



CMT Crossroads Sheryl Crow and Willie Nelson

**VH1 Music Studio
Cable in the Classroom**

Lesson for Music Classes, Grades 7-12

Lesson 3

Note to Teachers: The programs viewed in conjunction with these lesson plans may include references, consistent with the eras portrayed, to substance abuse, violent acts, and topics of a sexual and/or political nature. Because this may be considered inappropriate for classroom use in some communities, you are encouraged to review the programs before presenting them to your students, and if necessary, choose those sections that enhance your lesson and are acceptable for use in your classroom

Objective

Students will create song lyrics for two verses and one chorus.

Students will compare their song writing process to the process described by Willie Nelson and Sheryl Crow.

Students will discuss the experience of collaborating when creating song lyrics.

National Standards:

4 - Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines

6 - Listening to, analyzing, and describing music

9 - Understanding music in relation to history and culture

Materials

VHS VCR Player
Television
CMT Crossroads program, Sheryl Crow and Willie Nelson
Web-based lesson materials
Overhead projector
Transparency with teacher selected song lyrics
Pencils and paper

Prior Knowledge:

Students have previously viewed Segments 1 and 2 of the CMT program.

Procedures

Part I

1. As students enter the room, supply them with a blank piece of paper and a pencil if necessary.
2. When students are seated, read the selected song lyrics aloud. (Artists providing diverse lyric styles might include the Beatles, Paul Simon, Bob Dylan, the Beastie Boys and Buddy Holly.)
3. Direct student's attention to the overhead where the lyrics are projected. Have them identify the rhyme scheme, or lack thereof, and major themes in a number of the examples. The examples selected should have enough information in them for students to form an opinion about the theme.
4. Instruct students that they are to choose a theme such as relationships, love of a person or place, current events, favorite activities, etc. Have them work alone for about five minutes on creating one four-line verse of a song.
5. Ask students to reflect upon the following questions. This can take the form of a worksheet, a small group, or a class discussion.
 - Did you have a difficult time deciding on a theme?
 - Did you dismiss any ideas because you thought they wouldn't be right or interesting?
 - Were there any ideas you had but didn't write down because they seemed too private?
 - How creative did you feel when you were told to pick a theme and write?
 - Would you have felt more creative if you had not been given examples of lyrics at the beginning of class?
6. Show CMT Crossroads, Sheryl Crow and Willie Nelson, Segment 3, beginning and ending with the discussion between Crow and Nelson about songwriting. Ask students to take note of how each singer describes their inspiration and motivation.

7. Lead students in a class discussion on the following questions:

- How does Willie describe songwriting?
- How does Sheryl describe songwriting?
- What similarities are there between their processes? Differences?
- According to the interview, what inspires these two artists to write a song?
- Did they say anything that you experienced when you tried to write your own song?

8. Encourage students to give more thought to the lyric-writing process and their own experience in creating song lyrics. If students have written their comments, collect their work along with their lyric sheets.

Part II (for subsequent class period)

Additional Materials:

Lyrics sheet from one of the songs the students heard in Part I on Segment 3 of the “Crossroads” program.

Prior Knowledge:

Students have previously viewed Segments 1, 2, and 3 of the CMT program.

Procedures:

1. As students enter the class, return their lyrics sheets to them and supply them with a fresh piece of paper.
2. Have student read lyrics aloud from one of the songs that they heard in Segment 3 of the “Crossroads” program. Ask for volunteers to discuss the theme and rhyme scheme or any lyrics that particularly struck them.
3. Ask students to choose one or two people with whom they would like to collaborate on writing their lyrics. They may write the lyrics together or they may get advice on the ideas they are already working on. Allow students to collaborate for five minutes.
4. Ask students to reflect on the following questions:
 - Did you enjoy collaborating with others?
 - Were you more, or less, creative than when you worked alone?
 - Were you more, or less, productive than when you worked alone?
 - Why did/didn’t you enjoy working with others?
 - Given the choice, would you collaborate with others on a creative project? If so, why?
9. Show CMT Crossroads, Sheryl Crow and Willie Nelson, Segment 3, again, beginning and ending with the discussion between Crow and Nelson about songwriting. Ask students to take note of how each singer describes their inspiration and motivation.
5. Engage students in a small group discussion with the following prompts:
 - How does Willie describe the collaboration process? (He’s always learning.)
 - What does Sheryl compare collaboration to? (“Like playing tennis with a great player.”)
 - How do their responses compare to each other?

6. Bring class to a close by encouraging students to continue working on their lyrics by collaborating outside of class with their group members, or alone. Subsequent classes could be a continuation of the song writing process. Lyric sheets from songs that students have heard on the “Crossroads” program will be helpful throughout this process.

Lesson One is derived from *Strategies for Teaching: Middle-Level and High School Keyboard* (MENC: 1996).



These standards-based materials are provided through a partnership with MENC: The National Association for Music Education. This lesson plan provided by MENC member Melissa Harris, Trevor Day School, New York, NY.