

3) Title and Hook

OBJECTIVES

Students will understand that most popular songs resonate with many people because the songs address common human experiences.

Students will generate their own list of common human experiences.

Students will practice writing song titles and hooks.

VOCABULARY

hook (review), title (review)

PREPARATION

- Make copies of “Country Girl” Lyric Sheet and Writing Titles and Hooks Worksheet.
- Locate audio or video version of “Country Girl” performed by The Carolina Chocolate Drops.

STANDARDS**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.5**

Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

FREE WRITE (5 minutes)**DISCUSS HOMEWORK (2 minutes)**

Allow students to share the lyrics of their selected songs with a partner, explaining why they labeled each song section and offering textual evidence.

BRAINSTORM (5 minutes)

Share with students that most popular songs are about common human experiences, which are actions, thoughts, or feelings that many people can relate to. Brainstorm a couple examples as a class to make sure all students understand the concept.

For the main brainstorm activity, students will work alone and then in groups of four or five. Review the directions:

In your journal, write down as many common human experiences as you can in one minute. Afterward, you will break into groups to compare your lists. The goal is to come up with experiences you think your classmates are also writing down, so keep that in mind with this exercise. Try not to “overthink” your list, but just go with what first comes to your mind; focus on getting your ideas on paper.

After the one-minute brainstorm, divide the class into groups, and review these directions:

You now have two minutes to compare lists with your group, circling anything on your list that you have in common with another group member’s list.

Allow students to share some of their most common experiences with the whole class.

ACTIVITY (30–35 minutes)

1. Share this information:
 - A song **title** often comes from things heard in daily life. This can be a cool phrase, a line in a movie or TV show, or something repeated all the time.
 - Titles may or may not include the subject of the song. For example, the song “Stuck with U,” performed by Ariana Grande and Justin Bieber, is actually about being stuck with someone and cherishing the time together, while the song “Cardigan,” performed by Taylor Swift, is not just about a cardigan but about looking back on a young lost love.
2. Ask students to share other examples of song titles that may or may not include the subject.
3. Distribute **“Country Girl” Lyric Sheet**. Prepare students to listen to the song by doing the following:
 - Discuss the title. What do students think the song will be about? Is the title a phrase that the songwriters likely made up, or is it a phrase that they likely heard somewhere and then wrote a song about it?
 - Ask students to get ready to listen to the way the title shows up in the chorus.
4. Listen to “Country Girl” and discuss:
 - How is the title used in the song?
 - What makes this title catchy? (There is no correct answer to this question, so responses will vary. Facilitate the discussion to draw out a variety of opinions.)
 - Discuss the relationship between the title, hook, and chorus. (This discussion should reinforce the concept that the title, hook, and chorus are related to one another. The **hook** usually occurs in the chorus, and all or part of the hook usually appears in the title.)
5. Ask students to list the following items in their journals:
 - Three things that you think about a lot.
 - Three objects or ideas that are important to you.
 - The first two happy memories that come to your mind.
 - The first two sad memories that come to your mind.
 - The first funny memory that comes to your mind.

TEACHER TIP

Remind students not to overthink their lists—just go with what first enters their minds. The main goal is to get their ideas down on paper.

6. Distribute the **Writing Titles and Hooks Worksheet** and review the directions:

Look over the lists you just created. You may also look through what you wrote in previous lessons. Pick one or two subjects to practice writing song titles and hooks. Then create three possible song titles (which also can serve as hooks) for each subject.

Support students as they practice writing titles and hooks.

Note: You may wish to encourage students to pick one of their titles for their final song.

TEACHER TIP

If students get stuck writing titles, remind them that they also write titles for stories and essays in class.

Writing a title for a song is a similar task.



The Carolina Chocolate Drops was a traditional African-American string-band featuring founding member Rhiannon Giddens. Their album “Geniune Negro Jig” won Best Traditional Folk Album at the 2010 Grammy Awards. Above: Rhiannon Giddens 2021. Photo courtesy of Ebru Yildiz.

HOMEWORK

Give students the following prompt to complete as a journal entry:

Titles can come from everyday conversations you overhear, a cool or popular phrase, a line in a movie or TV show, or something that your family or friends say all the time. For the rest of the school day and tonight when you go home, use your journal to record anything catchy you hear. Remember to listen in the hallways, the cafeteria, the playground, and on your way home. A good song title can come from anywhere! Write down as many titles as you can. You will share your favorite titles with the class tomorrow.

LYRIC SHEET

Country Girl*Rhiannon Giddens / Lalenja Harrington / Adam Matta*

I was raised in the country, that's a natural fact
 Food on the table from the garden out back
 Everyone working to make the land their own
 Red clay crackin' where the silver queen grows

Runnin' with your cousins from yard to yard
 Livin' was easy but the playin' was hard
 Didn't have much, nothing comes for free
 All you needed was your family

I am a country girl
 I've been around the world
 And every place I've been
 Ain't quite nothin' like
 Livin' in the south
 I wanna shut your mouth
 I am a country girl
 I am a country girl

Biscuits in the morning and gravy too
 Fried chicken in the afternoon
 Jaw draggin' eatin' sweet potato pie
 Takin' half an hour to say goodbye

Blackberry patches scuffin' on by
 Sweet Georgia peaches and dandelion wine
 The best kind of food is made by hand
 The only place to get it is from the land

I am a country girl
 I've been around the world
 And every place I've been
 Ain't got nothin' like
 Livin' in the south
 I wanna shut your mouth
 I am a country girl
 I am a country girl

All day I dream about a place in the sun
 Kinda like where I'm from
 With the tall grass blowin' in the breeze
 Runnin' bare foot from the tall oak tree

All day I dream about a place I've been
 A place where the skin I'm in
 Feels like it's supposed to be
 And anyone around who looks at me says

I am a country girl
 I've been around the world
 And every place I've been
 Ain't quite nothin' like
 Livin' in the south
 I wanna shut your mouth
 I am a country girl
 I am a country girl

Livin in the south
 I wanna shut your mouth

I was born in the country, that's a natural fact
 On these long city days I wanna look back
 To see tobacco fields a row after row
 Red clay crackin' where the silver queen grows

WORKSHEET

Writing Titles and Hooks

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Look over the lists you just created. (You may also look through what you wrote in previous lessons.)
Pick one or two subjects to practice writing song titles and themes.

Subject 1: _____

Subject 2: _____

2. Create three possible song titles for each subject.

SUBJECT 1

Title 1: _____

Title 2: _____

Title 3: _____

SUBJECT 2

Title 1: _____

Title 2: _____

Title 3: _____

3. Think about how your titles might become hooks. Which titles would make the best hooks for a song?
Which do you find catchy to say or sing?

REMINDER

Sometimes the title has the subject in it (for example, “Country Girl,” “Stuck with U”). Sometimes the title has something related to the subject (“Let It Go,” “Cardigan”). The title is usually the hook of the song.