

Songwriter

Year 5

Summer 2

Unit Overview

Lesson One - An Introduction to Songwriting and Song Research

- In this exciting scheme, the children will take all of the music work they have learned throughout the year and combine it into writing a song. This song could be entered into the 'Young Song Writer of the Year' competition, if of a required standard.
- Show the children the 'Songwriter Introduction' video. This introduces the children to some of the most famous songwriters of all time. We hear short snippets of two songs written by Bob Dylan, The Beatles, Abba and Taylor Swift.
- Research. Ask the children to explore some of the songs a little further. Use digital media to find more information online about the background of the songs. Here is the song list:
 - Subterranean Homesick Blues
 - Make you feel my love
 - Twist and Shout
 - Let it be
 - Mamma Mia
 - Waterloo
 - Love Story
 - Blank Space

Ask the children to take notes about the background to a song of their choice from the list. When the children have some notes, they can relay them to the rest of the class.

Explain to the children that this research is important as it helps to fuel their 'composer' fire before they set on their own song writing. The more songs they hear the greater their pool of song ideas, hooks, melodies and rhythms. The more genres of music they explore the more genres of music they could be inspired by. And the more background they get on artists ideas and concepts the easier it will be for them to formulate ideas of their own.

Lesson Two – Young Songwriter

- The 'Young Songwriter of the Year' competition is an annual competition that allows children from 8-18 years of age to enter their own original song.
- Let the children watch the 'Young Songwriter Songs' video. Explain that all of the children in this video entered songs in the Aged 8-12 category. So this would be the category WE are looking at in class. We have the following songwriters:
 - Sam Hancock – Super-Human
 - Skye Bishop – Sneaks and Geeks
 - Joseph Davis – Take me to the Stars
 - Macy O'Niell – Voices
 - Alex Carroll – Muddy Boots and Messy Hair
 - Zachary Zbar – My Light
 - William Massey – No Place Like Home
 - Roe Byrne – Set me on Fire

We will now explore the songs a little further by listening to them again and pausing between each song. As a class, discuss the various elements involved in each song. This will help make it easier to dissect each piece of music. Discuss the following elements:

- Lyrics
- Instruments
- Mood
- Hook (What is the catchy part to the song?)
- Do you like the song or not? Remember, music is subjective.

To finish the lesson, the children need to pretend they are a journalist for a popular Music Magazine and write a short review of one of the songs you particularly like. Why do you like it? Tell the readers what makes the song a must-listen.

Lesson Three – Theme

- Today the children will focus on the background of songs and will re-imagine the brainstorming that songwriters made when thinking of Themes and Lyrics.
- Watch the start of the 'Theme' video. Play until 2m 32s. Ask the children if they understand what happened with the brainstorm. I was imagining what it would have been like to be Bob Marley sitting down to brainstorm ideas for 'Three Little Birds'. Notice, the main theme in the isn't necessarily the song title. The main theme of this song is 'Don't Worry', however, the song title is 'Three Little Birds'.
- Play the next part of the video. This is a little fun quiz (Probably more for the teachers!!) and will re-enforce what the children are doing in the next exercise. You do not have to do all of the questions. Just as many as you have time for. Again, notice that the main theme (in the middle) isn't often the title of the song!
- Next, the children are going to have a go at writing a brainstorm for 5 different songs. The video explains how to do this on a blank sheet of paper.
- Play the '5 Songs' video and let the children create brainstorms for each. Listen to children's work at the end of the lesson.

Lesson Four - Hooks

- In the last lesson, the children learned the importance of introducing a theme for their songwriting. In today's lesson they will learn about the importance of Hooks. I have created a detailed video to explain what a 'Musical Hook' is and I give examples of catchy Hooks from two songs: Mamma Mia and You'll Be Back.
- Let the children watch the video and then discuss the content of the video as a class. What is a Hook? Why is it important? How can Hooks be created? They can be both lyrical and melodic. So Hooks can be both words and melodies.
- The children are now going to put the two elements (Theme and Hook) explored in the last two lessons and begin planning their own song.
- First, ask the children to create a brainstorm for a theme of their choice. Remember, the children must put the main theme of the song in the centre oval and then write lyrical ideas linked to the theme around the outside.
- After the theme and link-words are decided the child must now attempt a few 'Hook' lines. A few words that would act as a catchy Hook. Words that you could find yourself repeating in a rhythmic and musical way. The children will use these 'Hook' lines as the basis for their composition.

Lesson Five – Now for the music

- In the previous lessons the children should have developed an understanding of a variety of different songwriting elements – Background, theme, lyrical ideas, brainstorm, mood etc. Today it is time to add the most important ingredient – music!
- In the previous half term the children learned a variety of chords on the Ukulele. It is now time for the children to put all of that practice to use as a songwriter.

- Firstly, the children will need the lyrical 'Hooks' they made in the previous lesson. They will then need a simple chord sequence. They can watch the 'Sneaks and Geeks – Ukulele' video and the 'Super-Human Ukulele' video to help. They will need a sequence of 3 to 4 chords that repeat. Ideally something like C – Am – F – G7 or Am – F – C – G7. If they decide on a chord sequence and keep looping it, they can then start to think of musical ideas to go with their lyrical 'Hook' from the last lesson.
- Playing the chords over and over will help to give them the musical feel of the piece and as they say the words of the lyrical 'Hook' a melody should start to grow from that. They may even decide that a 'rap' Hook might be sufficient to certain parts of their song.
- Allow children plenty of time to work on their musical ideas. If they are brave enough they could show the class a hook they have made and this might help inspire their classmates.
- Keep encouraging the children by reminding them that there is no 'wrong' way of doing this. Music is subjective and as long as they are sticking to their theme and trying musical ideas out, they are planting the necessary seed.

Lesson Six – A Songwriter is born!

- This final lesson should be a celebration of Year 5's musical journey, ending in a collection of new-found songwriters that the school can be proud of. Whatever the backgrounds, themes, hooks, musical ideas, the children have walked the footsteps of a songwriter. They have looked at musical influences and have taken their newly found musical knowledge and poured it onto a page, a ukulele and vocalized their thoughts and opinions of the world for their friends to hear.
- Use this lesson to give the children time to merge some of their hooks together into a verse or chorus. Maybe even a verse AND chorus. Generally once a verse or chorus is made and feels strong the rest of the song will quickly take shape around it. After all, Noel Gallagher wrote 'Don't Look Back in Anger' on one Tuesday afternoon!
- If you feel there are songs worthy of live performance, then maybe arrange a school assembly. If you feel there are songs worthy of entering into 'The Young Songwriter of the Year' competition, then feel free to put the pieces forward.