

The Poetry Playlist

Analyzing Lyrics Like Literature

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Grade Level	12th Grade	**Time Frame**	250 Minutes
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	3-5 Periods

Essential Question

In what ways do song lyrics exhibit poetic qualities, and can they be considered a form of poetry?

Summary

In this lesson, students dive into the big question: Is music poetry? It starts with a fun sorting challenge where they guess whether lines come from poems or song lyrics. Then, they analyze real lyrics, debating what makes some feel more poetic than others. Through a hands-on annotation activity, they break down a song's poetic elements before comparing how different genres use lyrics. Finally, they choose a song of their own and make their case for why it should (or shouldn't) be considered poetry. By the end, students will have a deeper understanding of how poetry and music overlap—and maybe even rethink the way they listen to their favorite songs.

Snapshot

Engage

Students hear various lines from songs and poems and vote on whether the line comes from a poem or a song.

Explore

Students sort cards with song lyrics, deciding whether the lines are poetic or not.

Explain

Students annotate a song, looking for one specific poetic element and conversing with classmates to learn about the presence of other elements in the song.

Extend

Students analyze a song from a specific genre to compare it to those of other genres.

Evaluate

Students choose a song and create a presentation explaining whether their song could be considered poetry.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 12)

12.3.R.4: Evaluate how literary devices impact theme, mood, and/or tone, using textual evidence:
- figurative language (i.e., simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, imagery, symbolism)
- sound devices (i.e., onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance)
- irony (i.e., verbal, situational, dramatic)

Attachments

- Card Sort—The Poetry Playlist - Spanish.docx
- Card Sort—The Poetry Playlist - Spanish.pdf
- Card Sort—The Poetry Playlist.docx
- Card Sort—The Poetry Playlist.pdf
- Lesson Slides—The Poetry Playlist.pptx
- Presentation Note Catcher—The Poetry Playlist - Spanish.docx
- Presentation Note Catcher—The Poetry Playlist - Spanish.pdf
- Presentation Note Catcher—The Poetry Playlist.docx
- Presentation Note Catcher—The Poetry Playlist.pdf
- Songs for Analysis—The Poetry Playlist - Spanish.docx
- Songs for Analysis—The Poetry Playlist - Spanish.pdf
- Songs for Analysis—The Poetry Playlist.docx
- Songs for Analysis—The Poetry Playlist.pdf
- Songs for Genre Analysis—The Poetry Playlist - Spanish.docx
- Songs for Genre Analysis—The Poetry Playlist - Spanish.pdf
- Songs for Genre Analysis—The Poetry Playlist.docx
- Songs for Genre Analysis—The Poetry Playlist.pdf
- Speed Dating Note Catcher—The Poetry Playlist - Spanish.docx
- Speed Dating Note Catcher—The Poetry Playlist - Spanish.pdf
- Speed Dating Note Catcher—The Poetry Playlist.docx
- Speed Dating Note Catcher—The Poetry Playlist.pdf
- Speed Dating Profile —The Poetry Playlist - Spanish.docx
- Speed Dating Profile —The Poetry Playlist - Spanish.pdf
- Speed Dating Profile —The Poetry Playlist.docx
- Speed Dating Profile —The Poetry Playlist.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Card Sort (attached; one set per group)
- Songs for Analysis (attached; one per student)
- Songs for Genre Analysis (attached; one excerpt per student)
- Speed Dating Profile (attached; one per student)
- Speed Dating Note Catcher (attached; one per student)
- Presentation Note Catcher (attached; one per student)
- Highlighters

Engage

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to facilitate this lesson. Begin by showing **slides 2-4** to introduce the title of the lesson, the essential question, and the learning objectives. Emphasize that the essential question will be addressed throughout the lesson.

Use **slides 5-10** to guide the Walking Vote strategy activity. Present each line or lyric as a statement and ask students to predict whether the statement comes from a poem or a song. Students will walk to the left side of the room if they vote that it comes from a poem and the right side of the room if they vote that it comes from a song. After all students have voted, ask for students from each side to justify the reasoning for their choice. Next, reveal the answer on the slide and discuss the answer.

Teacher's Note: Choosing Different Songs and Poems

There are six lines from songs and poems provided in the slides. Depending on the needs of your students, you may want to change them or add additional lines.

Explore

Teacher's Note: Preparing for the Activity

Prior to the lesson, print and cut out the cards for the Card Sort.

Move to **slide 11** and explain the Card Sort strategy. Explain that in groups of 3-4 students, they will analyze pre-selected song lyrics to determine whether they exhibit poetic qualities. Share that students will be separating the cards into two groups: poetic or not poetic. As they sort the cards, ask students to discuss the following questions:

- What qualities make lyrics feel more like poetry?
- Are there specific elements—imagery, metaphor, rhythm, structure—that distinguish poetic lyrics?
- Were there any lyrics that were difficult to categorize? Why?

Once students have finished sorting the cards, lead a class discussion to justify and debate the blurred lines between poetry and lyrics.

Explain

Teacher's Note: Choosing a Song

Prior to beginning the activity, select one song for students to analyze. There are five song options on the **Songs for Analysis** handout (attached). Choose one of the songs and print copies so that each student has their own copy to annotate. Alternatively, choose a different song not provided that also has these poetic elements present.

Display **slide 12** and provide each student a copy of the pre-selected song. Explain that students will be evaluating the lyrics to one song looking for a specific poetic element. Using a modified version of the Categorical Highlighting strategy, explain that they will be put into six different groups and that each group will be looking for one poetic element.

Assign students randomly into the following groups:

- **Group 1: Imagery and Symbols** – Highlight words or phrases that create vivid pictures or represent deeper meanings.
- **Group 2: Figurative Language** – Highlight metaphors, similes, personification, etc.
- **Group 3: Sound Devices** – Highlight examples of rhyme, repetition, alliteration, or rhythm.
- **Group 4: Structure and Line Breaks** – Highlight areas where the song's formatting (e.g., line breaks, stanza structure, or pauses) affects meaning.
- **Group 5: Tone and Mood** – Highlight words that establish the song's emotional effect or overall attitude.
- **Group 6: Theme and Message** – Highlight key lines that suggest the song's deeper meaning, lesson, or central idea.

After the groups have had enough time to annotate the song lyrics highlighting their assigned poetic element, move to **slide 13** and explain the Jigsaw strategy. Rearrange groups so that there are new groups of six, with one student from each of the categories. Each person becomes the expert of their assigned poetic element. Within the new groups, prompt students to lead conversations regarding their elements. Provide time for each student to share some of the lines they highlighted that were excellent examples of their assigned element. After each student has had time to share, ask groups to lead conversations regarding the following questions:

- How do poetic elements interact in the song?
- Which poetic elements make the lyrics feel poetic versus not-so-poetic?

Have students from each group share some of the main details they discussed with the class, specifically in regard to how each of the poetic elements interacted with one another.

Teacher's Note: Optional Timing

In order to ensure all students get adequate time to speak during the Jigsaw activity, consider posting a timer with a pre-established amount of time for each student to speak. As the timer ends, prompt the groups to switch to the next speaker and restart the timer with the same amount of time. Continue restarting the timer until all students have spoken within their groups.

Extend

Teacher's Note: Preparing for the Activity

The **Songs for Genre Analysis** attachment includes five excerpts of songs from each of the five genres. If your class size requires groups to have more than five students, you may want to find additional songs so that each student within each genre is assigned their own individual excerpt.

Move to **slide 14**. Explain that students will now analyze song lyrics from various genres. Explain that they will explore how poetry appears across musical styles and whether certain genres are more poetic than others. Provide each student a copy of the **Speed Dating Profile** and the **Speed Dating Note Catcher** handouts (attached). Introduce the Concept Speed Dating strategy and explain that they will be "dating" different genres in this activity.

To begin, students will be broken into five different groups with each being assigned one genre. Provide each genre group as many song excerpts from that genre as there are students in the group so that all students have different songs. Prompt students to read through their excerpts and fill out their "Dating Profile" according to what they read in their excerpt, noting how poetic it is, the elements of poetry present, the structure of the lyrics, what the artist prioritizes in the lyrics, and patterns between lines.

When students have completed their "Dating Profile," inform them that they will now be "dating" other genres. Prompt students to find a partner from a different genre. Using the timer on slide 14, tell students that they will have 30 seconds to share with their partner the key information they wrote down about their song. When time is up, the second partner will do the same. As they listen to their partner, students should be writing down the poetic elements of the genre on their handout and determining how compatible their genre is with their partner's genre. Next, have students find a new partner from a different genre and repeat this process. Continue finding new partners until all students have met with all five genres.

Move to **slide 15** and lead a conversation regarding compatibility of genres, focusing on poetic elements and other key details from their speed dating experience.

Evaluate

Display **slide 16** and explain that students will demonstrate their learning by presenting a chosen song and defending why it should or should not be considered poetry. Inform students that they will be doing a modified version of the 30 Second Spotlight in which they will have 3 minutes to present their slides.

Explain to students that they need to choose a song that they believe to be explicitly poetic or not poetic. After choosing a song, they will create a slideshow presentation in which they address:

- Why they chose their specific song
- At least three poetic elements they identified in the lyrics
- A justification of whether this song should or shouldn't be considered poetry
- (Optional) A YouTube video of their song

Next, students will present their slideshow to the class. Provide each student a copy of the **Presentation Note Catcher** handout (attached) and explain that they have up to 3 minutes to present. As their peers present, ask students to take notes on their handout and rank how poetic the songs their peers chose are.

Teacher's Note: Optional Playlist of Songs

Consider creating a playlist of the songs that students have chosen to share with the class as they present. Alternatively, ask students to include a YouTube video of the song in their slideshow presentation.

Resources

K20 Center. (n.d.). 30 second spotlight. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/3748

K20 Center. (n.d.). Card sort. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/147

K20 Center. (n.d.). Categorical highlighting. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/192

K20 Center. (n.d.). Concept speed dating. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/3330

K20 Center. (n.d.). Jigsaw. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/179

K20 Center. (2021, September 21). K20 Center timers. [Playlist]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.complaylist?list=PL-aUheQeaZXLMF3fltNDxiuSkEr0pq0c2

K20 Center. (2021, September 21). K20 Center 30 second timer. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9ViOMe_Wnk&list=PL-aUhEQeaZXLMF3fltNDxiuSkEr0pq0c2&index=1

K20 Center. (2021, September 21). K20 Center 3 minute timer. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilSP02KPau0&list=PL-aUhEQeaZXLMF3fltNDxiuSkEr0pq0c2&index=6

K20 Center. (n.d.). Walking vote. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/4126