

## 8) Focused Lyric-Writing Day

### OBJECTIVES

Students will write all or part of a song that incorporates what they have written and what they have learned in previous lessons.

### VOCABULARY

plagiarism

### PREPARATION

Make copies of **Songwriting Checklist** for all students.

Additionally, at your own discretion, make copies of the following templates and worksheets according to the needs of your students:

- For students who want or need additional support for outlining a song, make copies of **Songwriting Outline Worksheet**.
- For students who need extra support in general, make copies of **Songwriting Template** (in Supplemental Materials).

**Note:** Providing this template to all students may result in formulaic songs.

- For students who may have problems generating song ideas or supporting details, make copies of **Brainstorm Wheel**, **Spider Map**, and **Sensory and Emotion Brainstorm** (in Supplemental Materials).
- For students who are writing a blues song, make copies of **Blues Song Template** (in The Blues lesson).

### STANDARDS

#### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.5

Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

#### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

### FREE WRITE (5 minutes)

### DISCUSS HOMEWORK (1 minute)

Divide class into pairs so students can share a strong image from their writing.

### BRAINSTORM (5 minutes)

**Prompt:** You have done a lot of writing over the last few days. For the next five minutes, look through your journal and underline anything that you are proud of or anything that you think you might want to use in your final song.



*Cindy Walker composed lyrics on her typewriter, one of many treasures in the collection of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. Although she lived in Texas, she made regular visits to Nashville to pitch her songs, which she called her "babies." She was elected to the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1997.*

**ACTIVITY** (30–35 minutes)

1. Review the following concepts from previous lessons:

- **Parts of a song:** A song must have a title, verses, a chorus, and a hook. Some songs have a bridge, which usually occurs before the last chorus and introduces a twist or new idea on the subject.
- **Title and hook:** In most songs, the title appears at least once in the chorus. The title is often the hook, the catchy phrase that makes the song easy to remember. The hook and the title usually communicate the theme.
- **Subject and theme:** The subject is the song's topic. The theme is the message.
- **Rhythm and syllables:** Each line of the verse should have about the same number of syllables. Each line of the chorus should have about the same number of syllables. For songwriting novices, having between five and eight syllables per line produces the most successful songs.
- **Rhyme:** Most songs follow a rhyme scheme. Rhymes can be exact or approximate.
- **Sensory details and images:** Lyrics paint mental pictures to communicate their theme and convey emotions.

2. Share the following information before sending students off to write:

All songwriters draw inspiration from many different sources, including other songs and songwriters. Many songwriters create songs together by co-writing. It is fine to get inspiration or help from other songwriters and friends, but it is never OK to use a song or part of a song written by someone else and claim it as your own work. If you turn in someone else's work as your own, it is considered cheating, and you will receive a failing grade. If professional songwriters steal all or part of someone else's song and sell it as their own work, this is called **plagiarism**, and it is illegal. People who commit plagiarism can be sued by the material's original creators.

**TEACHER TIP**

Allowing students to co-write their songs is an excellent way to support ESL students and students who are struggling alone. ESL students may also wish to write a song in their first language and try translating it into English.

3. Distribute and review the **Songwriting Checklist** to all students. Reserve most of class time for students to work quietly on their songs. Distribute additional templates and handouts, including the **Songwriting Template**, as needs arise. If the Blues Lesson (see p.56) was taught, pass out the **Blues Song Template** to students who are writing a blues song. Students should be encouraged to write lyrics based on their song form preference. (Not every student should write a blues song.) If students finish quickly, they should write extra verses so they can pick the best ones for their final draft.

At this point, students will be in different stages of writing. Some will have completed an outline, some may have a verse and chorus, while others might have journal entries and an idea of what they want to write. Encourage students to use the Songwriting Checklist to help them move forward.

4. As you offer support to students, consider the following points of focus:

- The content of the song is most important.
- Songs should follow a standard structure.
- Students should attempt to rhyme so their song is catchy and memorable.

## TEACHER TIP

Here are some of the most common obstacles students encounter and strategies for overcoming them:

**Not enough ideas:** Refer students back to their journals for more ideas. Provide **Brainstorm Wheel** (in Supplemental Materials) to students to generate more ideas. Provide **Sensory and Emotion Brainstorm Worksheet** and/or the **Spider Map** (also in Supplemental Materials) to help students generate more supporting details.

**Too many ideas:** Remind students to focus on one subject and then add in supporting details about that subject.

**Ideas are scattered or disorganized:** Encourage students to approach their one theme in a different way for each of the three verses. Provide the **Songwriting Outline Worksheet** to students who are struggling with organizing their ideas.

**Song looks more like a paragraph:** Praise students for having so many ideas and details. Prompt students to try dividing the ideas found in their paragraph into four lines for the verses and four lines for the chorus. Remind students that each line should have about the same number of syllables.

**Generally “stuck”:** Remind students who feel genuinely overwhelmed that their song does not have to be the best ever written and that it takes lots of time and practice to become a good songwriter. Every song or part of a song that they write will make them better at writing their next song.

Provide the **Songwriting Template** (in Supplemental Materials) only to students who need extra support.

## HOMEWORK

By the end of the class period, students should have at least one verse and a chorus. For homework, students should attempt to finish their songs. A finished song will mean something different for each student, but let students know they will be sharing their songs with a partner during the next lesson. If students finish their chorus and all their verses, they should write extra verses for their homework. Or they also may try to write another song.



*William Christopher Handy was a songwriter, composer, and music publisher. Often referred to as the “Father of the Blues,” Handy popularized blues music in the early 20th century, with hits like “Memphis Blues” and “St. Louis Blues.” Learn how to write a traditional blues lyric in **The Blues Lesson** (p.56). Photo courtesy of State Historical Society of Missouri, Arthur Witman 120mm Photograph Collection.*



## WORKSHEET

## Songwriting Outline

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your title? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your hook? (It could be the same as your title.) \_\_\_\_\_

3. What details will you put in your verses to support the subject? \_\_\_\_\_

Here are some ideas for details; each verse should include only one:

- Specific things you like about your topic
- How you feel about your topic
- What you do with your topic
- How you interact with your topic
- When you first saw your topic
- How your topic changed you
- Physical qualities of your topic
- Someone your topic makes you think of

Create your own. \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 1 topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Hook (in the chorus): \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 2 topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Hook (in the chorus): \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 3 topic: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Write four lines for each verse and four lines for the chorus. The chorus should include the hook and/or title in at least one line. Remember that each line should have about the same number of syllables (usually between five and eight).