



LITTLE KIDS ROCK LESSON MEMORY, HOPE, AND CHARLIE PUTH'S "SEE YOU AGAIN"

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How does music help us remember people we are close to, or those we have lost?

OVERVIEW

In the final scene of the film *Furious 7*, longtime friends Brian O’Conner (played by Paul Walker) and Dom Toretto (played by Vin Diesel) arrive at a fork in the road. Toretto heads back to his “fast and furious” lifestyle, but O’Conner chooses what for him is the divergent path, away from danger and adventure and toward a quieter, more stable life with his family. The emotion of the scene is heightened by Charlie Puth’s “See You Again,” a sentimental song about families, friendship, and difficult goodbyes. The scene is fictional, the song, less so.



Puth composed “See You Again” in memory of actor Paul Walker, who died in a car accident in November 2013, shortly after filming *Furious 7*. He wrote it in response to a call from film producers at Universal Pictures and soundtrack editors at Atlantic Records for songs that would pay tribute to Walker’s life. The winning song would be played at the end of the film.

At the time, Puth was a relative unknown in Los Angeles, and had little hope his song would be chosen. Yet, while the *Furious 7* producers received submissions from several marquee artists, the melody and the message of “See You Again” stood out. “The first time we heard it we knew this was the end song,” said producer Neal Moritz in a Los Angeles Times interview. “It had a sense of longing and sadness but it was also uplifting as well.”

Part of the sentimental pull of “See You Again” might have stemmed from Puth’s personal experience - he too had lost a friend to a car accident. But while the lyrics acknowledge loss, they also remain, as Moritz points out, “uplifting” in their acclamation of the power of memory and the possibility of reunion. On Genius.com, Puth recalls, “I thought to myself, ‘What would [film co-star] Vin Diesel’s last text message be to Paul Walker the moment he died?’ I decided it would be ‘I’ll tell you all about it when I see you again.’ ”

The final version of “See You Again,” which also featured several verses by rapper Wiz Khalifa, topped the Billboard charts for 12 weeks. The music video eclipsed previous Youtube



viewing records, and became the most-streamed song in a single day on Spotify. In this lesson, students use “See You Again” to consider the emotional power of song, and explore ways music might help people think about loved ones. Working in groups, students then discover other songs that have been written in memoriam to people, finally contemplating how songs might remind them of their own personal friends and loved ones.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):

- The stories related to the composition of the song “See You Again”
- How music and memory are related
- Historical examples of songs written in memorial to specific people

2. MASTERY OBJECTIVE:

- Students will be able to consider the role music plays in remembering friends and loved ones through media analysis and exploratory writing.

ACTIVITIES

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY:

1. Ask students to raise their hand if they know how to sing the “ABCs,” then ask:

- What do you think the purpose of the ABC song might be? (*Encourage students to reach the conclusion that the song helps children learn and remember the alphabet.*)
- In what ways do you think the ABC song might help children remember the alphabet?
- Do you think a song can help people remember other things, like places and people? Can you think of any examples of this type of song? (*Encourage students to consider other songs used for memory, such as how many days are in a month, or the parts of their skeletons, or if particular songs remind them of people or places.*)
- Have you ever used a song or music to help you remember something?



PROCEDURE:

1. Play some or all of the song "See You Again," or play the music video.

Ask students:

- a. Have you heard this song before? If so, where?
- b. What do you think the song might be about?
- c. Do you think there was a specific motivation behind the creation of this song?
- d. The video for this song has been viewed more than 1 billion times on Youtube. What do you think might have made it become so popular?

2. If students are not aware, explain that "See You Again" was written for Paul Walker, an actor from *Furious 7* who died in a car accident in 2013. After the accident, there was a competition to write a song that would pay tribute to him. Among many contestants, singer/songwriter Charlie Puth won the contest, and his song was featured at the end of *Furious 7*, the last film in which Walker starred. Ask students:

- a. Why do you think the producers of *Furious 7* felt a song would be a good way to memorialize Paul Walker?
- b. Do you think a song is an effective way to remember someone who is gone and/or to celebrate that person's life? Why or why not?
- c. Can you think of another song that also serves to remember someone? (*Students may or may not be aware of other tribute songs to people, here are ten examples from a 2016 NME article that may be helpful.*)

3. Play students this short excerpt from the Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young song "Ohio," and ask them to listen closely to the words. Ask students:

- a. What do you think this song is about? What does it seem to memorialize?

4. Explain to students that the following clip contains musician Graham Nash discussing the origin of the song "Ohio." Play Clip 1, and ask students:

- a. What motivated the creation of the creation of the song "Ohio." (*Encourage students to recognize that protesting Kent State College students were shot and killed by Ohio National Guard soldiers.*)
- b. Why do you think Graham Nash and his fellow musicians felt such urgency about quickly recording and releasing the song "Ohio?"
- c. What do you think "Ohio" memorializes? (*Encourage students to consider the event, the place, the people--what did they learn from the song all these years later?*)
- d. What do you think Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young hoped to accomplish by releasing "Ohio"?
- e. Can you think of any other instances for which someone may write a song that is a "memorial"? (*Encourage students to consider how many songs "memorialize" love that is lost, or relationships that have ended as well as tragic events such as 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, etc.*)

5. Have students get out a sheet of paper for a free writing exercise. The goal of free writing is to abandon the idea of a finished product (grammar, structure, etc.) and record thoughts as they happen. Have students write for a 3-5 minutes about a song that reminds of them of someone, someplace, or an event, real or imagined. Ask volunteers to share their responses with the class.



SUMMARY ACTIVITY

Ask Students:

- How might “See You Again” be similar or dissimilar to the song you wrote about in the free writing activity?
- In what ways do you think music is a good way to memorialize a person or an event? In what ways might music not work to this end?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- How might “See You Again” be similar or dissimilar to the song you wrote about in the free writing activity?
- Performing “See You Again,” means helping to keep Paul Walker’s legacy alive. How might you perform this song to emphasize this idea?

STANDARDS

NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS

Performing/Presenting/Producing

Anchor Standard #6: Convey meaning through the presentation of an artistic work

Responding

Anchor Standard #7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Anchor Standard #8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Anchor Standard #9: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

Connecting

Anchor Standard #10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

Anchor Standard #11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

College and Career Readiness Reading Anchor Standards for Grades 6-12 for Literature and Informational Text



Reading 4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Reading 6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening (K-12)

Speaking and Listening 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language (K-12)

Language 4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

SOCIAL STUDIES – NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES (NCSS)

Theme 1: Culture

Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change

Theme 4: Individual Development and Identity

Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance

Theme 9: Global Connections

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

Core Music Standard: Responding

Select: Choose music appropriate for a specific purpose or context.

Analyze: Analyze how the structure and context of varied musical works inform the response.

Interpret: Support interpretations of musical works that reflect creators' and/or performers' expressive intent.



Evaluate: Support evaluations of musical works and performances based on analysis, interpretation, and established criteria.

Core Music Standard: Connecting

Connecting 11: Relate musical ideas and works to varied contexts and daily life to deepen understanding.