulHe: Rage Against the Machine has some good stuff, though some songs have bad language

DavidWe: Cover versions of "Downtown Train"?

VanessaB: I would suggest some songs by U2...but can't think of any titles just right now

DavidWe smiles

PaulHe: Sunday Bloody Sunday

JohnathanC: Great suggestions

PaulHe: Also, it's heavy, but Metallica's "Blackened" is a great song about environmental degradation

PaulHe: Buffalo Springfield's "For What It's Worth"

VanessaB: Paul, I like your music

PaulHe: {thx}

DavidWe: Arlo Guthrie will be at Carnegie Hall this coming weekend

DavidWe . o O (Alice's Restaurant)

PaulHe: Neil Young's "Southern Man"

VanessaB: Kanye West has sparked some great new anti-diamond movements with his song

PaulHe: which one?

JohnathanC: Has anyone had a chance to check out the Stories Behind the Songs link on this page yet?

PaulHe: Jonathan...looked at it briefly

DavidWe hasn't

VanessaB: see, this is where I go bad...I don't know titles well

VanessaB: I have not

BJB2: <http://www.learningfromlyrics.org/Introduction.html>

PaulHe: one other suggestion that just popped into my head...Tracy Chapman "Fast Car"

PaulHe: good social commentary there

StefanieG: When dealing with lyrics in high school... should we use songs that are more.. popular with whatever age group you are teaching?

JohnathanC: After you click on the link, scroll down and be sure to read the intro before we proceed

JohnathanC: I don't think that's necessary

JohnathanC: Are others finished with the intro, I'll move on

VanessaB: yes

JohnathanC: Ok now scroll down to the bottom entry "Another Day in Paradise" and click. One more reading, but this will help to establish a good knowledge base for discussion.

JohnathanC: I've been building this popular song reference guide for teachers for some time now to try and give people a starting point for using songs in the classroom.

PaulHe: you've got a hefty list of related works!

DavidWe: Great, Johnathan

JohnathanC: We will explore some shortly

JohnathanC: lots of tie ins to film and literature

StefanieG: fantastic

JohnathanC: We focus on DBQ's in NY so I try to incorporate song lyrics into constructed response questions

PaulHe: that is something I did not do with "Civil War" but I'm thinking of developing a more robust lesson on the song and incorporating some constructed response questions

JohnathanC: The format is easily replicated, check out the "Another Day in Paradise" Constructed Response

PaulHe: which link is it?

JohnathanC: It's below the narrative text under referenced and related works

JohnathanC: everyone find it?

PaulHe: got it [must be blind]

BJB2: <http://www.learningfromlyrics.org/para.html>

VanessaB: yes

VanessaB: there is so much information on songs, good backgrounds

JohnathanC: I generally start with a quote or excerpt from a historic document and then pose a series of questions before introducing a related song

JohnathanC: We listen to the song AFTER students have answered my questions.....they gotta do a little work first

PaulHe: good idea

JohnathanC: I love the two quotes because they are historic yet relate to students on a personal level

KimMe: do you usually use music as an introductory piece to a new unit?

KimMe: or mostly for discussion prompting?

JohnathanC: sometimes, other times to review information and check for student understanding and for discussion

JohnathanC: social responsibility is a great topic for this time of year

VanessaB: I would like to incorporate that theme in my classroom at the moment

PaulHe: I've got seniors, some of whom are 18, who don't show much interest in voting

PaulHe: I don't think any did in the election we just had

JohnathanC: Student apathy is a problem everywhere I think, take a look at "The Legend of the Starfish" link and what do you notice about the song I included on that page ?

JohnathanC: Be sure to read the legend first

JohnathanC: <http://www.learningfromlyrics.org/starfis.html>

PaulHe: there's a great segue from the end of the legend to the first lines of the song

VanessaB: ah, excellent. I always want to incorporate compassion for helping even if it means in small amounts, but to try and avoid my vegan ways of thinking. It can be tricky sometimes

VanessaB: this is a great story and song to appropriate that point

JohnathanC: A great way to have students demonstrate understanding of a particular theme or concept in English or Social Studies is to ask them to bring in a song that expresses a similar idea

PaulHe: in what format do you ask them to bring in the song?

PaulHe: I like the idea

JohnathanC: I might say find me a song that reflects the ideals of MLK

VanessaB: good idea. This would be an easy thing for them to bring in.

JohnathanC: I have an open invitation to my students

JohnathanC: You find a song with social and historic relevance

VanessaB: I have a "daily challenge" for them that is aside from normal classroom work, so this could be incorporated into the challenge to bring in daily song titles

JohnathanC: And I'll let you play it in class.....AFTER you have introduced the song and EXPLAINED its significance

JohnathanC: A great way to intro public speaking

PaulHe: so you ask the kids to bring in CDs? Can they bring in a song on an ipod?

VanessaB: great idea!

JohnathanC: They could I would have to bring in my son's ipod player

PaulHe: also, how do you handle bad language in the songs?

PaulHe: do you screen them first?

JohnathanC: Yes they must bring me the lyrics first and I will make enough copies for the class and they will present at some time that week

PaulHe: ok, that's easy enough

VanessaB: so, bad language?

VanessaB: I just usually tell the children that I'm about to introduce very mature stuff and if they can handle it let me know, otherwise I'll save it

JohnathanC: I focus on central concepts.....change, choice, power, empathy, environment, diversity, justice, identity, interdependence, culture and the students must be sure to explain how their song reflects any of these concepts

KimMe: You teach high school correct Vanessa?

BJB2: I think that this is a good opportunity to discuss whether the language adds to the meaning of the lyrics and is really necessary to the message

JohnathanC: Language has not been an issue for the most part

VanessaB: no, I'm 4th grade

KimMe: I teach elementary school and I feel this could be an issue

PaulHe: teaching English, BJ's point is definitely a focus of mine

KimMe: The parents are okay with this exposure?

VanessaB: good way to look at it...if the language adds to the meaning

JohnathanC: Ready to look at another item?

PaulHe: sure

BJB2: I'm referring more to the high school age kids. Elementary is a bit different

JohnathanC: <http://www.learningfromlyrics.org/whitma.html>

JohnathanC: Again I try to include a song excerpt that expresses a similar idea

JohnathanC: Sometimes students select songs that express contrasting views and that just as valid if they can explain the difference

PaulHe: good point

PaulHe: one thing I did is ask students to think about how the instrumentation of the song adds to the mood and tone of the piece, along with the lyrics

PaulHe: this gave them a listening objective in addition to following along with the printed lyrics

JohnathanC: great idea

PaulHe: it tied in with state standards of listening skills

JohnathanC: Someone mentioned Alice's restaurant earlier, does everyone know the connection to thanksgiving?

PaulHe: I could use a refresher

JohnathanC: The song was traditionally played on the radio on Thanksgiving day by a local DJ when I was growing up

JohnathanC: The story behind the song can be found here (gotta read again)

JohnathanC: <http://www.learningfromlyrics.org/alice.html>

JohnathanC: Inspired by an event that occurred on Thanksgiving Day

JohnathanC: It's an anti-draft/ anti-war song.....appropriate now more than ever

BJB2: John, our time is almost up. Will you be meeting on December 19?

JohnathanC: Yes

BJB2: wonderful! Thanks for leading the discussion, John...great as usual

PaulHe: thank you

BJB2: and thank you, everyone, for your enthusiastic participation

KimMe: thank you, great first time experience!

VanessaB: thank you, I have some wonderful ideas for music

JohnathanC: Thanks everyone.....happy Turkey day!

JohnathanC: Bye

BJB2 waves goodnight