

HOLLY VALENTINE

SESSION
14CLOSE READING THROUGH
SONG & LYRIC ANALYSIS

In-depth lyric analysis can bring students a sense of understanding and meaning that is often not possible in straight readings. By combining the notion of word choice by the author (the lyricist) with the tones and feelings found in the music (from the composer), students will be able to dig deeply to find not only a meaning conveyed by the musical team, but from themselves.

The following structure has been found to help students meet success when analyzing a song.

Suggested materials:

- * *An interactive notebook, to be used throughout the inquiry. This will be a place for students to annotate and record their individual thinking and observations from class discussions. This is also an ideal place for students to keep copies of articles, and lyrics.*
- * *For lyric analysis, each student needs four (4) different colored pencils or pens, as does the teacher. Colors do not matter. Making a key to chart the use of colors to record the thinking will help.*

Color Key example:	
	Initial thinking
	Second thinking
	Final impressions
	Group thinking

- To begin, simply play the song for students. Do not give them the lyrics yet, just have them listen and form their first impressions.
- At the end of the song, ask students to quickly jot down their thoughts, feelings, and questions in their first color. Hold a brief discussion, recording group impressions on large chart paper. Keep these thoughts to the top of the paper

**** If students are also going to record group thinking in their own notebook, they should use a separate color for that, so the teacher can clearly see the work that was their own thinking versus group thinking.*
- Distribute a copy of lyrics to the students, asking them to paste them in the center of a notebook page. It is helpful to have reduced them a bit to allow for space around the page to record thinking.
- Play the song a second time, asking students to simply read along with the lyrics. At the end of the song, ask students to record new thinking, questions, etc with a

HOLLY VALENTINE

SESSION
14CLOSE READING THROUGH
SONG & LYRIC ANALYSIS

second color. They may also need/want to circle or mark key phrases in the song that leads them to their thinking. This should be done independently.

- After a few minutes, hold another brief whole group discussion, adding to the class chart. At this point on the chart, the teacher has now also revealed a large set of lyrics in the middle of the chart paper, which s/he will also mark as needed to record thinking. *(Students will use their group color to take notes if desired)*
- Repeat this process, going section by section of the song, digging into deeper comprehension.
- Teacher will play the song one more time for students. Students will use their final color to jot down any new notes or ideas as they are listening. At the conclusion of the song, in this final color, somewhere on the page they will write their own interpretation of the song, and what they believe the author's purpose was in writing it, the character's reason for singing it, and acknowledge important word choices. There is clearly no right or wrong answer for this, but students must be able to cite evidence to prove their thinking.
- After allowing students sufficient time to think and write, a final group discussion will be held, charting those big ideas and meanings students have discovered. There may be a clear thought that is agreed upon, or there may be differing opinions, depending on the song. Once clear ideas have been drawn, it is strongly suggested to ask students to consider how word choice that has been used to convey the meaning. They may debate other words that could have been used, and/or consider if other words would have changed the tone of the piece.

Song Analysis Questioning Techniques:

These questions may help to promote deeper thinking by students, particularly during the group discussions aspect of the structure provided for analyzing lyrics. It is important to note that teachers should not lead students down particular paths of thinking too early in their discussions, but instead allow students to steer the thinking.

Before Listening:

- Based on the title, and/or what you know about the artist or character,

HOLLY VALENTINE

SESSION
14CLOSE READING THROUGH
SONG & LYRIC ANALYSIS

what do you *predict* the song will be about? What is leading your thinking that way?

During Listening:

Personal responses:

- What emotions do you have/feel when listening to the song?
- Does this song make you think about any events or people in your own life?

Analytical responses:

- Does this song tell a story? How?
- Does the song convey emotions? How?
- What instruments do you hear in the song, and what is the importance of those choices?
(Don't forget that the voice is an instrument)
- What phrases and lyrics stand out to you in particular?
- How is the song organized?
 - Does it have a clear beginning, middle and end? Does it read like prose?
 - Does it have stanzas and refrains, more like poetry?
 - How does the instrumental portion of the music relate to the lyrics and word choices?- Consider the tempo (speed), dynamics (loud/soft, etc) and pitch (high vs low tones) of different parts of the song

After Listening:

- What is the author's (artist, lyricist, composer) message in the song? What meaning are they trying to express or have the character express?
- Who is the intended audience for the song? What evidence do you have?
- What is the overall mood and tone of the song?
 - What technical elements (musically, artistically, word choice) contribute?

**Words make you think a
thought.
Music makes you feel a**

HOLLY VALENTINE

SESSION
14CLOSE READING THROUGH
SONG & LYRIC ANALYSISDifferentiation and Thinking Points

- For younger students still processing the idea of annotation, and trying to keep up with thinking, stick to just one color. I tend to not use regular pencils, as then they can't erase! ALL thoughts are validated and worthy!!
 - Depending on the group, rather than 4 colors, go with two. Use one color for "Thoughts on my own" and the second color for "Thoughts from the group". This option has been used as young as second grade.
- Extensions and things to think about when using the lyrics as text:
 - Word choice (try putting other words in certain key places)
 - Character traits of the person who might be singing it
 - Point of View
 - Foreshadowing
 - Imagery
 - Metaphor/Simile
 - Author's Purpose
 - Making connections -to yourselves, to other characters
 - Setting – what has likely happened to this character/person
 - Audience – who is it being written/sung for?
 - *How does music style and tone contribute to all of these items??*
- For secondary students:

HOLLY VALENTINE

SESSION
14CLOSE READING THROUGH
SONG & LYRIC ANALYSIS

- Jigsaw the stanzas. Break into groups and assign each group a section of the song. Don't show them the rest of the lyrics other than their own, and perhaps don't play the song yet.
- After students have closely read and pulled apart the lyrics, put the whole group together.
 - Does their thinking align?
 - When stanzas were in isolation, do they come across differently?
 - How does their thinking flow with the whole tone of the song when listened to?