

Making Connections between *Wuthering Heights* and Popular Music.

A LitTunes Lesson Plan Created by **Heather Jakobi**

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Type of Activity:

Individual, with small-group feedback.

Whole class presentations.

Approximate time:

Classroom Activity:

Four 75-minute periods.

Grades:

Grade 11 University Level English class (Canada).

11th and 12th grade Advanced Placement English (USA).

Overview:

After completing a study of the novel *Wuthering Heights*, students respond to several pop music songs in journal entries, explaining the connections between these songs and the novel. Next, referring to their journal entries, students return to the novel to find quotations and other specific evidence to support the connections they made. Then, they use their journal entries and quotations from the novel to develop a nomination speech for the song that they feel best fits one of the six categories of *The Heathys*.

In this way, students are thinking critically, as they would for a scholarly essay. They also use the evidence they find to persuade their classmates to support their *Heathy* nominations. The music serves as the vehicle for students to engage the themes of a complex classic novel.

Objectives:

◇ Students will extend their understanding of texts by making rich connections between the ideas in the novel and their personal knowledge, experience, and insights.

◇ Students will evaluate the effectiveness of texts using evidence to support their opinions by comparing songs with the novel.

◇ Students will communicate in a clear, coherent manner, using a structure and style effective for the purpose, subject matter, and intended audience.

Materials:

◇ Copies of *Wuthering Heights* for students. The novel should be completely read before this activity begins.

◇ Assignment sheet and rubric, which includes evaluation criteria for the Heathys.

NOTE: I built the rubric in conjunction with my students, so my sample is unfinished.

◇ Certificates (and prizes if appropriate) for the winners in each category.

◇ Pop songs discussing obsession, lost love, the dark side of human nature, death and decay, the power of revenge and hatred — any theme or motif that fits your study of the novel.

Here is a sample list of some of the songs I played for my students. They were suggested by my colleague, Stacie Oliver.

◇ “Iris” by the Goo Goo Dolls

◇ “When You’re Gone” by Avril Lavigne

◇ “I’ll Stand By You” by the Pretenders

◇ “My Immortal” by Evanescence

◇ “Welcome to the Black Parade” by My Chemical Romance

Feel free to alter your playlist to include songs relevant to your students. The five tunes listed here work effectively, but so will many others. What matters most is the act of having your students make connections between the songs and ideas in *Wuthering Heights*.

Also, you'll need copies of the song lyrics for your students. Lyrics for the five songs listed above are included as a downloadable handout at the end of this lesson.

Setup:

◇ Students must be finished reading the novel before doing this activity.

◇ Make arrangements to play the songs for students and have lyrics available.

Procedure:

1. With some fanfare, announce the upcoming awards event, *The Heathys*. Compare the event to the Grammys, but explain how it connects to *Wuthering Heights*. Introduce the categories that will be awarded for *The Heathys*:

- ◇ Thematic Connections
- ◇ Connections to Heathcliff
- ◇ Connections to Catherine
- ◇ Love Wins Eternal
- ◇ Revenge Reigns
- ◇ Strange Connections

2. Hand out the assignment sheet and develop a rubric with students for what makes good quality work for each part.

3. DAY ONE: Journal Responses

Play all songs, leaving about five minutes between each song for the students to respond.

Students respond in their journals about connections between the songs and *Wuthering Heights* — in terms of characterization, images, themes, setting, feeling, etc.

The in-class response can be written in point form — the teacher may choose to have students rewrite their responses in sentences for homework. I did have students write journal responses for ALL songs. I played 11 songs, and that was too much quantity, so next time I would emphasize quality and have students focus on only five responses.

4. DAY TWO: Finding Evidence

Students return to *Wuthering Heights*, finding quotations from the novel to support the connections they've made in their journal entries. The teacher may demand a quotation for each journal entry; I demanded at least one or two quotations for each of the five songs.

Students continue to narrow their choices to the song they will be nominating for a certain category; they choose their three favourite songs and write a well-organized persuasive paragraph for each one, using their evidence from the novel to support their argument.

5. **DAY THREE: Practice Nominations**

Students pick one of their three persuasive paragraphs and develop it into a SHORT nomination speech.

They practice this speech with a small group of two or three others, who use a feedback form to make suggestions. *NOTE: Copies of the feedback form are available as a download at the end of this lesson.*

6. **DAY FOUR: The Heathys**

With great fanfare, introduce the ceremony. Consider a red carpet, music — even costumes!

Category by category, students nominate their song for the *Heathy*. After each category, all students record their vote on a ballot.

At the end of the class, hand out the *Heathy* for each category. *SUGGESTION:* Designate a design committee of artistically gifted students to create a prize certificate for each *Heathy*. You can also download the sample *Heathy* certificate at the end of this lesson.

Extensions and Variations:

Consider allowing students to pick their own song if they can find one appropriate to the assignment.

This activity can be adapted to any class novel and any relevant songs. What matters most is the process of making connections, finding evidence to support those connections, and convincing others of one's point of view.

Heather Jakobi
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EDITOR'S NOTE:

Heather Jakobi has taught high school level English for ten years in Thames Valley District School Board in London, Ontario, Canada. She is now a Learning Coordinator - Literacy Grades 7-12 for the board of education and supports intermediate and secondary teachers in differentiating instruction, balanced literacy, instructional intelligence, and assessment and evaluation. Heather looks forward to returning to the classroom when her term finishes. To contact Heather, please email her at hjakobi@hotmail.com