

SOUNDS LIKE TORONTO

Sampling in Music and Writing

Grade 10 or 11: English

Guiding Question: How does sampling translate to writing?

Description

This lesson can act as a short unit in which students are asked to identify and critically reflect on “sampling” in music and translate this to writing, ultimately resulting in intertextual poems.

The timing, content, and delivery of the following lesson should be shaped according to your timetable, class length, and age of participants. Please adjust, edits, and/or additions as you and your students see fit.

Materials: projector or handouts of lyrics, smart board/projector to show music videos, paper for student compositions, writing utensils

Introduction/Minds On

Open discussion questions for students to start thinking about sampling:

- What does it mean to sample music? Can you think of examples?
- With partners or in small groups, can you find examples of sampling in the music you listen to?

Can you think of writing examples that might sample other writing?

Definition of sampling: the technique of using a portion (a sample) of existing recorded music to make a new recording/composition.

This now commonly used technique is considered to have been created, developed and mastered by early hip hop artists. Find examples of this technique being used in the music you listen to.

Small Group Discussion/Tasks

- Do you think it is fair to use a portion of someone else’s music?
- Research an example of sampling copyright infringement.

This can be a way for any of us to look at what’s been done, the art that already exists, to re-appropriate it (respectfully), and reclaim it as our own through sampling and remixing it with our own lives, whether that’s through words, sounds, or images. Today we will look specifically at words in written/spoken texts while listening to the music that the words accompany. Together, look at the exhibition links to Maestro’s performances at the [Concert Hall](#) and [Blue Rodeo](#).

In writing, this technique is called intertextuality: using a portion of an existing text to create a new written composition or making references to another text within your own writing to deepen, expand, or amplify possible interpretations. Read Toronto poet Hoa Nguyen's poem "Strummer" from her poetry collection *Violet Energy Ingots* (left). Then compare with the lyrics to [Fleetwood Mac's song "SecondHandNews."](#)

Strummer

with apologies to Lindsay Buckingham

"Let the wolves run free" (moon)

Washed my hair Spanish crocus
Serpent-bender stepping
 on a heart fire

She said something about danger faces

Dear Kimberley –
I have asked for days
 my empty blues
 and leaves trees in the rain

There's the tall tall grass
I've lain down in it
 doing my stuff

Group Discussion Questions

What does the reference to Second Hand News add to Nguyen's poem?

She hasn't directly quoted the lyrics, and instead places them in the past tense.

- In what ways does this change the original meaning of the song?
- How does it serve the poem?

Try approaching the poem on the level of sound, instead of meaning.

- Do parts of the poem feel slow or fast, melodic or dissonant?
- How does sound contribute to meaning in a poem?

Body/Action

Activity/ Assignment: Intertextual poems

The following focuses on [Maestro's \(formerly Maestro Fresh Wes\) "Reach for the Sky."](#)

In this song [Maestro samples Blue Rodeo's "Try"](#) (optional listening)

Listen to Maestro's "Reach for the Sky" again on your headphones (alone or with a partner). Consider the following questions.

- How is the Blue Rodeo sample used?
- How do the lyrics interact with the sample?

Consider the sample as a:

- "hook": An element of melody, lyrics, chords, or rhythm that attracts the listeners' attention by standing out from the texture ("catch the ear")
- "refrain" - A phrase or set of lines that appears at the end/between sections of a poem and emphasizes a main idea

Listen again.

We are going to create our own intertextual poems by sampling lyrics of another Canadian artist. Together, look at the exhibition link for [K'naan](#)

Students read the lyrics and listen to K'naan's song "Wavin' Flag" (below are two different versions of this song, each with its own lyrics. The teacher will have to decide which version best suits their students.)

Option 1:

- Version One - [K'naan - Wavin' Flag \(Original Song\)](#)
 - Annotated lyrics - [Wavin' Flag K'naan; Produced by Kerry "Krucial" Brothers & Bruno Mars](#)
- OR

Option 2:

- Version Two - K'NAAN - [Wavin' Flag \(Coca-Cola Celebration Mix\)](#)
- Annotated Lyrics - [Wavin' Flag \(Coca-Cola Celebration Mix\) K'naan; Produced by Kerry Brothers & Bruno Mars](#)

Tasks (Homework or in class)

Students write an approximately 250-word paragraph about dreams they have for themselves.

Possible guiding question: Write about 5, 10, 20 years into your future – What do you want/dream of?

Consolidation

Students sample the lyrics of “Wavin’ Flag” with their own paragraph of their dreams. Students should have 1. A copy of the lyrics (the version chosen by the teacher) and 2. Their 250- word paragraph about dreams they have for themselves.

Students go through K’naan lyrics to find a circle or underline possible samples/hooks/refrains that might fit with their written paragraph.

Students can interject this K’naan sample into their own paragraph. They may wish to physically cut and paste both their lyrics and the K’naan sample together. Students may also need to consider editing their own paragraph for better flow and clarity. Type up or write out this final version of the intertextual poem, edit, and share the poems.

Students are invited to share their pieces with a partner or small group of peers. Discuss what this activity felt like. Students can also choose a song or text that’s not K’naan’s but exists in their own lives they would want to sample and remix with their 250-word paragraph about dreams they have for themselves. (Examples might be a favourite song, poem, passage from a beloved novel etc.). This is an optional additional activity.

Another possible example for sampling and/or remix K’Naan’s remix of [Bob Dylan’s “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall”](#)

A Tribe Called Red’s remix of [Buffy Sainte-Marie's "Working for the Government" \(2008\)](#)

Further inquiry section:

How might sampling be done respectfully? Can you imagine times when artists should not sample? Research to find occurrences when artists were sampled and did not wish to be (e.g. copyright infringement).

Assessment

The work produced in this lesson does not need to be formally assessed (assessment of, evaluated), however, here are some suggestions for doing so.

If you wish to evaluate this work (assessment “of”) it is suggested that you co-create success criteria along with students.

1. Brainstorm
2. Sort and Categorize
3. Make and post a T-chart
4. Add, revise, refine

From Gregory, K, Cameron, C., & Davis, A. (2011). *Knowing What Counts: Setting and Using Criteria*
A sample of Success Criteria (with rubrics) are given below for reference
See below for curriculum expectations covered a sample of student created success criteria.

Sample Rubric

Criteria for Remix poems	4	3	2	1
Application of the creative process (evidence of generating ideas, reflection, revision, imagining, experimenting)				
Transfer of previous skills and knowledge (use of figurative and descriptive language)				
Effective word choice and use of syntax				
Creative (unique end product)				
Analysis (evidence of editing and effort in creating a unique piece of writing)				

CURRICULUM

ENG2D/P, ENG3U/C/E

Listening: Listening to Understand

- 1.1 identify the purpose of a variety of listening tasks and set goals for specific tasks
- 1.5 develop and explain interpretations of oral texts, including increasingly complex texts, using evidence from the text and the oral and visual cues used in it to support their interpretations
- 1.6 extend understanding of oral texts, including increasingly complex texts, by making connections between the ideas in them and personal knowledge, experience, and insights; other texts; and the world around them
- 1.8 identify and analyze the perspectives and/or biases evident in oral texts, including

increasingly complex texts, and comment on any questions they may raise about beliefs, values, identity, and power

Reading: Reading for Meaning

- 1.1 read a variety of student- and teacher-selected texts from diverse cultures and historical periods, identifying specific purposes for reading
- 1.3 identify the most important ideas and supporting details in texts, including increasingly complex texts
- 1.5 extend understanding of texts, including increasingly complex texts, by making appropriate connections between the ideas in them and personal knowledge, experience, and insights; other texts; and the world around them
- 1.6 analyze texts in terms of the information, ideas, issues, or themes they explore, examining how various aspects of the texts contribute to the presentation or development of these elements

Writing: Using Knowledge of Form and Style

- 2.1 write for different purposes and audiences using a variety of literary, graphic, and informational forms
- 2.2 establish a distinctive voice in their writing, modifying language and tone skillfully to suit the form, audience, and purpose for writing
- 2.3 use appropriate descriptive and evocative words, phrases, and expressions to make their writing clear, vivid, and interesting for their intended audience
- 2.5 explain how their own beliefs, values, and experiences are revealed in their writing