



The Power of Music

Introduction

For millennia, music has had a deep and abiding role in human culture. It affects and reflects historical, social, ethnic, religious, philosophical, and aesthetic contexts and practices. This lesson asks students to consider the role that music has played – and continues to play – in the human experience, in society as a whole as well as in their individual lives.

The following songs all provide opportunity to reflect on these issues, and in particular how music might affect and reflect attitudes towards alcohol or other drugs. Some songs may contain language that some may find offensive. The intent of the lesson is to encourage students to consider how the messages in the music may influence their beliefs, attitudes or behaviours.

- Bloodstream (Ed Sheeran) [lyrics video](#)
- The A Team (Ed Sheeran) [lyrics video](#)
- Habits (Tove Lo) [lyrics video](#)
- Starting Over (Macklemore and Ryan Lewis featuring Ben Bridwell) [lyrics video](#)
- Rehab (Amy Winehouse) [lyrics video](#)
- Drink you away (Justin Timberlake) [lyrics video](#)
- Cheap Wine and Cigarettes (Jess Moskaluke) [lyrics video](#)
- Last Friday Night (T.G.I.F.) (Katy Perry) [lyrics video](#)
- Dr. Feelgood (Motley Crue) [lyrics video](#)
- Semi Charmed Life (Third Eye Blind) [lyrics video](#)
- Hurt (Johnny Cash) [lyrics video](#)
- King of Everything (Wiz Khalifa) [lyrics video](#)

Instructional strategies

1. Facilitate a general discussion about the importance and power of music. You may ask questions like:
 - a. How would you describe music? What does music mean to you?
 - b. Why is music able to affect us? Do you think it can have a powerful effect?
 - c. Is it only the words or is the music itself a kind of language? What would that mean?
 - d. Who benefits? Whose interests might be served by music? Can you give examples?
 - e. Can you give an example of music that affects you whenever you listen to it? In what ways do you connect with it?
2. Have students break into small groups and play the video of one of the songs listed above (or another song of your choice). You might want to ask students to close their eyes and think about the images that appear while listening to the song. Provide them with printed copies of the lyrics and ask them to discuss some of the following questions in their group:
 - a. What images did you think about while listening to this song?
 - b. Do the images you imagine influence you? What about the words? Which is more powerful? Do they work together?
 - c. How does the song portray the use of alcohol or other drugs, relationships, gender roles, etc.? Do you think this portrayal is accurate? What does accurate mean in this context?

Repeat the above exercise several times with other songs from the list.



3. Ask students to write the lyrics of a song that captures their view of how alcohol or some other drug impacts human relationships or their community.

Note to teachers:

The intent of this last exercise is to encourage students to express their own thoughts through the medium of music. If a student chooses to write a song that glorifies drugs, directly challenging the expressed views is not likely to be very helpful. And making assumptions based on those expressions has unfortunately led to some very hurtful responses in the past. A more helpful response is to adopt a position of genuine curiosity. You might begin by exploring examples with the student of where drugs have played such a positive role and ask if there are any counter examples where drug use has been problematic. Examples of musicians who have struggled with their substance use might provide a basis for positive conversation. The goal is always to help the student be truly reflective and intentional.

Drug literacy

Big ideas

- Drugs can be tremendously helpful and also very harmful.
- As humans, both individually and as communities, we need to learn how to manage the drugs in our lives.

Competencies

- Assess the complex ways in which drugs impact the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities and societies
- Explore and appreciate diversity related to the reasons people use drugs, the impact of drug use and the social attitudes toward various drugs
- Recognize binary constructs (e.g., good vs bad) and assess their limitation in addressing complex social issues like drug use
- Develop social and communication skills in addressing discourse and behaviour related to drugs
- Develop personal and social strategies to manage the risks and harms related to drugs

Links to Curriculum

First Peoples' Principles of Learning

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.
- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).
- Learning is embedded in memory, history and story.



English Language Arts 9

Big Ideas

- Exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and the world.
- Questioning what we hear, read and view contributes to our ability to be educated and engaged citizens.
- Texts are socially, culturally, and historically constructed.

Competencies

- Apply appropriate strategies to comprehend written, oral, and visual texts, guide inquiry, and extend thinking
- Recognize and appreciate how different forms, structures, and features of texts reflect different purposes, audiences, and messages
- Think critically, creatively, and reflectively to explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts
- Recognize and identify the role of personal, social, and cultural contexts, values, and perspectives in texts
- Recognize how language constructs personal, social, and cultural identity
- Construct meaningful personal connections between self, text, and world
- Respond to text in personal, creative, and critical ways
- Understand how literary elements, techniques, and devices enhance and shape meaning
- Exchange ideas and viewpoints to build shared understanding and extend thinking
- Use writing and design processes to plan, develop, and create engaging and meaningful literary and informational texts for a variety of purposes and audiences