A Teacher’s Guide to
Using Popular Songs to Teach English

Nora Mitchell, MA TESOL
CATESOL Conference
October 20, 2017
nora@englishwithnora.com
Listen again while reading the lyrics below and circle the correct word in each line.

1. Is it (setting/getting) better
2. Or do you (feel/heel) the same?
3. Will it make it (please/easier) on you, now
4. You (got/get) someone to blame?

5. You (pay/say) one love, one life
6. When it’s one need in the (fight/night)
7. One love, we get to (share/care) it
8. (Leaves/please) you, baby, if you don’t care for it

9. Did (I/he) disappoint you
10. Or leave a (sad/bad) taste in your mouth?
11. You act like you (ever/never) had love
12. And you (won’t/want) me to go without

13. Well, it’s too late (tonight/to fight)
14. To drag the (past/last) out into the light
15. We’re one, but we’re not the (same/shame)
16. We get to (carry/marry) each other,
   (carry/marry) each other
17. One

18. Have you come (there/here) for
   forgiveness?
19. Have you come to (raise/promote) the dead?
20. Have you come here to (pray/play) Jesus
21. To the lepers in your (head/bed)?

22. Did I (ask/task) too much? More than a lot
23. You gave (me/thee) nothing, now it’s all I
   got

24. We’re one, but we’re not the (same/shame)
25. Well, we (hurt/flirt) each other, then we do
   it again

26. You say love is a (sample/temple), love a
   higher law
27. Love is a temple, love the higher
   (law/flaw)
28. You ask me to enter, but then you make
   me (brawl/crawl)
29. And I can’t be (scolding/holding) on to
   what you got
30. (When/Then) all you got is hurt

31. One (love/dove), one blood
32. One (life/fight), you got to do what you
   should
33. One (life/fight) with each other
34. Sisters, brothers
35. One life, but we’re not the (blame/same)
36. We get to (carry/marry) each other,
   (carry/marry) each other
37. One
38. One
39. Ooh-ooh-ooh
40. Oh-oh
41. May we, may we, may we get
42. Higher
43. Oh, higher
44. Ay, yeah, go higher
45. Oh higher
"Your Song"

**By Elton John**

**Listening**

**How would you describe this song? Take a survey.**

Fill out the form while listening to the song.  
1 = not at all  
5 = very much  
Circle the number of your choice.

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<td>makes me want to dance</td>
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<td>I want to hear it again</td>
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<td>I would give it to a friend</td>
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I think the person singing is:

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<td>I would like to meet the singer</td>
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<td>I can imagine saying the words to someone</td>
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**Speaking**

**C** Compare your answers on the survey, your reactions to the song, with your partner.
Listening

It’s a little bit funny, this feeling inside
I’m not one of those who can easily hide
I don’t have much money, but boy if I did
I’d buy a big house where we both could live
If I was a sculptor, but then again, no
Or a man who makes potions in a traveling show
I know it’s not much, but it’s the best I can do
My gift is my song, and this one's for you
And you can tell everybody this is your song
It may be quite simple, but now that it’s done
I hope you don’t mind, I hope you don’t mind that I put down in words
How wonderful life is while you’re in the world
I sat on the roof and kicked off the moss
Well, a few of the verses, well, they’ve got me quite cross
But the sun’s been quite kind while I wrote this song
It’s for people like you that keep it turned on
So excuse me forgetting, but these things I do
You see I’ve forgotten if they’re green or they’re blue
Anyway the thing is what I really mean
Yours are the sweetest eyes I’ve ever seen
And you can tell everybody this is your song
It may be quite simple, but now that it’s done
I hope you don’t mind, I hope you don’t mind that I put down in words
How wonderful life is while you’re in the world
I hope you don’t mind, I hope you don’t mind that I put down in words
How wonderful life is while you’re in the world

Directions:
Cut lyrics into strips for each student or each pair of students. Mix up the order of the strips before giving to students.
Listen to the song while students work alone or together to place strips in the correct order.
Part Two

A Teacher's Guide to Developing Music-Based Materials

The following guide illustrates how teachers can quickly and easily develop materials for English lessons based on popular songs.

1. Select Songs
2. Find Lyrics
3. Identify vocabulary
4. Developing exercises
5. Have fun, sing!

1. Select Songs

Survey students

Survey students early in the session to find their favorite songs in English. If you pass out a needs analysis form for your new class, be sure to ask on the form what their favorite song is in English. Building lessons around students' favorite music makes the lessons more meaningful, authentic and current.

Build playlists

Once you have students' favorite songs, build a playlist in your favorite music service. Spotify is popular and easy to use, but there are others, such as Apple Music, Google Play, and Amazon Prime Music. Then you can easily listen to the playlist during your commute, housecleaning or dog walking, and make note of the songs that would be most appropriate for use in a lesson.
Select appropriate songs
Not all songs will work in a classroom setting. Be sure the songs you select follow these guidelines:

1. Lyrical complexity—Lyrics are challenging and contain appropriate vocabulary
2. Musical appeal—The song has a catchy tune, easy to sing along to
3. Lyrical clarity—Lyrics are easy to hear and easily understood
4. Lyrical appropriateness—Lyrics are appropriately challenging for the level of the course
5. Cultural context—The artist does not offend cultural groups
6. Educational appropriateness—Both the song and the artist are a reasonable fit for educational purposes
7. Cultural fit—The song and the artist fit the cultural ideals of students’ native culture

2. Find Lyrics
To get a closer look at song lyrics and to be sure they're appropriate, go to genius.com and search for the song. Then click on the gray highlighted text in the lyrics to read about the meaning of the lines.

There are other good websites for lyrics such as play.google.com and azlyrics.com, however there are no explanations, just lyrics. Or, simply do a search for the song name and the word "lyrics."

3. Identify Vocabulary
Once you've decided a song is a good fit for your class, review the lyrics with an eye towards selecting vocabulary you think your students might not know. Generally, four to ten words make a good short vocabulary lesson. Also, keep an eye out for idioms that may not be clear to students.
A Teacher's Guide to Developing Music-Based Materials

ONE LYRICS

[Verse 1]
Is it getting better
Or do you feel the same?
Will it make it easier on you, now
You got someone to blame?

[Chorus]
You say one love, one life
When it’s one need in the night
One love, we get to share it
Leaves you, baby, if you don’t care for it

[Verse 2]
Did I disappoint you
Or leave a bad taste in your mouth?
You act like you never had love
And you want me to go without

[Chorus]

vocabulary idiom
4. Developing Exercises

Vocabulary
There are great resources online to contribute to vocabulary lessons. There are many sites that build fun activities—here are two. With wordclouds.com you can paste in the lyrics to a song and make a colorful display of the words with the more frequent words larger than the less frequent. You can also edit the words included, if you want to delete or add any that don't appear. At puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com you can build word search and other fun word puzzles, quickly and easily.
Listening
An easy and fun listening exercise is a cloze, also known as a gap fill. lyricstraining.com is the best site to use to quickly create cloze exercises with song lyrics for your students.

Search for the song, then click on the printer icon in the lower left side of the screen, "print lyrics," to find the cloze builder. The lyrics display and you can simply select the words you want omitted, then print. You can also print/save it as a pdf, so you keep the electronic file for future use. You can choose to include the omitted words in a wordbank, which is a good idea for lower level classes. You can choose to have the line index showing, numbering the lines of the song, which is helpful when guiding students during the listening activity. Be sure to also print the full lyrics of the song as the answer key for yourself. Once you print the full lyrics, highlight the words that were omitted for the students.

Play the song through once for the students, then play it again stopping at the end of each line so the students can call out the missing word. If you or the students are getting lost, the line index is helpful.
Pronunciation
Once you've printed your answer key of the song lyrics, review it for opportunities to teach pronunciation concepts, and make notes on the key. That way, as you go through the song line by line with students, after the gap fill exercise, you can also point out relevant pronunciation points. If you've recently been teaching a particular aspect of pronunciation, highlight occurrences in the lyrics and have students practice saying them.

Speaking
The most obvious classroom activity when learning English through music is to sing along to the song. But, song lyrics also bring forth a wide range of topics for pairs or group discussion. Ask students to discuss the meaning of the song, the mood of the song, and particular details that might be relevant to their lives.

Grammar
Whereas English language materials centered on popular songs are rare, grammar materials abound. Identify elements of grammar in the song lyrics you've selected and then find exercises from your favorite grammar sources to accompany the music-based lesson.

Writing
An easy extension exercise to do in class or for homework is to have students write an additional verse of the song. Give them clear instructions on how many lines to include and how to start the verse. Here is a particularly entertaining example of a student's homework, extending the song "Imagine" by John Lennon, includes student errors:

Imagine there's no homework  
It would be easy skip a class  
No more quizlets below us  
Above us only our partiee :)  
Imagine also our teachers  
Dancing for whole night :)

And a more serious rendition by another student:

Imagine there's no music  
How would life be?  
They might say it'll be boring  
But I don't agree at all  
I would say it'll be empty  
And the world won't be the same
5. Have fun, sing!

Youtube.com is an excellent resource for music videos. Be sure to preview videos to ensure the content is appropriate for your class. Not all music videos are. Even if the lyrics to a song are rather tame, the video could bring additional imagery that might not be appropriate.

Sing!

Most world cultures enjoy singing. It's Americans who tend to be self-conscious about singing aloud. So, don't hesitate to sing along to the song at the end of a lesson. You'll be surprised how engaged your students will be. Just model self-confidence and you'll all be signing up a storm.