

Critical Thinking: Deconstructing Billie Eilish

Subject: English Language Arts, Media Literacy

Student: Naomi (Age 13, Homeschool)

Time Allotment: 60 minutes

Materials Needed

- A device with an internet connection (for YouTube/Spotify and reading an online article)
- Headphones (optional, but recommended)
- Pen and paper, or a word processor for taking notes
- Your choice of two Billie Eilish songs with contrasting moods (e.g., "bad guy" and "everything i wanted," or "Happier Than Ever" and "my future"). Have the lyrics pulled up and ready to read.
- One media article about Billie Eilish (a review, an interview, or a news piece). You can find these on music magazine websites like Rolling Stone, Pitchfork, or even major news outlets.

Learning Objectives

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

- Analyze song lyrics to identify theme, tone, and mood.
- Evaluate a media article for purpose, bias, and intended audience.
- Synthesize information from multiple sources (music, lyrics, article) to form a unique, evidence-based argument or creative theory.
- Articulate a critical perspective in a creative format (a "fan theory" or a mini-review).

Lesson Activities

Part 1: Warm-Up - The Vibe Check (5 minutes)

Goal: To activate prior knowledge and introduce the concept of "artistic identity."

Instructions for the Teacher:

1. Ask Naomi: "If you had to describe Billie Eilish's artistic 'brand' or 'vibe' in three words, what would they be?"
2. Write down her three words.
3. Follow up with: "What makes you say that? Think about her music, her videos, her fashion. What specific things create that vibe?"
4. This quick discussion gets her thinking about how an artist's public image is constructed. Let her know you'll revisit these words at the end of the lesson.

Part 2: The Lyric Detective - Analyzing the Art (20 minutes)

Goal: To practice close reading and analysis using song lyrics as the text.

Instructions for the Teacher:

1. **Song #1 (The more upbeat or intense track):**

- Listen to the first chosen song together.
- After listening, read the lyrics aloud together.
- Ask Naomi to be a "lyric detective" and find clues to answer these questions (she can jot down her notes):
 - **What is the story or main idea of this song?** Can you summarize it in one sentence?
 - **What is the mood?** (e.g., confident, angry, playful, anxious). Find 2-3 specific words or phrases that create this mood.
 - **Who is the narrator speaking to?** (Themselves, a friend, an enemy, the public?) What makes you think so?

2. **Song #2 (The slower or more introspective track):**

- Repeat the process: listen to the second song, then read the lyrics.
- Ask the same detective questions.
- **Key Comparison Question:** "How does Billie use different words or musical styles in these two songs to create two very different moods? Are there any themes that connect both songs, even if they sound different?"

Part 3: The Media Mythbuster - Analyzing the Narrative (15 minutes)

Goal: To practice media literacy by evaluating how others portray an artist.

Instructions for the Teacher:

1. Have Naomi read the chosen media article about Billie Eilish.
2. After reading, ask her to be a "media mythbuster" and investigate the article using these questions:
 - **What is the author's main point about Billie?** Are they praising her, criticizing her, or just reporting facts?
 - **Find one sentence that you think is the author's opinion, and one sentence that is a fact.** How can you tell the difference?
 - **Who do you think this article was written for?** (e.g., hardcore fans, older adults who don't know her, music critics). What clues in the writing style or vocabulary tell you that?
 - **Does the author's description of Billie match the artist you analyzed in her lyrics?** Why or why not?

Part 4: The Final Take - Your Theory/Review (15 minutes)

Goal: To synthesize all the analysis into a creative, evidence-based final product.

Instructions for the Teacher:

Explain the final, creative task to Naomi. She can choose **ONE** of the following options:

- **Option A: Create a "Fan Theory."** A fan theory connects different pieces of an artist's work to propose a hidden story or meaning. Based on the two songs and the article, what's a deeper story Billie might be telling across her music?
Example prompt: "My theory is that the confident character in 'bad guy' is actually a mask to hide the vulnerable person we hear in 'everything i wanted,' and here's my evidence from the lyrics..."
- **Option B: Write a Mini-Review.** Write a one-paragraph review of Billie Eilish for someone who has never heard of her. The goal is to go beyond "she's a good singer." Use your analysis of her lyrics and mood to explain what makes her a unique artist. Reference the songs you analyzed as

proof.

Give Naomi 10 minutes to outline her ideas and write or prepare to speak her final take. She should present her theory or review to you, making sure to use specific evidence from the songs and article she analyzed. At the end, revisit the three "vibe" words from the warm-up. Ask her if she would keep, change, or add to them now that she's done a deeper analysis.

Assessment

The success of the lesson will be measured by Naomi's final presentation (Fan Theory or Mini-Review). Use this simple rubric for feedback:

Category	Criteria for Success
Clarity of Argument	The main idea of the theory or review is clear and easy to understand.
Use of Evidence	Specific examples from the song lyrics and/or the article are used to support the main idea.
Critical Insight	The analysis goes beyond the obvious and shows original thought (e.g., connecting ideas, questioning narratives).

Differentiation & Extensions

- **For Support:** Provide a "mood word" bank (e.g., *somber, defiant, ethereal, melancholic, assertive*) for the lyric analysis. Work together to highlight key phrases in the lyrics and article before asking the analysis questions.
- **For a Challenge:** Ask Naomi to find a second article about Billie with a contrasting opinion to the first. Have her analyze which author makes a more convincing argument and why. Or, have her compare one of Billie's songs to a classic poem with a similar theme (e.g., "Bury a Friend" and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven").