

**Popular Music:
Bridging the Gap from Medieval Times to the Present**

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INTRODUCTION

Music is a defining feature of a high school student's life. The music that a person listens to during his or her high school years more often than not defines the time period for the student. The baby boomers had the Beatles and rock and roll. The seventies had heavy metal, disco, and rock and roll. The eighties witnessed the increase of interest in the rap movement, glam rock, punk rock, heavy metal, and rock and roll. The nineties saw a mainstreaming of rap and hip-hop, grunge rock as an offshoot of punk rock, and rock and roll. The new millennium continues with and increased interest in mainstream hip-hop, punk rock, and rock and roll, now known as pop music. According to Barker and Taylor:

When we're young, a large part of our original motivation in discovering music comes from trying to find out about our identity – perhaps to fit in, or, in contrast, to differentiate ourselves from the rest. The music morality we adopt at an early age often becomes enshrined, making it hard to change our views later on. (335)

While each generation is defined by its own unique music that the previous generations may not connect with, there is music that serves as a thread from one generation to the next.

OBJECTIVES

TEKS: English 4

The students will:

Writing

- write in a variety of forms.
- use technology for aspects of creating, revising, editing, and publishing texts.
- use writing to discover, record, review, and learn.

Vocabulary

- expand vocabulary through wide reading, listening, and discussing.
- rely on context to determine meanings of words and phrases, such as figurative language, idioms, multiple meaning words, and technical vocabulary.

Reading/Comprehension

- comprehend selections using a variety of strategies.
- draw upon his/her background to provide connection to texts.
- analyze text structures such as compare/contrast, cause/effect, and chronological order for how they influence understanding.
- produce summaries of texts by identifying main idea and supporting detail.
- draw inferences and support them with textual evidence and experience.

- use study strategies such as note taking, outlining, and using study-guide questions to better understand texts.
- read silently with comprehension for a sustained period of time.
- read a variety of texts for different purposes in varied sources.
- read extensively and intensively for different purposes in varied sources, including British literature and increasingly demanding texts.

Listening/Speaking/Listening Critically

- demonstrate proficiency in each aspect of the listening process such as focusing attention, interpreting, and responding.
- demonstrate proficiency in critical, empathic, appreciative, and reflective listening.
- use effective listening to provide appropriate feedback in a variety of situations such as conversations and discussions and informative, persuasive, or artistic presentations.

RATIONALE

I teach advanced English and dual-credit English to seniors at a large urban public high school. The dual-credit students are enrolled in a community college class, so they are simultaneously earning the high school credit for British literature and six college credits for freshman English Composition I and II. The advanced seniors are learning about British and world literature. The motivated, college-bound students can handle the rigors of British literature, MLA documented papers, and abstract thinking. They also must do the essay writing and reading assignments as homework, since the class time is utilized for class discussions and group work. I teach the class as though it may be the last English class that these students will attend, so they must learn as much as possible in order to be successful in college and beyond. I try to cover a thousand years worth of British literature, from *Beowulf* to the twenty-first century, and immerse the students in writing activities. The lesson plans are geared toward any senior class; however, they can also be modified for juniors or underclassmen. The focal point of the curriculum unit is the chronological study of senior-level British literature and the lessons that work well with music. British literature is taught chronologically, so this unit presents the material in the order that it is taught.

UNIT BACKGROUND

Music is a powerful motivating tool for the uninterested or reluctant student. Music is captivating in the classroom. If a teacher wants to try something new that will invigorate the class, he or she should try introducing a lesson that includes a guaranteed attention-grabber: music. In today's technological society, parents and teachers are increasingly competing with so much multi-media stimulation. Ironically, by introducing music into the classroom, teachers are able to capture the students' attention by the very means that usually distracts their attention. Music is a powerful motivator. I have incorporated music into my high school classroom for the past eighteen years. Students who write letters of assessment at the end of the spring semester have written that the lessons involving music were the most memorable.

The Beatles have not been a band since 1970, yet teenagers today enjoy listening to the music that was made four decades ago. "The impact of the Beatles – not only on rock and roll but on all of Western culture – is simply incalculable" (George-Warren, Romanowski, and Pareles, 56). With their fascination with mythology, Middle Earth fantasy, and British folk music, Led Zeppelin has withstood the test of time to become "one of the most enduring bands in rock history" (554). Punk rock was the favorite music for many generation X-ers in the eighties, and today bands such as Green Day are enjoying a whole new audience of teenagers. "Nirvana is widely credited with bringing the sound of the late-'70s punk rock to a mainstream pop audience"

(700). “Nirvana’s success changed the course of rock music in the ‘90s, cementing the rise of alternative rock and legitimizing the differences in perspective between the earlier baby-boom generation of rock fans and the subsequent so-called generation X” (710). Metallica, so popular in the eighties, can be heard on today’s iPods and are displayed on tee shirts. “Metallica became known for its sophisticated, often complex song structures and serious lyrics that reflected teen obsessions with anger, despair, fear, and death” (642). Green Day and the Red Hot Chili Peppers have transcended decades and captured a whole new audience of teenage listeners with their modern rock.

Concerts are interesting case studies of intergenerational music. My fourteen-year-old and her friends were as excited about the 2006 Mötley Crüe concert as the thirty-somethings that I spoke to in nearby seats. What I found fascinating is that the adults that identify that music with their teenage years dress the part and psychologically go back in time to their youth for the few hours that the concert lasts. While there weren’t many younger people at the 2006 Grassroots concert or the 1990 Paul McCartney concert, the middle-aged people dressed as they did in the sixties when they first developed an interest in the music. Some of the fans attempted to squeeze into jeans that might have fit them in a bygone era. “The graying of the music market crept up on America” (Leeds 22). The baby boomers are still influencing the music market. “Last year [2006] fans 45 and older accounted for 25.5 percent of sales, while older teenagers...represented less than 12 percent” (22). Bands from the eighties, such as the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Green Day, stretch the intergeneration gap. For example, my older daughter grew up listening to those bands when they were new, and she took her little sister to the two concerts this past year because these two bands have rejuvenated their music recently, both having won Grammys. “With *American Idiot*, Green Day is back to rightfully reclaim the punk/pop throne” (Barker and Taylor 101). Both siblings enjoyed the experience equally. Then there are the concerts that target a specific audience at the exclusion of others. An example is punk rock, especially on a local level. By that, I mean that parents and children are not likely to attend this sort of a venue. As I waited for my teenage daughter and her friends to come out of a local punk rock concert, I noticed that virtually all of the fans were young and dressed in the typical black clothing, chains, many Mohawk hairdos in rainbow colors, and the occasional combat boots. The only mothers I noticed were waiting impatiently on the sidewalk or in their cars for their teenagers to emerge from the reverberating building. Music can serve as a connection to people with similar interests, and it can serve as an individual banner to identify the teenager as a unique individual with an interest that doesn’t include that of the parents. Hip-hop is also music that can be used as a rebellion that transcends parental boundaries: “hip-hop has become a vehicle for youth expression and rebellion in cultures from Europe to Asia” (“All Roads Lead to Hip-Hop” 117). Each generation seeks a niche that is uniquely its own and music serves this purpose well. Ironically, it is also a link between generations, a unification. One aspect of music that people tend to agree on is the importance of authenticity.

Authenticity

I have discovered in my eighteen years as a high school English teacher that students have an acute sense of what is fair, what is real, and what is authentic. They will accept most requests, grades, or assignments if they are given fairly to all. They also care deeply about authenticity. They can spot insincerity and know when something is not authentic. It behooves a teacher to know the material thoroughly and to care about the presentation of materials, or the students may respond in a disapproving manner, whether it is a comment or just shutting down and not paying attention. Authenticity in music is also a concern and an interest of the young people today.

The people who are qualified to judge authenticity are the musicians. They sometime define authenticity in their music. Bob Dylan is “the most influential American musician rock has ever produced and unquestionably the most important of the ‘60s” (George-Warren, Romanowski, and

Pareles 286). Dylan's lyrics are "the first in rock to be seriously regarded as literature" (286). His comments should carry some weight. In an interview, when asked why people reacted so strongly to him in the 1960s, he responded:

Because I had – and perhaps still do have – that originality that others don't have. Because I come from a time when you had to be original, and you had to have some kind of God-given talent just to begin with. You couldn't manufacture that. Just about everybody and anybody who was around in the Fifties and Sixties had a degree of originality. That was the only way you could get in the door. That was just a necessary part of your make-up, which needed to be there. (Wenner 52)

Neil Young believes that "music is just as powerful as ever" (Fricke 138). He also stated that now music is a business and an entertainment industry. In the '60s "the music was believable, and the people believed it" (140). Paul McCartney explained the change in their music from 1964 to 1967:

We were just following our instincts, but there was a big spurt of energy. The ideas were coming fast and thick. All sorts of new ideas – artistic, political, musical. We started writing stuff that was different because we were talking and thinking and feeling different. (DeCurtiss 60)

Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor, in their book *Faking It: the Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music*, concur as to the impact of popular music on society: "It seems clear that changes in popular music also partly reflected deeper changes in society" (195). The people responsible for making the connection between singer and songwriter an indicator of authenticity were Bob Dylan and the Beatles:

Dylan's move to rock 'n' roll was a significant step toward bridging this gap. But even more than Dylan, it was the Beatles who, by writing their own songs, transformed the music industry from one in which the congruence between singer and songwriter was irrelevant to one in which it could not be ignored." (168)

Performers who write their own songs is one definition of authenticity. Live performance versus recording or video is another marker. "The notion of the live performances [as] the authentic work [was] called into question as soon as the sound recording was accepted as a legitimate form of performance" (Williams 155-156). Music videos have changed the landscape of music. "Music videos not only promote records, they announce a new way of expressing music, a way of articulating sights and sounds, a way in which the visual performance does not simply translate or illustrate a musical performance, but in which a visual performance is attuned to and dances the music" (161).

Kitwana states that music videos "moved hip-hop from the margins to the center of American youth culture...music videos became a pivotal tool for selling music and with it a lifestyle of urban America" (41). Does massive acceptance or popularity make music authentic? Does music lose its quality without the authenticity label? "Rock 'n' roll was at its core self-consciously inauthentic music. It spoke of self-invention...Its lack of authenticity gave it staying power" (Barker and Taylor 149). Barker and Taylor believe that Elvis remained an actor to the end and that his "art was artifice, and it served him well" (157). In the mid-sixties "Rock music became what it remains today: a mode of performance characterized by a strong desire to stop acting and to get real" (157). Barker and Taylor list exceptions to the bands that wanted to get real: the Rolling Stones, the Who in the 60s, glam rock, art rock, and heavy metal in the '70s, and new wave in the '80s (157). Performance and music became more of a cohesive unit due to music videos. Barker and Taylor declare that "rock 'n' roll was at its core self-consciously inauthentic music: if Elvis could reinvent himself, so could others...Its inauthenticity gave it its staying power" (149). If that is the case, then is authentic music fleeting?

A dialogue about authenticity in music often includes Kurt Cobain and Nirvana:

Many young punk fans found echoes of their personal frustrations in punk's commands to keep it real, make it raw, do it yourself, and be against everything. Cobain wanted to be authentic partially because the seventeen-year-old fan he had once been would have wanted him to be authentic; he didn't want to let himself down, and he didn't want to let the average seventeen-year-old punk rock kid down. But at the same time he also felt that letting everyone down was inevitable. (Barker and Taylor 20-21)

Once authenticity is defined in music, how can it be maintained? "In the last fifty years, the quest for authenticity, for the 'real,' has become a dominant factor in musical taste" (Barker and Taylor ix). From Dylan to the Beatles to Nirvana to new bands emerging today, music fans seek authenticity in the artists.

Medieval Times

Introducing the medieval ballads with comparable contemporary music is a good attention-getting device. I will have a guitar in class to play or have students play a ballad or two. I also play CDs of ballads that parallel the medieval ones in the textbook. Before we read the ballads, we discuss the life of a medieval troubadour and how it compared to musicians today:

The medieval composer and performer did not purvey their talents to an anonymous public as private individuals. The life of a medieval musician was always that of a member of a community which existed for a wider purpose than a purely musical one, and which imposed definite rules and requirements not only on his musical activities but also on the form and manner of his daily life. (Harrison 1)

The prospect of today's rock star adhering to so strict a lifestyle may be good topic for a class discussion or writing assignment.

Oral Tradition: Beowulf

British literature was originally passed down from one generation to another by oral tradition. Students learn that over three thousand lines of *Beowulf* were memorized by the scop, or medieval minstrel, and recited in a rhythmic song-like chant that helped the scop to remember the lines. I introduce the unit with a comparison of modern English to Old English and Middle English.

Memorization techniques, such as rhythm and music, can enhance the students' test-taking skills. *Beowulf* was memorized by phrases rather than verbatim. This is the perfect opportunity to compare the technique of combining memorized phrases that is employed by some ministers and rap artists. Playing a speech by Martin Luther King, Jr., such as "I Have a Dream," teaches his use of parallelism, repetition, and emphasis on the words and their meaning. The translated *Beowulf* is read aloud in class, so that the students can experience oral tradition, even though memorization is not required. Seamus Heaney includes the Old English version of *Beowulf* side-by-side with his modern, poetic translation of the epic poem (Heaney).

Medieval Ballads

Medieval ballads were created along the Scottish-English border as a means of storytelling and passing down information from one generation to the next using oral tradition. This is an opportunity to teach students that illiterate does not mean ignorant. Often the mothers taught their children by passing down familiar stories to the new generation. The structure of the songs was refrain and chorus. Memorization techniques came into play. Medieval ballads usually came under one of three categories: love stories, shipwreck stories, and humorous stories. Ballads were a means of storytelling (Applebee, *Lang. of Lit: British Lit.* 192). There are many different versions of the same ballad. One version of "Barbara Allen" is in the textbook (193) and another

is sung by Pete Seeger (Seeger). This is a narrative about love. The shipwreck ballad is “Sir Patrick Spens” (194-195). A contemporary comparison is Gordon Lightfoot’s “The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald” (Lightfoot). “Get Up and Bar the Door” is a humorous story with the battle of the sexes theme (196-197). People shared the songs and passed them from one generation to the next. Barker and Taylor state:

Even in the middle ages, professional entertainers would absorb music from communities they visited and then share it with other communities; and those communities would learn songs from professional musicians and transform them into new folk songs. (72)

A discussion on the difference between folk songs and pop songs may spark the interest of the students. According to Barker and Taylor:

Perhaps the only way to properly separate what we now think of as ‘folk’ songs (‘Barbara Allen’) from ‘pop’ songs (Stephen Foster’s ‘Camptown Races’) is the context of their performance. In other words, ‘pop’ songs often become ‘folk’ songs; and ‘folk’ songs are basically old ‘pop’ songs. (71)

Students may compare folk songs and pop songs and get into a lively debate about what constitutes folk and pop.

Canterbury Tales

Geoffrey Chaucer borrowed many well known stories and retold them as *The Canterbury Tales*. There were no copyright laws at that time, and many authors borrowed from other works. It was a rarity for an author to sign his works; however, Chaucer was one who did. The study of *The Canterbury Tales* lends itself to an opportunity to teach a linguistics lesson about the growing, changing English language. Middle English is more easily understood than Old English. Students may prefer to read the modern English translated version of *The Canterbury Tales*. A lesson in rhythm and syntax can be utilized here. One of my classes noted how, when read aloud, *The Canterbury Tales* “Prologue” had the same cadence and rhythm as some rap songs. One of my students decided to read “The Prologue” to the class in a rap rhythm, while accompanied by percussionists with desks as makeshift drums. In all my years of teaching Chaucer, I have never witnessed such enthusiasm and delight from so many students. Music and student participation brought this medieval work of literature to life.

Faust Legend

Most senior textbooks contain a small portion of the Faust Legend, since the theme has become prevalent in works of literature. Many students remember reading “The Devil and Tom Walker” (Applebee, *Lang. of Lit.: American Lit.* 349) in American literature. I usually have the students brainstorm for examples of the Faust legend in other works. I play Charlie Daniels Band’s “The Devil Went Down to Georgia” and then list other examples on the board. Seniors are nostalgic and many remember watching Disney’s *The Little Mermaid* when they were young.

Elizabethan Times

Shakespeare is such a dominant force in senior English, so there is an opportunity to introduce Elizabethan music to the classroom. Sting recently released a CD called *Songs from the Labyrinth*, a collection of songs by John Dowland, an Elizabethan composer. “Many English Renaissance lyric poems were written to be sung, and because their purpose was to express the author’s feelings, the rhythm and the tone of the poem is often a function of their sound as well as their sense” (Applebee, *Lang. of Lit.: British Lit.* 284). According to Boyd:

Folk songs and troubadour songs were common in the Middle Ages, but our modern art-song, with every note of the melody and accompaniment fitted together carefully by a composer well aware of its artistic importance, dates from the Elizabethan period. (127)

Elizabethan music included a variety of genres, such as madrigals, lyric poetry set to music, church music, instrumental music, and music for the theater (Boyd 37, 92, 155, 189). By Shakespeare's time, music was multi-faceted and sophisticated.

Shakespeare

Shakespeare included songs in his plays. "The Elizabethan play...commonly contained songs" (Boyd 189). Boyd explains that because Elizabethan theater did not have curtains, painted scenery, or control of the lighting, Shakespeare introduced songs when characters had to get on and off the stage "and also to create atmosphere and to conjure up imaginary stage settings to the audience" (192).

Balthasar sings in *Much Ado about Nothing* and Amiens sings in *As You Like It*. Ariel's songs in *The Tempest* were sung by a boy. There are fairy songs in *Midsummer Night's Dream* and a dirge for two voices in *Cymbeline*. Ophelia sings in *Hamlet*, and Desdemona in *Othello*." (Boyd 191-192)

Boyd states that Shakespeare's own opinion of music is expressed in the Fifth Act of the *Merchant of Venice*:

Nought so stockfish hard and full of rage,
But music for the time doth change his nature.
The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils.
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus. (193)

Shakespeare included music in his plays, but it wasn't a priority. Other Elizabethan musicians, such as John Dowland, devoted their lives to music.

Sting

John Dowland, born in 1563, was an alienated singer-songwriter, "something that gives him an acutely modern resonance" (Sting). Sting became fascinated with Elizabethan music, so he studied the different instruments and took voice lessons to make his singing authentic to how the music was sung in the sixteenth century. Most of the songs in the CD, just released in 2006, were Dowland's compositions; however, Sting also included a song written by Ben Jonson. One song was written by Dowland to please James I's wife, the sister of King Christian IV of Denmark—"a well-placed compliment could go a long way in such a world" (Sting 12). Sting included a booklet with the CD that has commentary on the times and Dowland. He explains that musicians were sometimes used for intelligence, gossip, or spying, since they traveled to different courts in Europe. Sting also commented about why he chose some of the songs: "'The Lowest Trees Have Tops' is probably my favourite of all these songs. Its lightness of touch and sly humour express a 'pop' sensibility I feel comfortable and familiar with" (14). Sting has managed to bridge the wide gap between the sixteenth and the twenty-first centuries.

Romanticism

The Romantic period is one of my favorites to teach. The students can relate to the romantic ideals and the focus on nature. The students study impressionism in art and the music of the time period. Thinking in songs "in an old Romantic notion: Coleridge played upon it in his preface to 'Kubla Khan,' Shelley wrote of the skylark's 'profuse strains of unpremeditated art,' Keats cried, 'O for a life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts!'" (Barker and Taylor 212). A discussion about how Keats and Shelley died young almost always prompts a comparison to all of the contemporary rock stars that have died young: Jimi Hendrix, Kurt Cobain, Jim Morrison, and

Janis Joplin to name a few. Students are interested in George Gordon, Lord Byron, the equivalent of the modern-day rock star. Neil Young alludes to Keats in his statement, “Thinking in songs – that’s where it gets lost. Either playing it or writing it” (Barker and Taylor 213). “Young, like Keats, is trying to capture the innocent imagination of the child” (213). Barker and Taylor include Coleridge and Shelley as examples of poets that believed in the authenticity of the imagination that inspired their work.

Of all the Romantic authors, Robert Burns is the musician, having written and performed many songs. He was the equivalent of the modern rock star in eighteenth century Scotland. Most students recognize his songs, such as “Auld Lang Syne,” “My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose,” and “Coming through the Rye.” These songs “became instantly popular and are still to be heard in informal gathering of songsters throughout Scotland” (Burns ix). Famous American authors John Steinbeck and J.D. Salinger alludes to Burns’ poetry: Salinger uses “Coming through the Rye” in *Catcher in the Rye* and Steinbeck borrows from Burns’ “To a Mouse” for the title and theme of his novel, *Of Mice and Men*. Robert Burns is also an excellent author to use as an example of the use of local color.

Modern Era

The modern era was an example of fragmentation, with its fragmentation of life in the post-World War I years, its fragmented jazz music, its fragmented art in cubism, and its fragmented literature. War songs became popular. With the onset of the Depression, Woody Guthrie emerged as the voice of the people with his folk songs. “Dylan decided to remake himself in Woody’s image” (Klein 444). Pete Seeger was also influenced by Woody Guthrie. “Seeger, using Woody as a prime example – showed them how the music was more than just history, how it could be used to express anger, to protest against social conditions” (Klein 443). Pete Seeger was a major influence on Bob Dylan. Other musicians who influenced Dylan (according to Dylan in an interview): The Louvain Brothers, Hank Williams, Muddy Waters, Howlin’ Wolf, Charlie Patton” (Vox 207).

Pete Seeger made a name for himself in the middle of the twentieth century as a folk singer and a civil rights activist. The civil rights movement was “a singing movement from the very start” (Klein). Pete Seeger sang many civil rights songs during his concerts, including “We Shall Overcome.”

The highlander Folk School in Tennessee, still thriving twenty years after Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie had visited on their way to Oklahoma in 1940, was training civil rights activists like Martin Luther King and teaching them songs like “We Shall Overcome,” which was a reworking of a Baptist hymn (“I’ll Be All Right”) that first had been used by black tobacco workers in the 1940s (Klein 442).

Bob Dylan, considered to be “The most important songwriter of the modern pop era” (Hilburn 211) says this about Pete Seeger:

I have led two thousand, three thousand people through songs, but I haven’t done it like Pete Seeger. He’s a master at that, leading a mass of people in four-part harmony to a song not even in their language. I think he could appeal to people as much as Sting could, because he could make them feel like they matter and make sense to themselves and feel like they’re contributing to something. (223-224)

The folk music of the first half of the twentieth century influenced pop music of the latter half. “Folk music would keep a small, purist following, but the folk ‘style’ would become a major influence on the creative explosion in popular music that took place in the late 1960s” (Klein 453). The literature of the modern era influenced Bob Dylan, as indicated in his 2001 CD,

Love and Theft. The song “Summer Days” is a good song to compare to *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Contemporary Times

Forty years have passed since the British invasion, yet the music of the ‘60s still influences several generations of music fans. “Rock style also seeks a mass audience. It becomes a means of interpreting and defining the world” (Williams 111). From rock ‘n’ roll to hip-hop, “What was once a marginal culture has become mainstream” (Kitwana 48). So many musicians and bands inspire future musicians who then create their own unique sound and niche in the music community. “John Lennon credited ‘Heartbreak Hotel’ with igniting his love for the music” (Barker and Taylor 150). The Byrds, singing folk rock and country rock, influenced the Eagles and Tom Petty (George-Warren, Romanowski, and Pareles 137). Their most famous song, “Turn, Turn, Turn” was written by Pete Seeger, based on “Ecclesiastes” in the Bible. “The Yardbirds set the groundwork for heavy metal” (1093). Led Zeppelin – ‘70s Heavy Metal pioneer – was influenced by the Yardbirds, British folk music and the blues (653). Billy Joel was influenced by Paul McCartney (497), and in the ‘80s Green Day became “punk revivalists” (393). Steve Klein of New Found Glory stated, “After I listened to Green Day, it opened a whole new world to me about punk music” (Small 101). Teens identify with bands like Green Day and Nirvana. “Bands like Green Day added angst to their punk-pop... no post-Nirvana guitar-based band, whether post-grunge, mainstream, or even metal, could ignore the pressure to create autobiographical songs about their misery” (Barker and Taylor 26). Hip-hop is another genre that spans generations dating back to Africa (Harvey 115). “America’s soundtrack for 30 years –is now a global force” (110). Up and coming bands, such as the high school garage bands may be the next chapter in contemporary music.

Conclusion

It will be interesting to observe over the next decade or two whether the popularity of iPods, cell phones, and other listening devices will create a generation of audio learners, such as the generation in the first half of the twentieth century that listened to radio programs without a visual aid. Since the introduction of television and the computer screen, it seems as though an inordinate number of students have become visual learners.

Music is the international language. It becomes the signature of each generation. It taps into our memories and connects us to others worldwide. It is the international, intergenerational language that connects teachers to students. Music affects people on such a personal level. Kurt Vonnegut stated that he wanted this as his epitaph: “THE ONLY PROOF HE NEEDED FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD WAS MUSIC” (66). I looked it up on the Internet after his recent passing, and it is his epitaph.

Music defines us. For students who perform music in the classroom, it gives them a chance to shine, to bolster their self-esteem, to test their courage, and to express themselves. I have students who are in garage bands. One band, the Riff Tiffs, has shown so much promise that they were highlighted in an article in the *Houston Chronicle* (Feldman 1, 4). Our students may be musicians who follow in the footsteps of the musicians from medieval times to the present. They just may be the ones who change the world of music.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson Plan 1: Medieval Ballads – Oral Tradition

Objective: The students will understand the techniques used to remember words, lines, and phrases in literature and music that employ oral tradition.

TEKS: 110.45. (10) Reading/culture. The student reads widely, including British literature, to increase knowledge of his/her own culture, the culture of others, and the common elements across cultures.

Materials: strips of paper and copies of the selected poems, speech, or songs (See titles below.)

Procedures

Hand each student a phrase and have him/ her read it. If two phrases work well together, then those two students get up and stand on one side of the room. After all of the students have read their phrases, they must get up and find a person whose phrase best matched theirs. Once all of the students are paired up, the phrases are read once again to see if they make sense. Then the students return to their seats and they are given the poem, speech, or lyrics in the original order. If it is a song, then play it for them.

Discuss the importance of good syntax, memorization techniques, and the content of the piece.

Give each student three different versions of the ballad, “Barbara Allen.” Ask for volunteers to read each one. Compare the versions. If possible sing or play the musical version of the poem. How does the music enhance the narrative?

Read all of the ballads in the McDougal Littell senior textbook: “Barbara Allen” (192), “Sir Patrick Spens” (192) and “Get Up and Bar the Door” (196-197). These three represent the three types of medieval ballads: a love song, a shipwreck story, and a humorous lyric.

Play the following ballads after reading each of the ballads in the textbook: “Barbara Allen” (Seeger) and “the Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald” (Lightfoot). I will sometimes choose a humorous ballad to accompany “Get Up and Bar the Door” (196-197). Since Houston is so close geographically to Galveston, I also play Bruce Springsteen’s “Galveston Bay” which is a ballad about the tragic consequences of the Texas shrimpers versus the newer immigrants from Vietnam in the ‘70s.

Assessment: This is a group activity, a holistic daily grade. Students will be tested on oral tradition in the *Beowulf* test.

Lesson 2: Faust Legend

Objectives

TEKS: 110.45 (8), (9)

(8) Reading/comprehension. The student comprehends selections using a variety of strategies.

The student is expected to: (A) establish and adjust purpose for reading such as to find out, to understand, to interpret, to enjoy, and to solve problems; and (B) draw upon his/her own background to provide connection to texts.

(9) Reading/variety of texts. The student reads extensively and intensively for different purposes in varied sources, including British literature, in increasingly demanding texts; (C) reads British and other world literature, including classic and contemporary works; and (D) interprets the possible influences of the historical context on a literary work.

TEKS 7110.45 (2) Writing/writing processes. The student uses recursive writing processes when appropriate. The student is expected to (B) develop drafts independently by organizing content such as paragraphing and outlining and by refining style to suit occasion, audience and purpose.

Materials

Recording of “The Devil Went Down to Georgia,” by the Charlie Daniels Band

Copies of the Faust legend and “The Devil and Tom Walker”

Procedures

Listen to “The Devil Went Down to Georgia” by the Charlie Daniels Band.

Read the excerpt in the senior textbook about the Faust Legend and “The Devil and Tom Walker” in the junior textbook. Seniors are nostalgic and may remember stories when they were young, such as the Walt Disney movie, *The Little Mermaid*. Discuss the similarities and differences in these stories.

Creative Writing Activity: Students will write a short story or poem that has a similar theme to the Faust legend.

Assessment: Essay: Write a comparison essay, demonstrating knowledge of the Faust Legend, comparing it to another work of literature, either examples from the class discussion or a new example.

Lesson 3: Elizabethan Music

Objectives

TEKS 110.45 (1) Writing/purposes. The student writes in a variety of forms. The student is expected to: (A) write in a variety of forms with an emphasis on literary forms such as fiction, poetry, drama, and media scripts.

TEKS 110.45 (7) Reading/word identification/vocabulary development. The student acquires an extensive vocabulary through reading and systematic word study. The student is expected to: (A) expand vocabulary through wide reading, listening, and discussing; and (B) rely on context to determine meanings of words and phrases such as figurative language, idioms, multiple meaning words, and technical vocabulary.

TEKS 110.45 (15) Listening/speaking/critical listening. The student listens attentively for a variety of purposes. The student is expected to: (A) demonstrate proficiency in each aspect of the listening process such as focusing attention, interpreting, and responding; (C) demonstrate proficiency in critical, empathic, appreciative, and reflective listening; and (E) use effective listening to provide appropriate feedback in a variety of situations such as conversations and discussions and informative, persuasive, or artistic presentations.

Materials

Selected Shakespearean songs

Selected Elizabethan songs performed by Sting (*Songs from the Labyrinth*)

Vocabulary: Students write down unfamiliar words as they listen to the Sting CD.

Linguistics: enunciation. Point out how clearly Sting enunciates the words, often giving equal emphasis to all syllables. A comparison would be to Green Day and lead singer Billie Joe’s unusual enunciation of words.

Discussion: storytelling, the focus on love in Elizabethan songs, and the stringed instruments used in the Sting CD.

Assessment: Writing activity. Listen to the Sting CD and rewrite the story that he tells in short story format.

Lesson 4: *Things Fall Apart*

Objectives

TEKS: 110.45 (8), (9)

(8) Reading/comprehension. The student comprehends selections using a variety of strategies. The student is expected to: (A) establish and adjust purpose for reading such as to find out, to understand, to interpret, to enjoy, and to solve problems; and (B) draw upon his/her own background to provide connection to texts.

(9) Reading/variety of texts. The student reads extensively and intensively for different purposes in varied sources, including British literature, in increasingly demanding texts; (C) reads British and other world literature, including classic and contemporary works; and (D) interprets the possible influences of the historical context on a literary work.

TEKS 110.45 (7) Reading/word identification/vocabulary development. The student acquires an extensive vocabulary through reading and systematic word study. The student is expected to: (A) expand vocabulary through wide reading, listening, and discussing; and (B) rely on context to determine meanings of words and phrases, such as figurative language, idioms, multiple meaning words, and technical vocabulary.

TEKS 110.45 (1) Writing/purposes: The student writes in a variety of forms. The student is expected to: (F) organize ideas in writing to ensure coherence, logical progression, and support for ideas.

TEKS 110.45 (2) Writing/writing processes: The student uses recursive writing processes when appropriate. The student is expected to (B) develop drafts independently by organizing content such as paragraphing and outlining and by refining style to suit occasion, audience and purpose.

Materials: “The Second Coming” by W. B. Yeats and *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe

Procedures

Things Fall Apart is the recommended novel for seniors in HISD. Chinua Achebe is an African author. The story is unique in that it doesn't follow the traditional structure of western literature rather it is a story that is written in the style of the Ibo folk tales from Nigeria.

As an introduction to the book, the class reads William Butler Yeats' poem “The Second Coming” because the title of the novel comes from a line in the poem, and the pessimistic theme is similar to the book. The poem can be found in the paperback version of *Things Fall Apart*, in the McDougal Littell textbook, or on the W.B. Yeats Poems CD. I have the students reread the poem after they read the book.

A preliminary lesson on African drums may pique the students' interest, especially since most of the senior year's literature focuses on British and western culture. As a comparison lesson, students can research drums used in the military and in rock bands today.

Vocabulary

I supply the students with a glossary of unfamiliar terms and a list of vocabulary words with the page number in the book. They write the sentence from the book that contains the word; then they look up its definition. This helps the students with their scanning abilities.

Writing Assignment

A writing assignment is always included. I give a short list of topics, always including the character study of Okonkwo as the tragic hero and an outsider. Students must back up their assertions with references from the text.

“In Dakar...rap is king” (Harvey 115). The current interest in Africa is a good connection to current events and a comparison to what the students learn in the lesson about Chinua Achebe’s book, *Things Fall Apart*.

Assessment: The character analysis and a comprehensive test are the assessments.

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