

Lesson Outlines

Lesson #6 (Media Analysis): Analysing Music Lyrics

In this lesson, students analyse the lyrics of a pop song they have never heard (Appendix 18) and predict the media techniques and conventions that might be used in the design of the CD cover for the track. The teacher should preview pop songs carefully to ensure the appropriateness of the lyrics.

The Media Triangle guiding questions for the lesson are:

Production

- *Who created this message?*
- *What are the component parts of this message? Why have they been used?*

Audience

- *What is the purpose of the message and who is the audience?*
- *How closely do these lyrics represent reality?*
- *What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented or omitted?*

Text

- *What genre of music is the song?*
- *What visualization techniques have been included in the lyrics to suggest particular images, colours, or headings?*
- *What is the main idea in these lyrics, and how well did the techniques succeed in conveying the message?*
- *If I were to design a CD cover for this track, what media conventions and techniques would I use?*

Questions to prompt reflection and further discussion might include:

- *What did you find easiest about this task?*
- *What did you find challenging?*

What the Teacher Does:

Before

- Reviews with students the similarities between poetry and song lyrics (e.g., stanza and verse, refrain and bridge).
- Reviews some different genres of music (e.g., rock, pop, punk, hip hop, reggae). Has students brainstorm their favourite music genres, groups, and songs.

During

- Selects a popular song. Listens to the track with the class. Discusses with the class how well the CD cover for the track or album matches the lyrics of the song.
- Distributes the lyrics to a pop song that students have never heard (Appendix 18: "Awful Lot of Sunshine").
- Does a think-aloud on the first verse and on at least part of the first bridge to highlight the images, colours, and messages conveyed by the song lyrics.
- Has students work in small groups to analyse the remaining lyrics.

What the Students Do:

- Share their favourite music genres, groups, and songs.
- Provide the reasons for their preferences.
- Identify the media conventions and techniques that effectively illustrate the genre and message of the musical track.
- Using visualization techniques while reading the lyrics, suggest particular images, colours, or headings for a CD cover for the track. Work with partners to predict the media techniques and conventions that would be used on the CD cover for the track.
- Share their ideas as a whole class.

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What the Teacher Does:

After

- Has students, working in pairs, make predictions about the appearance of the CD cover for this song.
- Has students reflect on their learning by composing a media-log entry in response to these question prompts:

What did you find easiest about this task?

What did you find challenging?

What the Students Do:

- Reflect on their learning by writing media-log responses to question prompts.

Awful Lot of Sunshine

By Hugh Oliver, used with permission

You can make your life a misery if you try.
 You can take a smile and change it to a sigh,
 But why not throw off that shroud
 And then look beyond the cloud?
 Cause there's an awful lot of sunshine in the sky.

What's a shroud?
 Sounds nasty.

Maybe things are not
 so bad after all.

You may find your love has left you high and dry.
 You may find a bed of thorns on which to lie.
 But if you open up your eyes,
 You'll enjoy a nice surprise.
 Cause there's an awful lot of sunshine in the sky.

Looks as if his lover has
 left him. Sad. But why
 go looking for a bed
 of thorns?

Oh it's hard to predict about weather,
 And you may decide to resign.
 But if you should get it together,
 Blue skies will follow, the sun it will shine.

Does that mean give up?

He talks all the time about
 the weather. Maybe what
 he really means are feelings.

You may search in vain to find the answer "Why?"
 Or surrender to your grief and start to cry.
 But just look around instead
 At the view above your head
 Cause there's an awful lot of sunshine in the sky.

It may be dark,
 But fair will turn to fine.
 Blue skies will come around,
 The sun, it will shine.

I guess you can choose to
 look on the dark side or the
 bright side. You're in charge
 of how you feel.

That means your luck is
 very bad.

You may feel that fortune's out to black your eye,
 But you'll find your troubles vanish by and by.
 You should wipe your grief away,
 Give a welcome to the day.
 Cause there's an awful lot of sunshine in the sky.
 Yes there's an awful lot of sunshine in the sky!

Because it's the title and is
 repeated so often, I reckon
 that must be the message
 of the song