

Poetry is my Jam!: Teaching Text Analysis through Poetry and Music

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Abstract:

Poetry is my Jam! is a poetry and textual analysis unit designed for a high school English or ESOL class. This unit pairs poetry with music as a means to scaffold instruction, facilitate student buy in, and students' confidence in the material. Students will be introduced to a critical vocabulary for approaching musical and poetic analysis. Furthermore, students will engage in collaborative analysis of a wide variety of texts across multiple mediums. By engaging in collaborative discussions, students will hone their abilities to carry out academic discussion and analyze complex texts. Students will have a chance to pursue their own interests in the classroom by curating their own collection of poems and songs that they have analyzed independently. Poetry is my Jam! attempts to present students with something familiar like music, so that students can come together and discuss complex creative texts like poems.

Rationale:

Underperforming schools are unfortunately a reality in the school district of Philadelphia. While it is easy to identify this reality, its causes are more difficult to pin down. Socioeconomic status, high turnover rates for staff, lack of funding for college and career readiness programs, a growing focus on charterizing neighborhood schools all play a role, but there are a multitude of other factors at play. The consequences of these factors are very real: test scores which lag behind the national average, struggling graduation rates, and school closures to name a few. Considering this, it is clear we as teachers face an uphill battle, but we must be willing to meet these challenges head on in order to provide quality instruction to our students.

I teach English at a relatively small neighborhood high school in Kensington, Philadelphia. The school population is racially mixed, comprised of 70% Latino students, 25% African American students, and 5% listed as "other." While I do believe that we are doing some great things, the general sense of malaise so often felt by teenagers toward school is something that I deal with everyday. Many students report feeling that the subject matter discussed in their classes either does not interest them, or worse, the subject matter discussed in school is wholly inapplicable to their own lives and thus makes them question the relevance of education. I find it hard to blame them; many of the texts so often taught in high school English classrooms contain little to nothing about my students lives and the communities they come from. When you couple this with the fact that many students at my school read below or well below grade level, it becomes clear that something must change.

In order to be successful at the collegiate level, students must be able to engage with unfamiliar content directly and relate that content to the real world. Additionally, they must be practiced in breaking down a wide variety of different texts, techniques, and forms. In the English classroom, it is difficult to achieve this. Curriculums are too often dictated by a focus on standardized testing that borders on obsessive and an ever shifting focus on how exactly teachers should facilitate literacy, both of which narrow the scope of text types that students will be exposed to in the classroom. It seems as though the only texts that have a place in the high school English classroom anymore are informational texts and a short list of novels that someone somewhere deemed as "classics." There is no inherent problem with either of these types of texts. I am, however, frequently dismayed by students' inability or unwillingness to

engage with the implicit nature of texts, and it seems to me that this inability or unwillingness may stem from the fact that these common texts rarely demand students' own ideas in order to navigate. This unit will attempt to combat these issues by engaging students with poetry and song.

Poetry is certainly not a stranger to the high school classroom, however students rarely engage with music as a form of text. This is unfortunate, because many students have been engrossed by music from a young age and thus have a natural ability to analyze it. The idea that students can better understand poetic forms (or any type of text) by drawing on their familiarity with song (or any form of art) is described by Korina Jocson as "hybridity." Additionally, Jocson asserts that an approach focusing on hybridity can, "affirm the relevance of poetry, music, and other forms of popular culture in the lives of urban youth," in other words, the concept requires students to relate content to the world around them.¹ This is encouraging, as it appears that the hybridity model can be harnessed to solve not only the issue of students relating content to the real world, but also seems to offer a chance to teach content that is much more applicable to the lives of students in the first place.

This unit addresses the following Pennsylvania Department of Education Standards for Language Arts education:

- **Standard - CC.1.2.9-10.A** - Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **Standard - CC.1.2.9-10.D** - Determine an author's particular point of view and analyze how rhetoric advances the point of view.
- **Standard - CC.1.2.9-10.F** - Analyze how words and phrases shape meaning and tone in texts.
- **Standard - CC.1.3.9-10.H** - Analyze how an author draws on and transforms themes, topics, character types, and/or other text elements from source material in a specific work.

The following resources were used to create this unit:

Research

- Kirby-Smith, H. T. *The Celestial Twins: Poetry and Music Through the Ages*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999.
- Pence, Charlotte, ed. *Poetics of American Song Lyrics*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011.
- Jocson, Korina M. "Bob Dylan and Hip Hop." *Written communication*. 23, no. 3 (July 2006): 231–259.
- Ungerleider, Charles. "Words to images: media education using film adaptations of novels." *Emergency Librarian* 25, no. 2 (1997): 14-17.
- Loads, Daphne. 2013. "Collaborative Close Reading of Teaching Texts: One Way of Helping Academics to Make Sense of Their Practice." *Teaching in Higher Education* 18 (8): 950–57.

Background:

In order to properly implement this unit in the classroom, there are several areas with which teachers and students need to be familiarized. The background information found below is the result of my participation in the TIP seminar as well as my own research. This information is by no means absolute and may be reinterpreted. For example, I am choosing to focus in on meter, format, and the use of metaphor in song and poetry, but there's no reason the focus

¹ Jocson, Korina M. "Bob Dylan and Hip Hop." *Written communication*. 23, no. 3 (July 2006): 231-259.

couldn't be shifted to cover other areas of focus. Additionally, this unit will use poems and songs that attempt to engage directly with the *type* of student that occupies my school. Understanding that all schools are unique, it is fair to change this content to best fit your own students.

The Benefits of Hybridity

In many Language Arts classrooms, it is common practice to read a novel and, after finishing, watch a film version of the novel if one is available. This practice is not new, and it probably isn't going anywhere. For good reason: the use of films to supplement novels in the classroom helps facilitate dialogue and analysis of each medium. Additionally, film acts as a useful tool for differentiation, as it allows almost all students to engage with a complex novel on some level.² It is evident then that pairing two mediums with inherent similarities, and perhaps more importantly inherent differences, can help students to engage in meaningful conversations about essential course material. This practice of juxtaposing two different mediums with critical similarities and difference is known as hybrid literacy learning or *hybridity*.

As a concept hybridity has been shown to facilitate student engagement and more importantly, meaningful analysis. Professor Korina Jocson states that the intended product of the hybridity approach is that, "learners participate in rich zones or contexts of development by sharing sociocultural and linguistic resources."³ The appeal of this being a classroom reality is clear to any teacher. Considering this, it feels obvious that educators (especially Language Arts teacher) should look for more opportunities to bring hybridity into their classroom.

The pairing of film with novels, or documentaries with nonfiction texts, is probably the most obvious and widely practiced opportunity to introduce hybridity and it is also the most widely written about. The relationship of these two mediums dates back at least to films' golden age when Director Victor Fleming released his adaption of *Gone With the Wind* and took the nation by storm. Essentially, the benefits of pairing these two mediums is obvious because they have a history together and a vast array of scholarship focusing on their relationship. Luckily, there is research to support another pairing which lends itself nicely to what most high school Language Arts teachers already spend time teaching, and what students are already spending time discussing: poetry and music, respectively.

The Connection Between Music and Poetry

The connection between music and poetry isn't always obvious. Poetry is relegated to classrooms and coffee shops, and the music we hear on the radio or in public places is often maligned for lyrical content which is the *furthest* thing from poetic. Yet the two mediums still make for an interesting pairing. This is because they do in fact share much in common; poetry was fused with music dating back at least to the Greeks.⁴ Taking this a step further, H.T. Kirby-Smith asserts in his book *The Celestial Twins: Poetry and Music through the Ages* that, "all poetry can be connected directly or indirectly— sometimes only very distantly— with a musical context."⁵ The implications of this statement are promising when considering hybrid literacy learning in the classroom. Not only does Kirby-Smith suggest that there are many direct connections between mediums, he also notes that there are crucial *differences* and loose connections to be drawn. These differences and abstract connections are exactly the type of things that make hybrid learning literacy work.

² Ungerleider, Charles. "Words to images: media education using film adaptations of novels." *Emergency Librarian* 25, no. 2 (1997): 14-17.

³ Jocson, Korina M. "Bob Dylan and Hip Hop." *Written communication*. 23, no. 3 (July 2006): 231-259.

⁴ Kirby-Smith, H. T. *The Celestial Twins: Poetry and Music Through the Ages*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999.

⁵ Kirby-Smith, H. T. *The Celestial Twins: Poetry and Music Through the Ages*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999. 1.

Kirby-Smith asserts that one of the key similarities across most all forms of poetry and music rely on meter and rhythm.⁶ Whether Shakespeare's intricate iambic pentameter or Allen Ginsberg's free flowing rhythms, meter and rhythm make up critical elements of a poem's style and effectiveness. Music, *especially* performed music with lyrics, relies equally heavily on these elements. While some prefer the incredibly fast staccato flows of Twista', the often drunken grumblings of Jim Morrison of *The Doors* are equally effective for many because of the rhythms and emotion they evoke. Interestingly enough, Morrison was an avid poet and often incorporated his poetry into his music. Both mediums also use techniques like metaphor and similes in order to impart meaning on the listener or reader, involve some aspect of performance, etc. The overall point is that poetry and song are in a sort of dialogue. The two formats are far from identical, but it's clear that within the varieties that each medium offers, we can point to worthwhile similarities *and* differences. Comparing and contrasting has long been known to be an effective way to get students to think more deeply about content, so it makes sense to focus on it as a driving excursive behind this unit.

While Kirby-Smith presents convincing points about the relationship between music and poetry, he is careful not to overstate the pairing. He states that "poetry is forever separating itself from its origins in music, developing rhythmic and structural principals of its own that have little to do directly with actual music."⁷ On the surface, this statement may be troubling, because it seems to imply that there may not be much use in a comparison between music and poetry after all. In reality, it simply means that there is ample opportunity to compare and contrast the two mediums. It is no secret in education that requiring students to describe the similarities between things, as well as non-similarities, is an effective method for understanding concepts more deeply.⁸ Considering this, it will be crucial for teachers to draw students' attention to key differences between poetry and music as well. In fact, the differences between how a song and a poem attempt to convey a similar meaning or emotion may lead to some of the most valuable discussions in the classroom.

Establishing a Critical Vocabulary

In order to truly analyze course content, students need to be well versed in the vocabulary of said content. Whether they are learning the functions of the cell, how to graph an equation, or how to throw a football, students need to be able to speak with the proper terminology. The same is true for this unit. While there is no one formal definition for what a critical vocabulary is, it can generally be summarized as a set of terms taught to students that better allow them to engage with and/or critique material on an academic level.

Poetic and musical vocabularies are vast and ever expanding, there are entire courses at the university level designed to simply equip students with a comprehensive critical vocabulary. Obviously then, it will be impossible to equip students with a truly comprehensive vocabulary in the high school setting. For the purpose of this unit, vocabulary will be separated into three categories: music specific vocabulary, poetry specific vocabulary, and vocabulary that applies to both music and poetry. That said, it is up to the individual teacher what terms they want to teach, what terms they want to focus in on, and what terms they might leave out altogether. This critical vocabulary will give students a foundation for discussion and analysis when they meet in collaborative close reading groups.

The poetry related terms that this unit will focus on are mostly related to form and techniques. For instance students need to understand the difference between a stanza of poetry and a singular line of poetry, because without this basic understanding, they will not be able to accurately describe how they interpret each part of the poem. Students should also have some

⁶ Kirby-Smith, H. T. *The Celestial Twins: Poetry and Music Through the Ages*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999. 11, 17.

⁷ Kirby-Smith, H. T. *The Celestial Twins: Poetry and Music Through the Ages*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999. 2.

⁸ Frayer model

understanding of poetic techniques, so I have included imagery, repetition, and cadence as terms for discussion. Obviously, these are not the only poetic techniques that may come up, so feel free to adjust the focus as necessary.

Musical terms will focus mainly on song structure. Just like the format of a poem, the structure of a song can speak volumes about the artists' intent. For this reason, musical terms such as instrumentation and refrains will be covered. Additionally, the terms verse and chorus will be highlighted.

Lastly, students will learn vocabulary terms which can be used to analyze both poetry and music. As noted above, though poetry and music have become radically different mediums, they share common roots and thus have terms that apply to both. It will be very important for students to learn about terms like meter, metaphor, simile, structure, and rhyme in order to analyze poetry as well as better understand the music they're most likely already listening to.

Collaborative Close Reading

Teaching poetry presents several unique problems in the classroom. In order to effectively teach a poetry unit, these unique problems must be addressed and at the very least genuinely considered. First and foremost we must address the issue of time. While a novel is inherently broken up into chapters or sections that can adequately fill an entire lesson, poetry is more often than not concise and able to be read within a few minutes. Essentially, poetry is short, so teachers must find an approach that offers more than the simple act of *reading* a text in and of itself. In addition to the length of a text and thus the time it takes to discuss in the classroom, there is the issue of meaning. Most students are familiar with the concept of a story or an article. They know that when the reading starts, they will be introduced to major characters or details, by the middle of a text something important will be happening, and by the end of a text the issue will be resolved. Students are used to this structure. They read it in books, watch it in films, and hear it in stories they tell in the lunchroom. Poetry does not follow this method of story telling in order to communicate meaning. Sometimes poetry does not follow *any* rule to convey meaning. Simply said, teaching poetry is just *different* from teaching other types of texts. So how can these issues be addressed in the classroom? The simplest, and most effective way to deal with the short length of most poems and the difficulty that comes with interpreting them is to use collaborative close reading in the classroom.⁹

Collaborative close reading is a fairly self descriptive process. Essentially it requires students *and* teachers to form a collaborative group, break a text down into multiple parts, assign those parts to members of the group, closely read and analyze the assigned sections, then talk about what each section meant to those responsible for analyzing it. The process can be time consuming, but it helps students move through a poem at a comfortable pace, and it allows meaning to build slowly rather than all at once. As Daphne Loads asserts in her article *Collaborative Close Reading of Teaching Texts*, "powerful metaphors, intriguing ambiguities and nuances, questions that really make us think,"¹⁰ are often lost when we read in a vacuum or rush to be the first one to finish. Collaborative close reading forces us to engage texts on a deeper level, and thus these crucial connections are less likely to be lost in the rush to finish.

A key component of collaborative close reading is that the process must be organic. Whoever is facilitating the discussion (which will often be the teacher, but by no means *has* to be the teacher) must be aware that there are no right or wrong answers during the session. While it is certainly fair to guide the discussion with guiding questions or to prod students in a

⁹ Filreis, Al. Lecture, Modern and Contemporary U.S. Poetry

¹⁰ Loads, Daphne. 2013. "Collaborative Close Reading of Teaching Texts: One Way of Helping Academics to Make Sense of Their Practice." *Teaching in Higher Education* 18 (8): 950–957.

certain direction when they are on the verge of breaking through, the entire point of collaborative close reading is that it allows for a wide variety of experiences and interpretations to be voiced. The focus should be the words on the page, and ideally there should be very little outside knowledge required to engage in a full discussion.¹¹ This may lead to confusion, and in some cases even frustration, but this type of confusion is exactly what motivates students to voice their thoughts and interpretations of a text. The more students are practiced in swinging at every proverbial pitch, the more fruitful and free flowing discussions will be.

Objectives

This unit is designed for students in an 10th grade Language Arts class, however it can easily be modified and applied to a multitude of different content areas, objectives, and grade levels. The unit is designed to fit into a rotating A/B day schedule with 90 minute block periods, but can be modified in order to work under different schedules as well.

The objectives for this unit include:

- Establish a critical vocabulary for discussing and analyzing music and poetry in an academic context
- Write analyses of source texts while employing critical vocabulary
- Closely analyze both music and poetry in a group discussion
- Describe techniques that are unique to artistic mediums as well as techniques that span across different artistic formats
- Research poetry and music using multiple forms of media (books, databases, video, etc.)
- Synthesize an original multimedia presentation in order to demonstrate mastery

Teaching Strategies

In this unit students will be required to engage in critical thinking, critical listening, written analysis, and academic group discussions in order to explore the connections and incongruities between music and poetry. Students will be led through guided questions and scaffolded instruction, but as the unit proceeds student independence and free form discussions will become a defining trait. In order to achieve this a number of instructional strategies will be employed. See the text below for a list of strategies, many of which have materials attached in Appendix A:

Critical Vocabulary

For the unit to be successful, it is essential to establish the academic vocabulary required for students to use when analyzing, criticizing, and/or discussing music and/or poetry. The specifics of the critical vocabulary for this unit are described at greater length above. Having this vocabulary not only allows students to listen, read, and discuss music and poetry through a critical lens, it also helps students think critically about how and why different mediums of art approach their subjects. A critical vocabulary should be established early on in the unit in order to maximize the benefits of the other strategies.

Collaborative Close Reading/Listening

The main strategy for engaging students with the content of this unit is collaborative close reading. The benefits and rationale behind the use of collaborative close reading are discussed at length above, however less time has been spent discussing the process of the technique in the classroom. Students will meet as a group, preferably in a comfortable setting where they can see and hear one another with few obstructions. Students will be given a printed

¹¹ Filreis, Al. Lecture, Modern and Contemporary U.S. Poetry

version of the poems and songs that will be discussed. Students will independently read a text selected by the teacher. After this period of independent reading, the teacher will read the poem aloud or play the song for a group listening session. Students will then be assigned specific sections of the text that they will be responsible for commenting on. After taking some time to gather thoughts, the teacher will lead students through a discussion of their thoughts. This process should start out relatively structured, but as the unit progresses it is encouraged to become more freeform.

Graphic Organizers

During collaborative close readings, students will use a number of graphic organizers to record their thoughts and ideas. Typically organizers will focus on comparing and contrasting. The organizers will be useful for students to gather ideas on the spot so that they can use what they've learned from their discussions in future discussions or assignments. See Appendix A for graphic organizers that can be used during discussions.

Exit ticket

Students will complete small writing/discussion tasks prior to completing a lesson. The purpose of these tasks is to check for students' understanding and allow for teacher reflection. If necessary, these exit tickets may be factored in as grades.

Student Led Instruction

Students will present their ideas and interpretations throughout the collaborative close reading process. Students will respond to one another in informal as well as formal settings. Each student will have an opportunity to speak publicly and lead their own discussion.

Jigsaw

Students will be paired or grouped in order to break down readings into small pieces. Students can be grouped on reading level, interest, or any factor that will aid their learning. Groups/pairings are given a section of a text or set of texts which they are responsible for reading and analyzing. After each group/pairing has had some time, all groups/pairs meet and present their findings to one another so that the overall gist of the reading(s) reaches the entire class.

Multi Media Presentation

At the end of the unit, students will have an opportunity to synthesize their own collection of songs mixed with poems that they have selected from the course, their own research, or even their own writing. The goal of the Multi-Media Presentation project is to use critical analysis/discussions to research and curate a collection of artistic works that evoke a specified mood or tone. The presentation will take the form of a podcast of sorts, and if facilities allow, students should be encouraged to record/perform their collection. This presentation will serve as the finale of the unit, and offers students an opportunity to take the content from the class in a way that best suits their own interests.

Classroom Activities

Lesson One: Establishing a Critical Vocabulary

Objectives: Students will describe the meaning of a given list of vocabulary terms related to poetry/music analysis and criticism in order to build a critical vocabulary for collaborative readings. Students will record vocabulary terms in their notebooks as well as draw on their own knowledge of poetry/music to provide an example for each term.

Materials and resources:

- Teacher created slide show/presentation with definitions and images/clips for each term.
- Critical Vocabulary Jigsaw Worksheet (Appendix A Fig. 1)
- Parental Permission Form (Appendix A Fig. 2)

Vocabulary Terms:

Poetry Specific

- Stanza
- Line
- Imagery
- Repetition
- Cadence

Music Specific

- Verse
- Chorus
- Instrumentation
- Refrain

Non Specific

- Metre
- Metaphor
- Simile
- Alliteration
- Structure
- Rhyme

Phase One: Explain to students that the purpose of this lesson is to set a foundational understanding for group analysis and that learning this critical vocabulary will not only make music and poetry more enjoyable but will also be essential for the unit. Prompt all students to take out a notebook and writing instrument. Finally, stress the idea that most students are already probably familiar with the ideas they will learn about, let students know that during the lesson they are encouraged to share examples of each vocabulary term that come to their mind.

Phase Two: Using your classroom display (projector, smart board, etc.) present your slideshow. Go through each term slowly, allowing time for students to copy/organize definitions into their notebooks. Encourage students to write down they are familiar with alongside their definitions. Before moving on to a new term, be sure to ask students if they can think of an example of their own for the term if one hasn't been volunteered already. Before moving on to phase three of the lesson, ensure that all students have copied down each definition in full. If a student missed a definition or wants clarification go back to the relevant slide.

Phase Three: After students have finished recording vocabulary terms in their notebooks, have them form (or organize them into) small groups. Two to three students per group is recommended but feel free to change these numbers according to class size/needs. Distribute the Critical vocabulary worksheet (attached in Appendix A figure 1) to each group as well as a specific term from the critical vocabulary to focus on and have them complete the worksheet fully. These worksheets can be collected as part of a participation grade if need be and the time allotted to complete them can be modified as needed. After time is up, have each group share their responses to the prompts about how they explained the term in a different way and an example of the term from a song or poem they know.

Closing Activity: Have students take out a loose leaf or scrap sheet of paper and split it into three sections labeled “low” “medium” and “high.” Have students place each term into the section that corresponds to their level of understanding of the specific term. On their way out of class make sure all students turn in their responses, as it is important to review their understanding of the terms before moving on to the next lesson. Additionally, pass out parental permission slips to students.

Lesson Two: Modeling Collaborative Close Reading

*See Appendix A Fig. 9 for a list of song and poem pairings to select for each lesson, or feel free to choose your own.

Objectives: Students will practice using critical vocabulary in the collaborative close reading setting. Students will participate in a scaffolded/closely guided session of collaborative close reading in order to analyze the introductory texts for the unit. Students will complete an organizer to keep track of their discussion and take notes. The teachers goal should be modeling what an effective collaborative close reading should look like so that the unit can progress.

Materials and resources:

- Writing instruments for students
- Collaborative close reading rules guidelines and expectations sheet (Appendix A Fig. 3)
- Collaborative close reading guided discussion worksheet (Appendix A Fig. 4)
- **Poem**
- **Song**

Phase One: Begin the lesson by displaying the prompt “who is your favorite musician/music group? Who is your favorite poet?” and allow students time to record a response in their notebook, loose leaf, or a piece of scrap paper. After students have had sufficient time to record their thoughts, ask some students to share out their answers and ensure that they explain why they selected the musicians/poets they did. If time permits, allow students to engage in a discussion about their answers. The goal of this part of the lesson is to get students to engage in a discussion about the topic at hand, to build engagement for the collaborative close reading.

Phase Two: Distribute the collaborative close reading rules, guidelines and expectations sheet to students and let them know that this unit will focus on discussion very much like the one class started with. Take time to carefully go over the rules, expectations and guidelines (please note that there is no specific criteria that must be followed, if you’d like to change rules or expectations to better suit your own classroom feel free). Allow students to ask any questions they may have after discussing the assignment. After discussing the assignment, inform students that their first collaborative close reading session.

Phase Three: Arrange the room in a way that allows everyone to see one another unobstructed (if your classroom is not already set up in this way). Have students sit in desks and clear everything off except for a pencil. Pass out the collaborative close reading guided discussion worksheet and inform students to fill out the sheet as they read, listen, and discuss. Additionally, pass out the **song and poem**.

Phase Four: Inform students that they are about to analyze a piece of music. Remind them to think about the critical vocabulary terms while listening and apply them to their analysis wherever possible. Students are free to write on their collaborative reading guide while the song plays, but they should hold any discussion until the end. If you choose to break the song down into individual lines or smaller parts, assign what students are responsible for analyzing before playing the song. Once students are ready, play the song through a speaker that everyone will be able to hear. After listening, go around the circle once, allowing each student to comment on their impressions and what they made of the section they were responsible for. Encourage students to build on peer comments. Once the discussion ends or begins to drop off, segue into the poem.

Phase Five: Make sure all students have copies of the poem. Inform students that they should treat this reading very much the same way they treated listening to the song. Ask students to pay specific attention to any and all differences and similarities they feel exist between the song and the poem. Once all students are ready, read the poem aloud to students. After this, ask for a student to volunteer to read the poem as well. Once the poem has been read aloud twice, go around the circle once, allowing each student to comment on their impressions and what they made of the section they were responsible for. Keep this discussion focused on analyzing specific similarities and differences between mediums. If the discussion becomes stale before you are satisfied that all students are understanding, have some prepared questions to keep driving it. The goal here is to allow students to do a collaborative close reading without being the ones responsible for guiding it.

Phase Six: To close the lesson, have students respond to the prompt, “how do you feel about collaborative close reading? What benefits do you think can be gained from reading/listening/discussing as a group?” Allow students to answer on a loose leaf sheet of paper, scrap paper, or anything that can be collected and reviewed by you. Remind students to hand in their response as they leave in order to receive credit.

Lesson Three: Collaborative Close Reading

*This lesson will be repeated several times during the unit and will serve as the main lesson for discussing new poems and songs. It can be done quickly or slowly, and pace is entirely up to the individual teacher, however it is highly recommended to start things slowly to ensure that students are comfortable with the process.

Objectives: Students will participate in collaborative close reading groups to analyze music and poetry. This lesson will build on the guided collaborative reading and should be less formally structured than lesson two, however feel free to add more structure if necessary. Students will practice analyzing texts as well as explaining their understanding.

Materials and resources:

- Writing instruments for students
- (Optional) Collaborative close reading guided discussion worksheet (Appendix A Fig. 4)
- Collaborative Close Reading reflection worksheet (Appendix A Fig. 5)
- **Poem**

- **Song**

Phase One: Begin the lesson with a Do Now by displaying a prompt that relates to the poem/song that will be discussed during collaborative close reading. The poems and songs you use are up to the individual teacher, so just make sure that you have an idea of what you want students to be thinking about prior to meeting for a collaborative close reading (see Appendix A Fig. 9 for a list of paired songs and poems for discussion). As long as time permits, allow students to share their responses to get a discussion flowing. Having a discussion to lead into the collaborative close reading session is not required, but it will certainly help to build engagement throughout the close reading process.

Phase Two: Arrange the room in a way that allows everyone to see one another unobstructed (if your classroom is not already set up in this way). Have students sit in desks and clear everything off except for a pencil. If you're not confident in students ability to participate in a free flowing discussion, pass out the collaborative close reading guided discussion worksheet and inform students to fill out the sheet as they read, listen, and discuss. Additionally, pass out the song and poem that your collaborative close reading for the day will focus on.

Phase Three: Inform students that they are about to participate in a collaborative close listening session. Ensure that all students have a copy of the lyrics for the song that will be discussed. Prior to playing the song, assign individual parts of the lyrics or instrumentation to students. Inform them that they are responsible for explaining their interpretation of the lyrics they were assigned and how they fit into the song as a whole. In other words, students will be responsible for explaining, in their own opinion, what their assigned section of the lyrics *does* for the song. Once students are familiar with their part of the lyrics, play the song and allow students some time to analyze. Feel free to play the song multiple times if necessary. After students have been given some time to think, go around the circle and have students explain their thoughts and analysis. As the teacher, feel free to guide the discussion if it trails off or loses focus, but one of the goals here is to shift the onus of interpretation and analysis onto the students so that they can gain confidence in their own ideas. Remind students that there are no right or wrong answers. Additionally, encourage students to build on each other's ideas and discussions.

Phase Four: Once students have fully discussed the song, inform them that they will now be moving onto a collaborative close reading of a poem. Distribute the poem to all students and assign individual lines or stanzas of the poem as you see fit. Remind students that, while there is no right or wrong answer, they are responsible for explaining their interpretation of the portion of the text they were assigned. Encourage students to connect the poem to the song by comparing and contrasting. Once all students know what they are responsible for interpreting, read the poem aloud. After the first reading, ask for a student to volunteer to read it one more time. Reading the poem twice is highly recommended as it can reveal different cadences and points of emphasis. After the poem has been read through twice, go around the circle and have students explain the lines they were responsible for. Allow students to control the discussion once it gets going, the idea here is to allow students to explore their own ideas and build on the ideas of their peers with minimal prompting or scaffolding. The more practice students have with the process, the more beneficial their discussions will be.

Phase Five: Once you are satisfied with the discussion, or time in class begins to run down, inform students that they will begin to reflect on their collaborative close reading session. Pass out the collaborative close reading reflection sheet (Appendix A Fig. 5) and allow students to work through it independently. If you'd like, you can have students collaborate to complete their

reflection. Have students complete their reflection by the end of class if time permits, or assign it to be turned in as a classwork grade next class.

Lesson Four: Introducing the Multi Media Presentation Project

Objectives: Students will begin the process of outlining and organizing their ideas in order to begin working on a multi media presentation. Students will employ critical vocabulary and what they've learned from collaborative close readings in order to create their own cohesive collection of music and poetry. Later on in the unit, students will have a chance to present their curated collections in a collaborative circle to receive feedback from peers and lead a discussion.

Materials and resources:

- Multi Media Presentation assignment sheet (Appendix A fig. 6)
- Multi Media Presentation rubric (Appendix A fig. 7)
- Media Curation Organizer worksheet (Appendix A fig. 8)
- Computers (headphones highly recommended)

Phase One: Begin the lesson with a Do Now by displaying the prompt "Do you think poetry and music can work in tandem to create a sense of mood or atmosphere? Explain your answer." on the board. Allow students to take some time answering and make sure to stress that they should be as specific as possible in their answers. After students have had time to record their responses, ask for students to share what they wrote. Encourage students to get a discussion going regarding how music and poetry can support or supplement one another.

Phase Two: Once the discussion begins to reach its end, pass out the Multi Media Presentation assignment sheet and rubric to all students. Have students follow along with the assignment sheet as you read it aloud. Once you've gone over the assignment, ensure that all students are clear on what must be completed and allow students to ask any questions they may have. Next, go over the rubric. Allow students to keep both sheets so that they can reference them in the future.

Phase Three: After answering all student questions and concerns, distribute the Media Curation organizer. Inform students that this organizer will help guide them through the process of curating poems and music for their presentation. Remind students that turning in a completed version of this organizer will be a portion of their grade for the assignment. Once all students have an organizer, distribute laptops or allow students to log into desktops, depending on how your classroom is set up.

Phase Four: Students will spend the rest of class working independently to begin curating their "playlist" for presentation. As the teacher, this time should be spent floating around the room from student to student making sure that they are on task and answering any questions that may arise. Try to check in with each student at least once to make sure that they understand what they are doing. These informal check-ins are great opportunities to ask students what direction they are taking their "playlist" in and to ask specific questions, like why they chose to include a certain song or poems, what certain parts of their playlist mean to them, or how they plan on communicating an atmosphere with their "playlist." With about ten minutes remaining in class, have students save their work and begin to shut down their computers before meeting as a class for a debrief and exit ticket.

Phase Five: Once computers are away and students have wrapped up for the day, go over the expectations for the project one more time. After that, have students respond to the prompt,

“What did I complete for my project today? What will I achieve in the next week? What is one thing I’m confused or not confident about regarding the project?” as an exit ticket. Collect student responses as they leave the room at the end of class so that you can review the responses.

Lesson Five: Multi Media Presentations and Discussion

*This lesson may require more than one day for all students to be able to present.

Objectives: Students will present their Multi Media project in a collaborative setting. The class will form a collaborative close reading circle where, rather than doing a close reading of teacher selected poems and songs, they will analyze the lists curated by their peers. Students will practice public speaking, constructive feedback, and close reading/listening.

Materials and resources:

- Poems from student curated lists
- Songs from student curated lists
- Speakers

Phase One: At the start of class, gather students into a collaborative close reading circle. Remind students that rather than read a collection of teacher selected materials, they will analyze a few materials from lists curated by their peers for Multi Media presentations. Go over whatever procedures for presenting you use in your classroom to remind students to respect their peers when they are presenting. Once all students are clear on what is expected of them, presentations and student led discussions are ready to begin.

Phase Two: This section will take up the bulk of the lesson and can be modified to suit your classroom needs. If you have a large class, it is recommended that you pick ten to fifteen students to present on a given day. If your class is smaller, or you are forgoing a formal presentation, simply go around the circle allowing each student to lead the circle in a collaborative close reading of one song and a collaborative close listening of one song from their curated “playlist.”

Fig. 2 (Parental permission form)

Name: _____

Dear Parents and/or Guardians,

Your son or daughter is currently enrolled in my English class. As part of this class we will be listening to music and reading poetry as academic resources to work on the essential skills of text analysis and creative thinking. In order to fully allow for students to engage with meaningful content, we will read and listen to some content that may be viewed as "adult." With that said, I don't want to give any student the go ahead to engage with content that their parents or guardians would not permit themselves. Some texts will contain profane language and/or adult themes.

Considering this I am requiring students to get a signed permission slip from you in order to analyze certain content. If you do not wish for your son/daughter to analyze this content, and alternative will be provided. If I do not receive a permission slip or you do not consent (which is absolutely your decision to make), your son or daughter will not be allowed engage with some course content. If you have any questions or concerns feel free to email me at EMAIL ADDRESS or call the school and ask for TEACHER.

Please circle whether you do or do not give permission for your child to view the R rated films we will study in class this year:

YES I give my child permission

NO I do not give my child permission

Signature: _____

Fig. 3 (Collaborative close reading rules and expectations)

Collaborative Close Reading: Rules, Guidelines, and Expectations

What: Collaborative close reading is a method we will use in class to more effectively analyze complex pieces of writing. In class we will meet as a group and take turns breaking down texts, building on each others comments and critiques. Collaborative close reading is a team effort, and the more you put into it as an individual, the more the group will be able to get out of the activity. One thing important to note about the collaborative close reading process is that there are no wrong answers!

Why: In school reading often takes the form of a solo activity for a number of reasons. When approaching a standard text like a novel or an article, the ability to maintain focus for an extended period of time is key. But what about less conventional texts, or texts that are short but dense? Collaborative close reading has been shown to help learners tackle complex readings, like poetry, with more confidence. Additionally, allowing a space for open interpretation and discussion has been shown to boost students creative thinking and problem solving abilities. In short, collaborative close reading will help prepare you to be more adept at reading complex texts.

How: In class, we will meet as a class sized group. At the start of each session, you will be handed two readings (a poem and song lyrics). Each reading will be broken down into smaller parts which individuals will be tasked with analyzing. Sometimes you may be assigned a stanza, a couplet, or even simply a word, and you will tell the group what it means to you in the context of the text. Once you know what you are responsible for analyzing, we will read the poem/listen to the song as a class. During our discussion you are encouraged to build on the comments of your peers to make meaning out of each text. You may be assigned a guided discussion or reflection worksheet during the collaborative close reading process.

When: For the next few weeks, we will meet in class as a collaborative close reading group. While readings and discussions of texts will take place in class, you may be assigned readings and work that must be completed in order to participate in discussions.

Rules/Guidelines: During collaborative close reading sessions, there are several rules and guidelines that must be followed by all participating students:

- **Be respectful-** You will not always agree with your peers, but you must treat everyone in the circle with respect so that their ideas can be heard and considered.
- **Speak your truth-** Part of the goal of this activity is to allow you to speak openly and honestly about your own interpretation of texts. Whatever the text means to you is what you should share with the group, don't worry about telling us what you think we want to hear!
- **One mic-** Everyone will have a chance to speak and a chance to respond! If you have feedback, comments, or questions, raise your hand and wait your turn to speak so that you can be heard.
- **Be academic-** We will analyze a wide range of materials, remember that the purpose of this activity is academic, and we should speak and carry ourselves in a way that reflects that.

Fig. 4 (Collaborative close reading guided discussion worksheet)

Fig. 5 (Collaborative close reading guided discussion worksheet)

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Collaborative Close Reading: Reflection Questions

Directions: After a collaborative close reading, take some time to respond to the following questions/prompts. The more specific you are, the more clear it will be that you've mastered materials.

What texts were you analyzing?

1. Which text did you prefer, and why?
2. What techniques and terms from our critical vocabulary did you see on display during our collaborative close reading? In your opinion, what did these terms and techniques **do** for the text they appeared in?
3. What comments did you hear from your peers that changed your view/opinion about the text? What comments did you hear that were interesting to you? (Minimum of three)

Fig. 6 (Multi media presentation assignment sheet)

Multi Media Presentation Project

Purpose: To exercise close reading strategies in order to curate a list of poems and songs into a unique “playlist” communicating an emotion or idea. You will curate a list of songs and poetry by researching online and using class materials. While not required, you are welcomed to compile an actual playlist by compiling mp3s of song recordings and poetry readings. You will also write about your list formally and informally throughout the project. Any writing you do for this project can be submitted into your final portfolio. Lastly, you will present your list to the class in a collaborative circle. Time may not permit that we can analyze your entire list, so it is recommended you choose two to three specific items to discuss in the circle. In your presentation, you should present your selected songs and poems to the class, discuss why you made the selections you did, and also discuss how they work relate to the critical vocabulary from class. This assignment will serve as a formal assessment of your close reading skills.

Style: This project will require you to turn in items in multiple styles and formats. Written components can be handed in written or typed. If typed please use “Times New Roman” print size 12. For the curated “playlist” component, you are able to submit a word document that lists each selection along with its text. You will be free to use computers in the classroom and at home to complete this project, so it is encouraged that you curate a playlist of actual song files and poetry readings. When selecting files, be sure to talk to me to ensure that you are in compliance with fair use policies.

Grading: The main grading component for this project will be your in class presentation within a collaborative circle. There will be several additional components to the assignment which you will submit as a portfolio on the date of your presentation, so it is important that you hold on to everything you complete for this assignment! A rubric that will be used to grade your presentation is available for your review.

Requirements: While this assignment allows you to make many personal decisions, there are several requirements that are expected of you. Failure to follow these requirements will reflect on your final grade.

- A curated playlist of seven songs and seven poems that communicated a student selected emotion, idea, or story. The playlist can be submitted as a word document with annotations or a literal playlist of audio files with written annotations as a word document.
- Written justifications for each selection included in your curated playlist that answer the following prompts: how/why does including this selection help communicate the emotion, idea, or story you are trying to tell? What techniques/terms from my critical vocabulary are on display in this selection, and where? How and where did I find this resource?
- A brief formal presentation of your playlist in a collaborative circle setting followed by a discussion of a few of your selections. In your presentation, you should share with the class what your overall idea was for this playlist, what you selected to communicate this idea, and how you went about the process.
- A completed media curation organizer worksheet.
- All selections must be cleared as appropriate by the teacher prior to submission.

Fig. 7 (Multi Media Presentation rubric)

Criteria:	1	2	3	4	5
Engagement Techniques	No attempts to engage the audience were made	Student makes minimal attempts to engage their audience, energy is low	Student makes consistent attempts to engage their audience with moderate success, energy is acceptable	Student uses several specific techniques to engage their audience throughout their presentation, energy is good	Student keeps audience consistently engaged throughout presentation by utilizing specific techniques, energy is dynamic
Eye contact	Student does not make eye contact	Student makes inconsistent eye contact, looks down or around the room frequently	Student makes a noticeable effort at keeping eye contact, eye contact is rarely broken	Student makes eye contact and consistently scans room	Student constantly scans room during presentation, occasionally using techniques to enhance engagement
Content	Student does not have any of the required content prepared	Student has prepared content, but only partially. Student curated list is sparse and incomplete	Student has some of prepared content ready to go. Student curated list has shows incomplete ideas	Student has most of prepared content ready to go. Student curated list has direction to it and student ideas are apparent	Student has created a full list of content. Student has curated a list of all necessary materials and meets all requirements. Students ideas are clear
Justification	Student does not make an attempt to justify their selection of materials	Student only loosely justifies the materials they have chosen. It remains unclear why items on their list were included	Student partially justifies the materials they have chosen. Some materials are explained, but others are ignored or skimmed over	Student justifies their materials satisfactorily. Student comments on each material included and explains the purpose for including each	Student fully justifies all of their materials. The student comments on each material, how/why it was chosen, and how it fits into their curated list. Student provides details about their process

Additional Points:

Time Limit: -1 | -2

Total Score:

Confidence/Preparedness: +1 | +2 | +3

Fig. 8 (Media curation organizer) *students should complete one grid for each selection, so they will need multiple copies

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Multi Media Presentation: Curation Organizer

Directions: While researching materials for your playlist, record information about them here. This will make it easier to complete the written and spoken sections of this project.

Author/Artist:
Poem/Song Title:
Source Book/Album:
Genre:
Initial impression and/or reason for inclusion:

Author/Artist:
Poem/Song Title:
Source Book/Album:
Genre:
Initial impression and/or reason for inclusion:

Author/Artist:
Poem/Song Title:
Source Book/Album:
Genre:
Initial impression and/or reason for inclusion:

Author/Artist:
Poem/Song Title:
Source Book/Album:
Genre:
Initial impression and/or reason for inclusion:

Fig. 9 (Suggested poem/song pairings for collaborative close readings)

The following list contains a handful of suggested poems and songs to pair together for a collaborative close reading and discussion session. The pairings are only suggestions, and I wholly encourage teachers to add their own ideas and content to the unit. The text for all songs and poems included is available freely online. Youtube can serve as a means for playing songs during song listening.

- Witman, Walt. "I Hear America Singing"/Childish Gambino. "This is America"
- Smith, Danez. "the bullet was a girl"/OutKast. "Return of the G"
- McKay, Claude. "If We Must Die"/Heron, Gil-Scott. "The Revolution Will Not be Televised"
- Silverstein, Shel. "Blue"/Edie Brickell & New Bohemians. "What I Am"
- Hughes, Langston. "I look at the world"/Tupac. "Changes"
- Poe, Edgar Allen. "A Dream Within a Dream"/The Talking Heads. "This Must be the Place"
- Frost, Robert. "The Road Not Taken"/The Jimi Hendrix Experience. "Castles Made of Sand"
- Niedecker, Lorine. "Foreclosure"/Mitchell, Joni. "Big Yellow Taxi"
- Yeats, W.B. "He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven"/Common. "The Food"
- Cummings, E.E. "Buffalo Bill's"/Blondie. "Die Young Stay Pretty"

Bibliography/Works Cited

- Kirby-Smith, H. T. *The Celestial Twins: Poetry and Music Through the Ages*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999.

A thorough history of the connections between poetic and musical techniques. The text argues that poetry and music are inseparable due to the fact that poetic verse began as a form of musical verse. In addition to historical details, Kirby-Smith produces side by side analyses of applied meter in poetry and song. The text helped provide a basis for this unit and is a great starting point for discussion.

- Pence, Charlotte, ed. *Poetics of American Song Lyrics*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011.

A collection of essays focusing on song lyrics as a form of literature. Each essay highlights connections between the mediums of poetry and song. The text splits its focus between specific techniques or histories shared between mediums and a collection of influential song writers whose works are highlighted. This text serves as a great place to gather ideas for discussion as well as a helpful guide for musical content to select.

- Jocson, Korina M. "Bob Dylan and Hip Hop." *Written communication*. 23, no. 3 (July 2006): 231–259.

Jocson's article focuses on Bob Dylan as a sort of photo hip-hop. She writes about her experience teaching Bob Dylan as poetry in the classroom, and states that she had a great deal of success when connecting Dylan's lyrics to the lyrics of modern hip-hop artists. In addition to this, Jocson describes the concept and benefits of hybridity, which is an important concept to understand for explaining *why* this unit works.

- Ungerleider, Charles. "Words to images: media education using film adaptations of novels." *Emergency Librarian* 25, no. 2 (1997): 14-17.

Ungerleider argues that film is a helpful way to differentiate teaching complex novels. This unit views collaborative close listening as a means for differentiating collaborative close readings.

- Loads, Daphne. 2013. "Collaborative Close Reading of Teaching Texts: One Way of Helping Academics to Make Sense of Their Practice." *Teaching in Higher Education* 18 (8): 950–57.

Loads' article describes the practice of collaborative close reading in a formal setting with measured results. The results of using collaborative close reading to approach abstract ideas at the college level proved effective. Loads provides a solid foundation for using collaborative reading (and listening) in the high school classroom.