



SONGWRITING 101:

An Introduction to Words & Music

Grades 7-12

INTRODUCTION

This two-lesson unit is designed to prepare students to write lyrics. Songwriting 101 teaches students the basics of songwriting, including song structure and vocabulary, and establishes songwriting as a creative outlet to explore and process emotions, capture experiences, share stories, and express individuality. The program can be used to strengthen skills learned in traditional language arts units, promote social and emotional learning, and provide an interactive and collaborative writing experience with a professional songwriter.

Completing these lessons ensures that the Songwriting 101 workshop will be a productive co-writing experience with a professional songwriter and your students. Please plan to teach these two 45-minute lessons at least three weeks prior to your scheduled songwriter workshop to allow time to write and submit the outline.

Lesson 1 encourages students to think about what they already know about songwriting, while teaching the parts of a song. In Lesson 2, students brainstorm as a class and choose a specific song theme for the outline. Together, they will create a complete song outline that will be submitted to the songwriter prior to the workshop.

The Teacher Resource Portal provides support materials for Songwriting 101, including song lyrics for classroom projection, music videos, songwriter biographies, and more. In addition to Songwriting 101 materials, the Portal includes lesson guides, tool kits, and other primary sources that bring the Museum into your classroom.

To access the Teacher Resource Portal, visit CountryMusicHallofFame.org/Education/Teacher-Resource-Portal/.

Songwriting 101 is a precursor to Words & Music, the Museum's flagship education program. A rigorous step-by-step lyric writing experience, Words & Music supports standards in English language arts and music, and culminates with an interactive performance by a professional songwriter who presents student lyrics as finished songs. For more information on Words & Music, visit CountryMusicHallofFame.org/WordsandMusic.



Kane Brown



Tenille Townes



Taylor Swift

STANDARDS

COMMON CORE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1

Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.2

Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.3

Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.4

Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.4

Describe how words and phrases (e.g., regular beats, alliteration, rhymes, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning in a story, poem, or song.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR
MUSIC EDUCATION STANDARDS

Standard 6

Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.

Standard 7

Evaluating music and music performances.

Standard 8

Students will understand relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.

TENNESSEE MUSIC STANDARDS

Foundation R1

Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Foundation R2

Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Foundation Cn1

Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to artistic endeavors.

Foundation Cn2

Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context.

NATIONAL CORE ARTS ANCHOR STANDARDS

Anchor Standard #1

Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard #2

Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard #3

Refine and complete artistic work.

Anchor Standard #7

Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Anchor Standard #8

Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Anchor Standard #10

Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experience to make art.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING INDICATORS

1A. Demonstrate an awareness of my emotions.

1B. Demonstrate an awareness of my personal qualities and interests.

2A. Understand and use strategies for managing my emotions and behaviors constructively.

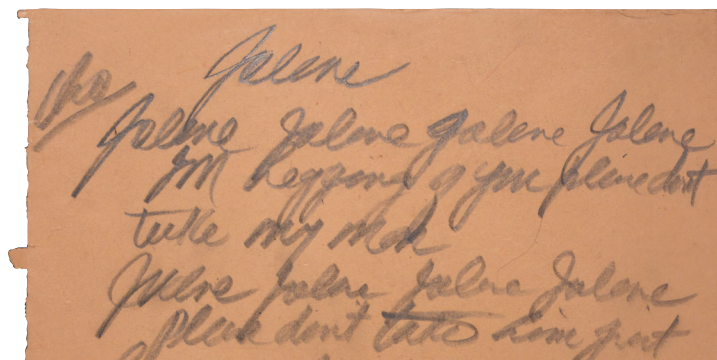
3A. Demonstrate awareness and consideration of other people's emotions, perspectives, and social cues.

3C. Demonstrate an awareness and respect for human dignity, including culture and differences.

4A. Use positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.

4B. Develop and maintain positive relationships.

5A. Consider and use multiple factors in decision-making, including ethical and safety factors, personal and community responsibilities, and short-term and long-term goals.



Dolly Parton's original "Jolene" manuscripts, 1973–1974

Lesson 1: Introduction to Songwriting

OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn and review the parts of a song.
- Students will analyze song lyrics and demonstrate their understanding of parts of a song and rhyming words.
- Students will define common human experiences and journal about examples.

VOCABULARY

Title	Verse
Subject	Chorus
Theme	Bridge
Hook	Common Human Experience

PREPARATION

Select a song to use for the lesson based on your students' interests and grade level. Suggested songs for this unit include the following:

- "Somebody's Daughter," written by Barry Dean, Luke Laird, and Tenille Townes, recorded by Tenille Townes
- "White Horse," written by Liz Rose and Taylor Swift, recorded by Taylor Swift
- "Worldwide Beautiful," written by Kane Brown, Shy Carter, Ryan Hurd, and Jordan Schmidt, recorded by Kane Brown

LESSON

40–45 MINUTES

1. Lead a class discussion about songs.

Ask students to name some of their favorite songs. Ask them what they like about the songs. Notate the discussion as it occurs. Encourage the conversation until the list of songs represents a range of musical genres.

2. Review the parts of a song.

Ask students to list as many parts of a song as they can and write them down. See if your students can define the parts of a song correctly.

- The **title** is the name of the song.
- The **subject** is the topic of the song.
- The **theme** is the message of the song.
- The **hook** is the part of the song that catches or "hooks" a listener's attention, making the song easy to remember. The title and hook are often the same, and the hook is usually repeated throughout the song.
- The **verse** communicates the details of the song's subject, such as who, what, where, when, why, and how. Songs usually have multiple verses.
- The **chorus** is the part that is repeated throughout the song. It is usually simpler than the verses, and it often contains the hook. The chorus summarizes the main subject, while the verses provide the supporting details.
- The **bridge** introduces a twist or a new idea on the theme. It usually occurs toward the song's end, and it has a different melody from the verses and chorus. Not all songs have a bridge.

3. Share song lyrics with students.

Students should read the lyrics, and then follow along as a recording of the song is played. Have students circle the chorus and underline the hook and title. Discuss correct answers after everyone has completed the exercise.

4. Ask students to draw a box around rhyming words.

Once students have finished, work as a class to identify the song's rhyme scheme (e.g., ABAB, AABB, etc.). Inform students that the chorus, verses, and bridge

(if there is one), may have different rhyme schemes.

5. Discuss theme and message further.

Reiterate that **subject** is what the song is about, and the **theme** is the message. For example, the subject of “White Horse” is real world relationships versus fairytales. The theme is that a person can be independent and doesn’t have to wait for someone to show up and save the day, like a fairytale. Finally, go back to the songs from the previous steps, and identify the subject and theme.

Student answers should include, but are not limited to the following:

The subject of “Worldwide Beautiful” is unity. The theme is about finding unity and celebrating diversity.

The subject of “Somebody’s Daughter” is understanding. The theme is everybody has a story.

6. Discuss common human experiences.

Brainstorm a few examples of the most popular songs that are about **common human experiences**, which are actions, thoughts, or feelings others can relate to. Brainstorm a few examples as a class to make sure all the students understand the concept.

7. Homework or journal time

Have students brainstorm their own list of common human experiences and potential song topics.

- List three common human experiences you might share as a class.
- List three things you think about a lot.
- Write down a funny memory that comes to your mind.
- Write down a happy memory that comes to your mind.
- Write down a sad memory that comes to your mind.

TIP:

The goal is to come up with things you think other people are also experiencing. Try not to “overthink” your list. Just go with what first comes to your mind.



Lesson 2: Song Topic and Outline

OBJECTIVES

- Students will review subject and theme and share their common human experiences with the class.
- Students will analyze their common human experiences as a class and use them to brainstorm a song topic
- The class will create a song outline using their chosen topic.

VOCABULARY

Outline
Subject (review)
Theme (review)
Common Human Experience (review)

PREPARATION

This is a group-write, so you will need a large space, white board, chalkboard, projector, etc. to write student ideas and document your class brainstorm.



Custom-painted Royal typewriter used by Cindy Walker to compose her hit songs

LESSON

40–45 MINUTES

1. Review the parts of a song.

Review what students learned in lesson one, focusing on the definitions of subject, theme, and common human experiences.

2. Have students share from their homework or journal.

Record their topics on the board and notate repeating or similar subjects. You can do this by color-coding related words or by putting common topics in an organized chart.

BRAINSTORM EXAMPLE:

LOSS

Family pet dying
Losing a prized possession
Breaking up with a girl/boyfriend

SCHOOL

Homework
Recess
The cafeteria

SUMMERTIME

Swimming
Family vacations
Summer camp
Hot days
Eating watermelon and hotdogs

3. Pick a song subject.

With the students' ideas on the board, point out the subject that has the longest list of related topics and make it clear to the students which common human experiences are the most prevalent in their class. Use this grouping to sum up one main idea for your final song theme and erase the others.

NOTE:

In the example above, summertime would be your main idea and song subject.

4. Brainstorm a song theme.

Erase the other topics from the board, leaving just the chosen subject. Ask the class to brainstorm a theme, or message, they want to communicate about the subject. Ask the class to brainstorm more descriptive words, activities, feelings, or ideas related to this subject and theme, and add them to the list. You cannot over-brainstorm. Stop when there is a substantial list of ideas on the board.

5. Make a song outline.

Explain that a song outline is a rough sketch of what the lyrics will communicate. Outlining a song is a useful way to help writers organize their thoughts. Using the main idea and details the students came up with, make an outline of your song together as a class.

SONG OUTLINE EXAMPLE:

Verse 1 Topic: Things I like about summertime

Verse 2 Topic: Places I go in the summertime

Chorus Theme: How much I love summertime

Verse 3 Topic: Things I do during the summer

Bridge Topic (optional): How much longer until summertime?

NOTE:

Remind the students that their co-writer may not follow this outline exactly, but it will be a good start for song ideas.

Turn in your outline to the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum and include school/group name, grade level, and teacher name. The song outline is due at least two weeks before the scheduled songwriting workshop.

It can be submitted via

Email:

Make sure the outline is in the format above and attach to an email.
lyrics@countrymusichalloffame.org

**WORDS & MUSIC FUNDERS**

Words & Music is made possible by the Country Music Association Endowment for Words & Music and is funded in part by Chet Atkins Music Education Fund of The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee; CMA; CMA Foundation; Dollar General Literacy Foundation; HCA Foundation; The Memorial Foundation; Metropolitan Nashville Arts Commission; Nashville Predators Foundation; PNC Grow Up Great; Tennessee Arts Commission; and Wells Fargo.

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Lyric Sheet

Somebody's Daughter

Barry Dean / Luke Laird / Tenille Townes

I drive home the same way
Two left turns off the interstate
And she's always standing at the stoplight on 18th Street
She could be a Sarah, she could be an Emily
An Olivia, maybe Cassidy
With her shaky hands on the cardboard sign
And she's looking at me

Bet she was somebody's best friend, laughing
Back when she was somebody's sister
Counting change at the lemonade stand
Probably somebody's high school first kiss
Dancing in a gym where the kids all talk about someday plans
Now this light'll turn green and I'll hand her a couple dollars
And I'll wonder if she got lost or they forgot her
She's somebody's daughter
Somebody's daughter
Somebody's daughter

Did she give up wondering where the cars all go?
Can she even tell that I don't know what to say?
So I just nod my head and wave
Well, no one's going to ask what she wants to be
Or why we're both stuck here at the mercy of geography
And whether it shines or rains

Bet she was somebody's best friend, laughing
Back when she was somebody's sister
Counting change at the lemonade stand
Probably somebody's high school first kiss
Dancing in a gym where the kids all talk about someday plans
Now this light'll turn green and I'll hand her a couple dollars
And I'll wonder if she got lost or they forgot her
She's somebody's daughter
Somebody's daughter
Somebody's daughter

Oh, I don't know the reasons why
I'm the one who's driving by
And she's the one on the corner of 18th Street

Bet she was somebody's best friend, laughing
Back when she was somebody's sister
Counting change at the lemonade stand
Probably somebody's high school first kiss
Dancing in a gym where the kids all talk about someday plans
Now this light'll turn green and I'll hand her a couple dollars
And I'll wonder if she got lost or they forgot her
She's somebody's daughter
Somebody's daughter
Somebody's daughter

Lyric Sheet

White Horse

Liz Rose / Taylor Swift

Say you're sorry, that face of an angel
Comes out just when you need it to
As I paced back and forth all this time
Cause I honestly believed in you
Holding on the days drag on
Stupid girl, I should have known (I should have known)

I'm not a princess, this ain't a fairy tale
I'm not the one you'll sweep off her feet, lead her up the stairwell
This ain't Hollywood, this is a small town
I was a dreamer before you went and let me down
Now it's too late for you and your white horse to come around

Maybe I was naïve, got lost in your eyes
And never really had a chance
My mistake, I didn't know to be in love
You had to fight to have the upper hand
I had so many dreams about you and me
Happy endings now I know

I'm not a princess, this ain't a fairy tale
I'm not the one you'll sweep off her feet, lead her up the stairwell
This ain't Hollywood, this is a small town
I was a dreamer before you went and let me down
Now it's too late for you and your white horse to come around

And there you are on your knees
Begging for forgiveness, begging for me
Just like I always wanted but I'm so sorry

'Cause I'm not your princess, this ain't a fairytale
I'm gonna find someone someday who might actually treat me well
This is a big world, that was a small town
There in my rear view mirror disappearing now
And it's too late for you and your white horse
Now it's too late for you and your white horse to catch me now

Oh, whoa, whoa, whoa
Try and catch me now
Oh, it's too late to catch me now

Lyric Sheet

Worldwide Beautiful

Kane Brown / Shy Carter / Ryan Hurd / Jordan Schmidt

White churches, black churches
Different people, same hearses
It's kinda hard to fight with each other
Laying down in the ground, six under
At every show I see my people
They ain't the same, but they're all equal
One love, one God, one family

You're missing every color
If you're only seeing black and white
Tell me how you're gonna change your mind
If your heart's unmovable (we're not that different)
We ain't that different from each other
From one to another, I look around
And see worldwide beautiful

You're missing every color
If you're only seeing black and white
Tell me how you're gonna change your mind
If your heart's unmovable
We ain't that different from each other
From one to another, I look around
And see worldwide beautiful

Look around and see worldwide beautiful (so beautiful)
Look around and see worldwide beautiful
Worldwide beautiful
Look around and see worldwide beautiful

Thank God, thank God, thank God, thank God,
thank God, thank God
Oh, thank God, thank God, thank God, thank God,
thank God, thank God

Coast to coast, city to city
Reach out your hands if you're with me
Still got some work but we still got a dream
Every shade, every heart come together and sing
Oh, thank God, thank God, thank God, thank God,
thank God, thank God

You're missing every color
If you're only seeing black and white
Tell me how you're gonna change your mind
If your heart's unmovable
We ain't that different from each other
From one to another, I look around
And see worldwide beautiful

One love, one God, one family
One love, one God, one family
One love, one God, one family
One Love, one God, one family