

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 explore the connection between song titles and hooks.

Students will practice writing song titles and hooks.

VOCABULARY

hook (review), title (review)

PREPARATION

- Make copies of “The House That Built Me” Lyric Sheet.
- Locate audio or video version of “The House that Built Me” performed by Miranda Lambert.
- For advanced students, make copies of “Spotlight on Chorus” (in the Appendix).

STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.5

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. Remind students that the **title** (the name of the song) is often the same as the **hook**. A hook is the part of the song that catches listeners' attention. A song's title often appears in the chorus.

Students will generate ideas for the subject of their lyrics and turn a subject into a title. To begin, ask students to list the following items in their journals:

- The first random memory that comes to mind.
 - 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 mind.
 - The first two sad memories that come to mind.
 - The first funny memory that comes to mind.
2. Share with students:
 - Song titles often come from things heard in daily life. This can be a cool phrase, a line in a movie or TV show, an overheard comment, 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.
 3. Ask students to share other examples of song titles that may or may not include the subject of the song.
 4. Use these examples and previous ones to explore the connection between the title and the hook. Remind students that the title often appears in the hook.
 5. Distribute **“The House That Built Me” 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? What does the phrase “the house that built me” mean? Is it 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 listen to the way the title will show up in the chorus.
 6. Listen to “The House That Built Me” and discuss:
 - How is the title used in this song?
 - What makes this title memorable? (There is no correct answer to this question, so responses will vary. Facilitate this discussion to draw out different opinions.)
 - Why—or why not—is this a successful title/hook/chorus?
 - Discuss the relationship between the title, hook, and chorus. (This discussion should reinforce that the title, hook, and chorus are related to each other. The hook usually occurs in the chorus, and all or part of the hook usually appears in the title.)

TEACHER TIP

Continue to remind students that while they are learning “the rules” of song structure, many songs do not follow these rules. Still, it is important to know the general pattern that many songs follow in order to understand when and how to bend or break those patterns.

7. Practice writing titles.

Prompt: Look back at the list of topics you created in your journal at the beginning of class and pick three to practice writing titles. Try to write a title that corresponds with each of the topics you pick. Remember, a title can be a word or a phrase. Let your mind wander to different words and phrases that pop up when you think of each topic. You may want to brainstorm about each topic and jot down a lot of ideas. Then pick one that you think could sound catchy as a hook.

TEACHER TIP

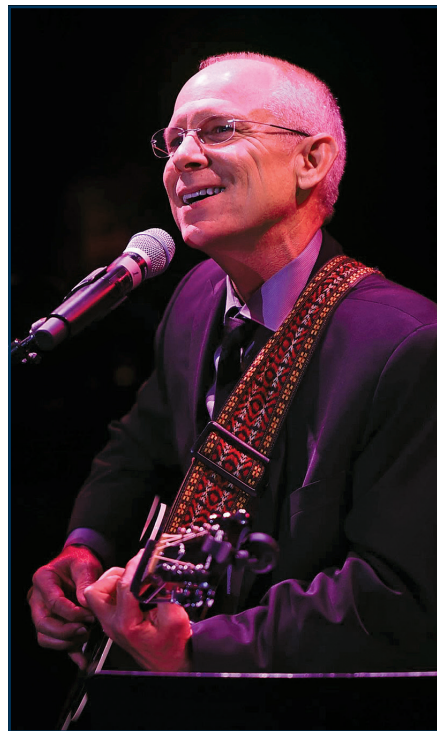
If students get stuck, encourage them to write down ideas that might seem random or only loosely related to their topic. Song titles can come from a variety of places and inspirations. Using a Spider Map or other mind-mapping technique may help students think of ideas.

For advanced work on titles, see “Spotlight on Chorus” in the Appendix.

HOMEWORK

Read the following prompt for students 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 sports field, the mall, and on your way home. A good song title can come from anywhere! Write down as many possible titles as you can. You will share your favorite titles with the class tomorrow.



Miranda Lambert (center) drew on her own childhood memories when she recorded “The House That Built Me,” an award-winning ballad written by Tom Douglas (left) and Allen Shamblin (right).

The House That Built Me

Tom Douglas/Allen Shamblin

I know they say you can't go home again
I just had to come back one last time
Ma'am I know you don't know me from Adam
But these handprints on the front steps are mine
Up those stairs in that little back bedroom
Is where I did my homework and I learned to play guitar
And I bet you didn't know under that live oak
My favorite dog is buried in the yard

I thought if I could touch this place or feel it
This brokenness inside me might start healing
Out here it's like I'm someone else
I thought that maybe I could find myself
If I could just come in I swear I'll leave
Won't take nothing but a memory
From the house that built me

Mama cut out pictures of houses for years
From *Better Homes and Garden* magazine
Plans were drawn and concrete poured
Nail by nail and board by board
Daddy gave life to Mama's dream

I thought if I could touch this place or feel it
This brokenness inside me might start healing
Out here it's like I'm someone else
I thought that maybe I could find myself
If I could just come in I swear I'll leave
Won't take nothing but a memory
From the house that built me

You leave home, you move on, and you do the best you can
I got lost in this old world and forgot who I am

I thought if I could touch this place or feel it
This brokenness inside me might start healing
Out here it's like I'm someone else
I thought that maybe I could find myself
If I could walk around I swear I'll leave
Won't take nothing but a memory
From the house that built me