

Press Play – Figurative Language in Pop Lyrics

Lesson Topic: Music & Language Arts

Grade Level: 6th Grade

Estimated Time: 90 minutes

English/Language Arts Academic Standards:

Standard A: Reading/Literature

Benchmarks:

- A1-3.6 Use context clues to determine the meaning of words and phrases (e.g., connotation and denotation, analogies, synonyms and antonyms, and multiple-meaning words).
- A1-4.6 Analyze the effect of literary devices (e.g., simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, alliteration, onomatopoeia, and symbolism).

Creative Arts Standards:

Standard 6: Understands the relationship of music to history and cultures

Benchmarks:

- Understands ways in which music is interrelated with the subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school

Student Objectives:

- Students will learn the meaning of literary terms and discover how they're used in writing and lyrics.
- Students will learn how the music connects to literary terms in the Language Arts
- Students will then find their own songs and identify the literary terms in the lyrics.

Materials/Resources:

- *Rhythm, Rhyme, Results: Language Arts CD*
- Figurative Language Flocabulary worksheet
- Press Play worksheet
- Index cards
- CD player or MP3 player
- Songs and Lyrics
 - "April 29, 1992" by Sublime
 - "Fortunate Son" by Creedence Clearwater Revival
 - "Like a Rolling Stone" by Bob Dylan
 - "American Pie" by Don McLean
 - "Staying Alive" by The Bee Gees
 - "Hurts So Good" by John Mellencamp
 - 'While My Guitar Gently Weeps' by The Beatles
 - "MMM Bop" by Hanson
 - "Don't Stop Believin'" by Journey
 - "Changes" by 2Pac
 - "Umbrella" by Rihanna
 - "The Wind Cries Mary" by Jimi Hendrix
 - "Fly Like an Eagle" by Steve Miller Band
 - "Boom Boom Pow" by Black Eyed Peas
 - "Grenade" by Bruno Mars

- “One Week” by Barenaked Ladies
- “Let It Be” by The Beatles
- “Desert Rose” by Sting

Assessment:

Informal Assessment

- Student responses during introduction of the lesson

Formal Assessment

- Ability to creative a figurative language sentence/example
- Ability to find a song that represents one or more of the figurative language examples discussed in the lesson

Introduction:

- As students enter the room, play number seven of the *Rhythm, Rhyme, Results: Language Arts* CD, “Figurative Language”
- Have the following words displayed:
 - Simile
 - Metaphor
 - Alliteration
 - Hyperbole
 - Personification
 - Onomatopoeia
 - Imagery
- Play the “Figurative Language” song again, from the beginning and ask students to listen carefully for definitions of the above.
- Display the lyrics to “Figurative Language” while you play the song for students to follow along
- As a group, verbally ask students to give a description for each of the words based on the song lyrics

Development:

- Tell students that they have been listening to poetry, narratives, persuasive essays, and other genres of literature every day and probably enjoyed every minute of it! Every song you hear begins with lyrics. Lyrics are comprised of words.
 - Do you listen to music?
 - What are some of the particular songs you enjoy?
 - Do certain songs explain exactly how you feel?
 - Do they tell a story you like?
 - Make a statement you agree with?
- Discuss how music lyrics are like literature
 - They sometimes tell a story
 - They express the artists feelings, thoughts or views
 - They are sometimes representative of current and or historical events

- Play and display the lyrics for “April 29, 1992” by Sublime

- I don't know if you can,
but can you get an owner for Ons,
that's O-N-S, Junior Market,
the address is 1934 East Anaheim,
all the windows are busted out,
and it's like a free-for-all in here
and uh the owner should at least come
down here and see if he can secure his business,
if he wants to...

April 26th, 1992,
there was a riot on the streets,
tell me where were you?
You were sittin' home watchin' your TV,
while I was participatin' in some anarchy.

- On March 3, 1991, Los Angeles police officers severely beat and then arrested Glen "Rodney" King after pulling him over for a traffic violation in a residential area of Los Angeles. King, an African American man, was intoxicated at the time and had disobeyed police orders when ordered to stay on the ground. An amateur cameraman caught the beating on tape and sent it to CNN. News stations across the United States played the video repeatedly. As awareness of the event spread, many people argued that the incident was racially motivated. All of the white police officers were found not guilty. Following news of the acquittals, massive rioting in Los Angeles left 55 people dead, 2383 injured, and 8000 more arrested. Rioters, largely from the African American community, destroyed over \$1 billion of property mainly in the Korean American community.
- In the lyrics, lead singer Brad Nowell says, "April 26, 1992" when referring to the date of the riots. This was a mistake - the date in the title is correct.

- Play and display the lyrics for “Fortunate Son” by Creedence Clearwater Revival

- Some folks are born made to wave the flag
Ooh, they're red, white and blue
And when the band plays "Hail to the chief"
Ooh, they point the cannon at you, Lord
It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no senator's son, son
It ain't me, it ain't me; I ain't no fortunate one, no

Yeah!
Some folks are born silver spoon in hand
Lord, don't they help themselves, oh
But when the taxman comes to the door
Lord, the house looks like a rummage sale, yes

- It was a protest song about the Vietnam War. At that time the draft was going on and it seemed the only ones getting out of being drafted were the "well to do" and politicians sons, etc.
- Talk about how figurative language livens writing and lyrics
 - Figurative language is used to create a special effect or feeling. It is characterized by figures of speech—language that compares, exaggerates, or means something other than what it first appears to mean.
 - A figure of speech is a literary device used to create a special effect or feeling by making some type of interesting or creative comparison.
- Handout the “Figurative Language Flocabulary” sheet
- Discuss the definition of the figurative language example (simile, metaphor, etc.). Then play a sample of the song associated with the word. Hint: Include the portion of the song, listed below.
- Simile—a comparison of two or more things using the words “like” or “as”
 - “Like a Rolling Stone” by Bob Dylan
 - How does it feel
How does it feel
To be without a home
Like a complete unknown
Like a rolling stone?
 - Simile – Like a Rolling Stone
- Metaphor—a comparison of two or more things that doesn’t use the words “like” or “as”
 - “American Pie” by Don McLean
 - A long, long time ago...
American Pie was written in 1971 and the time McLean talks about is the 1950's. This seems like a long time ago because of all the turmoil that occurred in the 60's.
 - I can still remember how that music used to make me smile.
McLean's favorite music was that of the 50's.
- Alliteration – a phrase with a string of words all beginning with the same sound
 - “Staying Alive” by The Bee Gees
 - Well, you can tell by the way I use my walk,
I'm a woman's man—no time to talk.
Music loud and women warm, I've been kicked around
Since I was born.
 - Alliteration - Well, you can tell by the way I use my walk, I'm a woman's man—no time to talk.

- Hyperbole—an overstatement or exaggeration
 - “Hurts So Good” by John Mellencamp
 - Hurt so good.
Come on baby, make it hurt so good.
Sometimes love don't feel like it should.
You make it hurt so good.
 - Hyperbole – You make it (love) hurt so good
- Personification—a special kind of metaphor in which human qualities or attributes are given to an inanimate object
 - 'While My Guitar Gently Weeps' by The Beatles
 - I look at you all see the love there that's sleeping
While my guitar gently weeps
I look at the floor and I see it need sweeping
 - Personification – The guitar is “crying”
- Onomatopoeia – a word that imitates the sound it is describing
 - “MMM Bop” by Hanson
 - Mmm bop, ba duba dop
Ba du bop, ba duba dop
Ba du bop, ba duba dop
Ba du
- Imagery—the words or phrases a writer uses to create a certain picture in the reader’s mind. Imagery is usually based on sensory details.
 - “Don’t Stop Believin’” by Journey
 - Just a small town girl, livin' in a lonely world
She took the midnight train goin' anywhere
Just a city boy, born and raised in south Detroit
He took the midnight train goin' anywhere
- Assonance – Identity or similarity in sound between internal vowels in neighboring words
 - “Changes” by 2Pac
 - I see no changes all I see is racist faces
misplaced hate makes disgrace to races
We under I wonder what it takes to make this
one better place, let's erase the wasted
 - Racist faces, misplaced hate makes disgrace to races
- Handout the “Press Play Worksheet” and do page one together.

- Begin by playing the song titled in Number 1 and so forth. You can either play the entire song or part of it—depending on time constraints.
- During the song, students should write down their answer
- For additional guidance, post the lyrics to each of the songs
- Ask for volunteers to share their answer with the class and why they believe it is correct

Conclusion:

- Have each student take out a piece of paper and a pen. Explain that when the music (any selection of music, perhaps a compilation of the songs used in the lesson) starts, each student will begin writing a story using one of the figurative language examples from above.
- When the music stops, have students pass the paper to the person to the right. Once everyone has passed their paper, start the music again. Have students continue writing as the music plays.
- Repeat several times and ask for volunteers to share their figurative language song with the class
- Assign the remainder of the worksheet as homework

Sources:

Evans, Jerome. "From Sheryl Crow to Homer Simpson: Literature and Composition through Pop Culture." *English Journal* 93.3 (January 2004): 34-38.

Anders, Marian. *My Dog Bites the English Teacher: Practical Grammar Made Quick and Easy*. Raleigh, NC: Aviary, 2009. Print.

"A Rap Song for Teaching Figurative Language With Educational Music." *Educational Songs For Teaching with Music by Rhythm, Rhyme, Results*. Rhythm, Rhyme, Results, LLC. Web. 05 May 2011

Lyrics. Web. 05 May 2011.

Figurative Language Flocabulary

Music and poetry are full of figurative language. Here is a guide for identifying and using figurative language in songs and poems. In this list, each figurative language term has a definition, and an example.

- **Simile**—a comparison of two or more things using the words “like” or “as”
 - “Like a Rolling Stone” by Bob Dylan
 - How does it feel
How does it feel
To be without a home
Like a complete unknown
Like a rolling stone?
- **Metaphor**—a comparison of two or more things that doesn’t use the words “like” or “as”
 - “American Pie” by Don McLean
 - A long, long time ago...
American Pie was written in 1971 and the time McLean talks about is the 1950's.
This seems like a long time ago because of all the turmoil that occurred in the 60's.
 - I can still remember how that music used to make me smile.
McLean's favorite music was that of the 50's.
- **Personification**—a special kind of metaphor in which human qualities or attributes are given to an inanimate object
 - 'While My Guitar Gently Weeps' by The Beatles
 - I look at you all see the love there that's sleeping
While my guitar gently weeps
I look at the floor and I see it need sweeping
- **Hyperbole**—an overstatement or exaggeration
 - “Hurts So Good” by John Mellencamp
 - Hurt so good.
Come on baby, make it hurt so good.
Sometimes love don't feel like it should.
You make it hurt so good.
- **Imagery**—the words or phrases a writer uses to create a certain picture in the reader’s mind. Imagery is usually based on sensory details.
 - “Don’t Stop Believin’” by Journey
 - Just a small town girl, livin' in a lonely world
She took the midnight train goin' anywhere
Just a city boy, born and raised in south Detroit
He took the midnight train goin' anywhere

- **Alliteration**—a phrase with a string of words all beginning with the same sound
 - “Staying Alive” by The Bee Gees
 - Well, you can tell by the way I use my walk,
I'm a woman's man—no time to talk.
Music loud and women warm, I've been kicked around
Since I was born.

- **Onomatopoeia**—a word that imitates the sound it is describing
 - “MMM Bop” by Hanson
 - Mmm bop, ba duba dop
Ba du bop, ba duba dop
Ba du bop, ba duba dop
Ba du

- **Assonance**—Identity or similarity in sound between internal vowels in neighboring words
 - “Changes” by 2Pac
 - I see no changes all I see is racist faces
misplaced hate makes disgrace to races
We under I wonder what it takes to make this
one better place, let's erase the wasted

Figurative Language Lyrics

Chorus

Sometimes what you mean is not exactly what you say
That's figurative language, using words in different ways
Personification, alliteration, assonance, hyperbole
Onomatopoeia, metaphor, and simile

Verse I

When Sally seems to sit somewhere separate from Sonia,
Or Caleb calls Chris 'cause he's coming to California
It's called alliteration: that's what occurs
When you got the same sound at the start of every word
But when you've got a vowel sound that keeps sounding the same
That's a figure called assonance, yeah, that's its name
It's what I'm trying to define by providing this example
But I cannot deny that assonance can be a handful

Chorus

Verse II

A simile is something that you use to compare
Two unrelated things with an element that's shared
My mind is like an ocean; it's as smooth as jazz
But it's only a simile if it uses "like" or "as"
A metaphor is similar, but watch out!
Be careful 'cause you've got to leave "like" and "as" out
My mind is an ocean; my words are a river,
So keep your ears open as I continue to deliver

Chorus

Verse III

Now if the sun's smiling down, or the boat hugged the shore
That's personification, nothing less, nothing more
But with a buzz or a ding or a hiss or a roar
That's onomatopoeia that we're using for sure
Hyperbole: man, that's like a million times harder!
Take something true, then exaggerate it way farther
Now you've heard this song from beginning to the finish
Now you've got some tools to draw your literary image

<http://www.educationalrap.com/song/figurative-language.html>

Press Play Worksheet

Listen to each song and fill in which literary term the song represents.

Word Bank	
Imagery	Alliteration
Simile	Metaphor
Personification	Assonance
Hyperbole	Onomatopoeia

	Song	Artist	Literary Term
1	Umbrella	Rihanna	Metaphor
2	The Wind Cries Mary	Jimi Hendrix	Personification
3	Fly Like an Eagle	Steve Miller Band	Simile
4	Boom Boom Pow	Black Eyed Peas	Onomatopoeia
5	Grenade	Bruno Mars	Hyperbole
6	One Week	Barenaked Ladies	Alliteration
7	Let It Be	The Beatles	Assonance
8	Desert Rose	Sting	Imagery

Name _____

Date: _____

Find a song with a literary device either expressed in the lyrics or represented by the song. The song must have (or be) a literary device (from the sheet of literary devices defined in class). The song may be from any genre of music. You may play the song in class, provided the lyrics are appropriate.

Song: _____

Artist: _____

The literary term represented in this song (or by this song) is:

Explain this term using the content of the song. How do you know that it is a simile, metaphor, personification, etc?

What do you like best about this song? Explain why you like a particular line or message in the song.
