

Lesson Plan: Your Song, Your Story

Materials Needed

- A dedicated notebook or journal ("Songwriting Journal")
- A pen or pencil
- An audio recording device (a smartphone's voice memo app is perfect)
- Optional: An instrument the student is familiar with (keyboard, guitar, ukulele, etc.)
- Optional: Access to YouTube to listen to song examples

1. Learning Objectives

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

- Identify the three main parts of a song: verse, chorus, and bridge.
- Brainstorm a central theme or idea for a song using sensory details.
- Write original lyrics for at least one verse and one chorus.
- Create a simple melody for their lyrics.
- Combine lyrics and melody to perform a complete, original song.

2. Alignment with Standards

This lesson aligns with the National Core Arts Standards for Music, specifically:

- **Creating - Anchor Standard 1:** Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- **Creating - Anchor Standard 2:** Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

3. Instructional Activities: Writing Our Song (Approx. 90 minutes)

Part 1: The Spark - Finding Your Idea (15 minutes)

Goal: To find a topic for our song. Great songs are about specific feelings and moments. We'll start by looking for one.

1. **Activity: "Feeling Finder" Scavenger Hunt.** We aren't just looking for a topic, but a *feeling*. Let's pick a feeling, like "joy," "boredom," "frustration," or "excitement."
2. **Brainstorming:** In your Songwriting Journal, write the chosen feeling at the top of a page. Now, let's brainstorm things related to that feeling. Answer these questions:
 - **What does this feeling look like?** (e.g., Joy: sunshine through a window, a dog wagging its tail, bright yellow color)
 - **What does it sound like?** (e.g., Joy: friends laughing, a favorite song on the radio, birds chirping)
 - **What does it feel like (touch)?** (e.g., Joy: a warm hug, soft blanket, cool breeze on a hot day)
 - **What specific memory do you have of this feeling?** (e.g., Scoring the winning goal, opening a birthday present, finishing a difficult video game level)
3. **Choose Your Focus:** Look at your list. Circle the most interesting image or memory. **This will be the central idea for your song.** For our example, let's choose the memory of a perfect, lazy summer afternoon.

Part 2: The Blueprint - Building a Song Structure (10 minutes)

Goal: To understand how songs are put together.

1. **Direct Instruction:** Think of a song like a house.
 - The **CHORUS** is the main room that you keep coming back to. It has the main idea and is usually the most memorable part.
 - The **VERSES** are the other rooms. They tell the story and give details that lead to the main idea in the chorus. Each verse has different lyrics.
 - The **BRIDGE** is a special hallway that connects two parts of the house in a new way. It offers a different perspective or a change in the story before leading back to the final chorus.
2. **Listen and Identify:** Let's listen to a song like "Anti-Hero" by Taylor Swift or "Drivers License" by Olivia Rodrigo. As you listen, try to point out when the verse changes to the chorus. Notice how the chorus repeats with the same lyrics and melody.

Part 3: The Heart - Writing Your Chorus (20 minutes)

Goal: To write the most important, catchy part of your song first.

1. **Find Your Main Message:** Look at the central idea you circled in Part 1 (e.g., "the perfect lazy summer afternoon"). What is the one sentence that sums it all up? This will be the heart of your chorus.
 - Example: "*This afternoon is slow and sweet, just for me.*"
2. **Add Rhyme and Detail:** Now, let's build around that line. A simple AABB or ABCB rhyme scheme works great. Let's try to write a four-line chorus.
 - **A:** No clocks, no calls, no place to be (rhymes with D)
 - **B:** The sun is warm upon my feet (rhymes with D)
 - **C:** Got a cold glass of lemonade
 - **D:** The perfect summer day I've made
3. **Sing It Out:** Try humming a simple tune for these four lines. It doesn't need to be perfect! The goal is to make it sound catchy and repeatable. Record yourself humming it so you don't forget.

Part 4: The Story - Writing Your First Verse (15 minutes)

Goal: To add details that set the scene for your chorus.

1. **Set the Scene:** The verse answers questions like "Where are we?" "What's happening?" "How did we get here?". Go back to your brainstorm list from Part 1.
 - Let's use the "sunshine through the window" and "dog wagging its tail" ideas.
2. **Drafting the Verse:** Write four lines that describe the scene. Don't worry about rhyme at first, just get the ideas down.
 - *The ten o'clock sunbeam hits the floor*
 - *My dog is sleeping by the door*
 - *I finished all my work for the day*
 - *Decided I would stay home and play*
3. **Refine and Connect:** Now, sing your verse and see how it flows into the chorus you already wrote. Does it tell a good story? Does it set up the main idea?

Part 5: The Twist - Adding a Bridge (10 minutes)

Goal: To add a new perspective to the song.

1. **Change Your Viewpoint:** The bridge is where you can have a new thought. What does this

"perfect afternoon" make you realize? Maybe you realize you need more days like this, or you wish you could share it with someone.

- Example Idea: Realizing that these quiet moments are more important than busy ones.

2. **Writing the Bridge:** Write 2-4 lines that feel different from the rest of the song. It often doesn't need to rhyme perfectly.

- *And I know tomorrow will be loud and fast*
- *So I'm gonna make this quiet moment last*

Part 6: The Grand Finale - Putting it all together (10 minutes)

Goal: To structure and perform your finished song!

1. **Assemble Your Song:** Write down the final structure in your journal. A great, classic structure is:
 - Verse 1
 - Chorus
 - Verse 2 (For homework, you can write a second verse with new details!)
 - Chorus
 - Bridge
 - Chorus
2. **Final Melody Check:** Hum or play through your whole song. Does the melody for the verse feel different from the chorus? It should! The chorus melody is usually higher or more energetic. The bridge often feels a bit quieter or more thoughtful.
3. **Rehearse and Record:** Practice your song a few times. Then, use your recording device to capture your first original song! It's a "demo" – a snapshot of your idea. Be proud of it!

4. Differentiation and Inclusivity

- **For Extra Support:** Focus only on a verse and a chorus. Use a pre-existing simple melody (like "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star") and write new words to it. This separates the lyric-writing from the melody-creation challenge.
- **For an Advanced Challenge:** Encourage the student to use more complex rhyme schemes (ABAB), add pre-choruses, or create a more complex melody using an instrument. Challenge them to write a second verse that tells a different part of the story during the lesson.
- **Inclusivity:** The "Feeling Finder" activity is designed to draw from the student's personal experiences, ensuring the song is authentic and relevant to them, regardless of background or interests.

5. Assessment Methods

- **Formative (During the lesson):** Observe the student's brainstorming list, review their drafted lyrics for the chorus and verse, and listen as they hum their melody ideas. Provide encouraging feedback and guidance throughout the process.
- **Summative (End of lesson):** The final product – the recorded original song – serves as the primary assessment.
 - **Criteria for Success:**
 1. Does the song have at least one verse and one chorus?
 2. Do the lyrics express a clear idea or feeling?
 3. Is there a simple, repeatable melody attached to the lyrics?