

SOUNDS LIKE TORONTO

Writing and Editing

Grade 12 – English

Guiding question: How do we write and edit a poem?

Description

This lesson offers students the chance to read/ listen to a song, look at someone else’s editing, and then write and edit their own poem.

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

Further inquiries and other artists you may include are suggested below.

Materials: projector or handouts of lyrics, speakers to listen to music, paper for student compositions, writing utensils.

Introduction/Minds On

Open discussion questions for students to start thinking about composing lyrics. What might an artist be inspired by when writing lyrics for a song? In small groups students can discuss:

- What, they imagine, inspires the lyrics of artists they enjoy listening to
- What can be inferred about an artist’s politics via their lyrics?
- What inspires them in their own lives? What has recently been surprising in a positive or negative way?

Body/Action

Activity/ Assignment:

Read the biographical information about [Joni Mitchell](#) on the Sounds Like Toronto website. There is a short story about what inspired [Michell’s song “Big Yellow Taxi”](#)

Writing poems inspired by Joni Mitchell’s song “Big Yellow Taxi” (1970)

Listen to Joni Mitchell’s song “Big Yellow Taxi” while following along with the lyrics projected. [Lyrics are on Joni Mitchell’s website:](#)

- What can you infer about Joni Mitchell’s position and politics through this song’s lyrics and

tune? (Consider what you can deduce about her personal experiences, beliefs, and socio-cultural contexts, etc.)

Take notes

Imagine your own neighborhood, city, or a place you are familiar with. Take notes on things that have changed or are changing since you were born (or even since your parents were born)

- a) What has changed? If nothing has changed in your lifetime, imagine how it changed before you were born? Peel back the layers until you're left with trees and dirt... What was the agriculture? Plants? Animals? Insects?
- b) Has any natural space/place been altered and in what ways?
- c) Fill in the blanks: "They _____ paradise and _____"
- d) What has disappeared and where has it gone? Likewise, what has appeared in its place and where has that come from?
- e) Finish this sentence: "Don't it always seem to go _____"
- f) Relatedly, is there someone in your life who used to be present but is no longer there, describe this departure. Mitchell's song has two instances of someone the speaker loves leaving. She sings, "Late last night/ I heard the screen door slam/ And a big yellow taxi/ Took away my old man..."
- g) Think of what you've seen in museums (even the AGO and the ROM). Imagine something from your day to day life that would seem silly in a museum or art gallery and put it there. You can even use this phrasing: "We took _____ and put it _____"
- h) Include a colour somewhere (it doesn't have to be yellow)
- i) Is there a common practice or accepted law you disagree with? (Mitchell sings about not wanting DDT (a pesticide) and instead wants imperfect looking apples)
- j) Mitchell laughs at the end of her poem, maybe you could include a joke or sarcastic line
- k) Don't forget to title your poem!

Write a poem!

Once you've taken some notes, compile your observations into a poem. The line breaks and punctuation are up to you and whether or not this rhymes is optional (rhyming is not recommended since this often takes away from other/ better possibilities).

Editing poems via conferencing with peers

Once students have their poems, they are invited to share them in small groups of 2-4 students. One student reads, the others listen and can write down feedback while the poet reads, they then share this feedback. Each poet gets 5-8 minutes of feedback (these are short pieces). When listening to the poet's poem, the peers should be listening to see if they have any constructive feedback. Constructive feedback means the poet can take what you say and edit (that is perhaps reconstruct) their poem.

Once a person reads a poem offer feedback. Feel free to use this checklist:

- Thank the person for sharing their poem! (It's a brave thing to share art you've made)
- Consider the title, if you don't think it's the best title for this piece offer a suggestion of what could replace it.
- Does the grammar work?
- Are there confusing moments that cause the reader to be confused? How could this be cleared up?
- Are the lines in the right order? Should some things be moved around?
- What is the strongest part of the piece? This could be a favourite line or something more general like the topic or theme or character.

Task (homework or in class)

Students: Take this feedback from conferencing with peers and make changes you see fit to your poem! Remember, this feedback you've collected are just suggestions. This is your piece! The final decisions on changes to the piece are made by you the poet!

Further inquiry section:

How might your poem be received by people who also know this area (in your neighbourhood, city, or other place you wrote about) react to your poem? Would they agree? Would they have something to add to your poem?

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

We have listed curriculum expectations for Grade 12: The Writer’s Craft below, however this work could easily be adapted for other grades and/or subjects.

Expectations for Grade 12 The Writer’s Craft:

A. INVESTIGATING WRITING

1. Writing, Writers, and the Writing Life: demonstrate an understanding of writing as an art, a craft, and a career as they explore the work of a variety of Canadian and international writers.

1.3 analyse the ways in which writers use elements of form

1.5 explain various ways in which works by selected writers from Canada and around the world are influenced by the writers’ personal experiences, beliefs, and socio-cultural contexts

B. PRACTISING WRITING

1. Exploring Ideas, Forms, and Styles: generate and experiment with ideas about writing content, forms, and styles

1.1 generate and explore ideas for potential writing projects independently through reflection, reading, listening, viewing, and research

1.2 use text forms and stylistic elements in experimental ways to develop a personal writing style

2. Drafting and Revising: organize, draft, and revise their writing, employing forms and stylistic elements appropriate for their purpose and audience

2.1 select and organize ideas and information to draft texts appropriate for the purpose and audience

2.2 use appropriate text forms and stylistic elements to communicate ideas and experiences effectively in their writing

2.3 revise drafts by reviewing and refining content, form, and stylistic elements to produce clear, coherent, and effective written work

3. Editing, Proofreading, and Publishing: use editing, proofreading, and publishing skills and strategies to refine and polish their work

3.1 edit and proofread their written work, applying the conventions of spelling, usage, punctuation, and grammar correctly and appropriately

4. Collaborative Writing: collaborate in the writing process with peers by generating ideas, responding to peers' work, and assessing peers' work in a workshop setting.

4.1 generate and explore ideas for potential writing projects collaboratively through brainstorming and other discussions with a partner or as a group in a workshop setting

4.2 provide constructive feedback to peers on works in progress by working with a partner or as a group in a workshop setting

4.3 assess peers' written drafts, working with a partner or as a group in a workshop setting, to aid peers in their revision process

C. REFLECTING ON WRITING

1. Metacognition: identify their strengths as writers and areas where they could improve, and assess the growth and development of their own writing style.

1.1 identify and explain specific creative choices they have made during the writing process to help them better understand the art of writing