OKLAHOMA Arts COUNCIL

Oklahoma Arts Council
Performing Arts Corps- Songwriting
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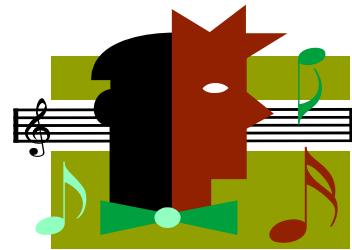
"I'd like to emphasize...
A good song need not be a hit song on the radio. For
example: "Happy Birthday" is one of the simplest songs
there is; and one of the most successful.

Students and teachers may want to write songs together
to help remember facts from their lessons, or to help
negotiate transition times during the day."
    ~Monty Harper

"To me, the greatest pleasure of writing is not what it's about, but the music the
words make."
    ~Truman Capote

OAC Performing Art Corps – Songwriting

Songwriting Introduction

- The PAC artist will use the following principles and keys to the art of Song-writing to define and demonstrate. Students will identify and/or employ these principles and keys by participating in activities that will provide practice and exhibit understanding. **This curriculum is designed to support in the fulfillment of the Oklahoma State Department of Education's PASS requirements for Language Arts.**

Songwriting Principles and Keys

- **Prosody**- The melding together of words and music. The use of Prosody determines how effectively and creatively a message is communicated. Prosody may be manipulated through:
  - Pronunciation of words
  - Emphasis of syllables
  - Emphasis of words in a phrase
  - ✓ Prosody can determine Mood & Emotion
  - ✓ Mood & Emotion can determine Prosody

- **Audience/Purpose**
  - Songs differ for different purposes & audiences
  - What are the various things a song can be asked to do?

- **Titles/Topics**
  - What makes a good topic for a song?
  - What makes a good title?
  - What is the main Focus of the song?

- **Structure**- The way that the various parts of the song fit together.
  - A (single verse)
  - AAA (multiple verses with an identical melody, but different words)
  - ABAB (verse/chorus) (chorus 1 & 2 have thee same words and melody)
  - ABABCB (verse/chorus/bridge) (bridge has a totally new melody and words.)
  - AABA (verse/bridge) (verse sections have same melody but different words.)
  - Cumulative & Zipper songs (special structures often found in children's songs)

OAC Performing Art Corps – Songwriting

- **Point of View/Attitude-** The specific voice in which the song is sung. Who is singing and what are they singing about?

    o Persona- character, mask, or personality
    o 1st person
    o 2nd person
    o 3rd person

- **Lyrics**- The words of a song
    o Meter- The phrasing or rhythm of the words in a line
    o Rhyme- Two or more corresponding words that begin with different sounds, but end with same sound
    o Alliteration, Assonance- Repetition of consonant sounds/ the repetition of vowel sounds.
    o Colorful language, Simile, Metaphor- Descriptions and comparisons
    o Devices- Structure or series of phrases you repeat to build a song. A language pattern that repeats.

- **Melody**- sequences of pitches and rhythm strung together

    o Phrase/Motif- A repeated section of melody
    o Repetition- Something that is done over and over again. The use of the same motif more Than once, possibly transposed up or down the scale
    o Resolution- The way in which the last note or notes of a melody add a feeling of ending to a song or section. It's like the period on the end of a sentence… or a comma, or an exclamation point!

- **Process**

    o Pre-writing, writing, feedback, polishing (see Songwriting for Kids outline.)

OAC Performing Art Corps – Songwriting

Outcomes

- ✓ Students will identify various keys and principles to creative songwriting
- ✓ Students will demonstrate the use of various keys and principles of songwriting to write their own individual songs.
- ✓ Students will expand their use of vocabulary as well as the expressive and creative use of vocabulary.
- ✓ Students will begin to employ songwriting techniques to the memorization and comprehension skills and apply them to a variety of subjects.
- ✓ Students will learn and experience a lot all in the fun of songwriting.

Performance

- Mr. Harper will demonstrate all of the above songwriting concepts with original songs and music.
- Mr. Harper will provide brief explanations of things for students to listen for during the performance.
- Mr. Harper will provide opportunities for brief discussion, questions and answers.

Teaching Resources

- Writing a Song activities (Appendix A)
- Songwriting with Kids- PDF (Appendix B)
- The Art of Critique- PDF (Appendix C)
- Write a Song- PowerPoint (Appendix D)

OAC Performing Art Corps – Songwriting

Songwriting Activities

- **"Writing a Song"-** 30-50 minutes
  - Work with students to collectively write a short song.
  - Beginning with **Prosody**, demonstrate the Brainstorming process by generating examples on the fly, based on student input. (These examples can be set aside for possible use later.)
  - Discuss the **Purpose** of the song that you will write together.
    - This should generate one or two ideas for songs the class can use.
    - Steer the class toward an idea that the class can use either to remember a lesson or celebrate an event or during a transition time in their day.
    - Remind students to consider **Audience**, **Point of View** and **Attitude** when thinking of ideas for their song
  - Brainstorm titles, and discuss what features make a good song title.
  - Having selected a good title, work with students to put together a four line song, with a singular focus.

- **"Writing a Song" Part 2 -** 30-50 minutes

  The point to this session would be to tackle a more complex song, and to end up with a plan that the class could then follow to complete the song; perhaps even break into small groups and create many song plans, then share them and discuss how to proceed.

  - Discuss the various song **Structures**, looking at examples of each.
    - Demonstrate each separate structure
    - Have students practice making up quick songs with the various structures
  - Using a simple song structure template, students will fill out a worksheet that specifies the song's purpose, title, focus, point of view, and what will happen in each section of the song (an outline)
    - Divide the sections of the song among smaller groups
    - One section of the song might be selected to work on as a larger group
    - ✓ Write the chorus, and discuss what will be needed to finish the song

- **"Writing a Song" Part 3-** 30+ minutes

  Using a song plan from the previous session, launch a discussion of various concepts to do with **lyrics** and **melody** as you do some actual writing. At the end of this session students should have a **rough draft** of a song and be able to discuss **getting feedback**, and **polishing**.

The Art of Critique
Monty Harper
www.montyharper.com

I. Why We Need Critique
    A. Feedback is part of the writing process
    B. Better songs faster
    C. Growth as an artist
II. How to Solicit and Give Useful Feedback
    A. The Liz Lerman Critical Response Format
    B. Adapting the format to various situations

LIZ LERMAN CRITICAL RESPONSE
Details: http://www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2003/10/toward_a_proces.php

This process was developed by Liz Lerman from The Dance Exchange in Washington, D.C.

ROLES
1. The Responders
The responsibilities of the responders are twofold: 1) not to bring their own agenda to the work they are responding to and 2) have a desire for the artist to do her/his best work. Responders are attempting to help the artist create her/his piece, not to create their own.
2. The Artist
The responsibility of the artist is to be honest and open. The artist needs to be in a place where they can question their own work in a somewhat public environment. It is the motivation and meaning of the creator that is the basis on which feedback is given, so the artist should be very clear about her/his intent.
3. The Facilitator
In a group setting it is best if one person is designated as the facilitator and that this person be very conscious of the responders in the group. The facilitator should never dominate the dialogue. If discussing more than one piece, sometimes it works to rotate the facilitator position. It is good to limit the number of responses from one responder until all have had the chance to say something in any given step.

PROCESS STEPS
1. Affirmation and Observation
Responders give the artist either positive feedback about the work or moments that affected them. People want to hear that what they have just completed has meaning. The artist must work to really hear the comments. Responders need to try to make the palette of responses as wide as possible. Be specific and expansive in the use of vocabulary about the work.
2. Artist Questions Responders
Artist asks the responders questions about the work. Be specific; nothing is too insignificant. The more the artist clarifies what s/he is working on, the more meaningful becomes the dialogue.
3. Responders Question Artist
Responders ask neutral questions of the artist about the work. It is very important not to be judgmental in the phrasing of the questions. This is a chance for the responders to help the artist step back and analyze the work. If given the chance, most criticisms can be stated or explored in this step in a neutral fashion.
4. Criticisms and Opinions
If there is a criticism that can't be stated in the form of a neutral question, responders can express opinions about the work to the artist after they have asked permission of the artist. The artist is allowed to refuse at any time. The opinions should be positive criticism, based on problem-solving techniques. It may seem redundant to ask permission for every single criticism, but it is very important. This gives the artist control of this very sensitive step and creates a dialogue, albeit a very basic one.

Songwriting With Kids

by Monty Harper
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This is a summary of what I've learned through my own experience writing songs with kids. I've mostly worked with classroom-sized groups writing together, however it should be easy to adapt most of the ideas for working with smaller groups or individuals.

1. Materials

    1. Use an overhead projector and transparencies
        1. They allow you to start where you left off last time
        2. You can photocopy transparencies for a complete record of the process
    2. Have a tape recorder or portable digital recorder handy
        1. Essential for remembering melodies and rhythms
        2. Record the song (at least) at the rough draft stage and at the finished stage
        3. Kids absolutely love to hear themselves on tape! And it provides great feedback
    3. Pencil and paper for the kids, comes in handy with older grades
    4. Rhyming dictionary, dictionary, thesaurus
    5. Hone your own skills. Come ready to be flexible and creative and have fun!

2. Ownership

    1. Let the kids write their own song!
        1. You are just there to guide the process.
        2. Goals and schedule should allow kids maximum chance for success on their own
        3. Step in only when really needed
        4. When kids feel ownership of the song, it builds self esteem
    2. Resist the temptation to fix problems yourself
        1. Kids' solutions are often more interesting than yours
        2. What seems problematic to you may not be to them
        3. Kids can learn more discovering their own mistakes than through your intervention
    3. Go for an original melody as well as original words. Kids can do it!

3. Planning Considerations

    1. Begin with the end in mind
        1. What is the purpose of the song?
        2. Will you perform the song - when, and for whom?
    2. Numbers
        1. How many kids or groups will be involved? How many songs will you write? How much time do you have?
        2. Ideally one group will write one song, but a song can easily be passed along from group to group, which has its own advantages.
    3. Know your school's policy on taboo subjects. I once spent two sessions on a Halloween song

before I was informed the school wouldn't allow Halloween as a topic!
4. Think about what you personally are comfortable with. I disallow songs or ideas based on existing TV, movie, or video game characters.
5. Share all these details right up front with your kids so they know what to expect.

4. 2nd - 5th Grade Groups. The middle grades are the most receptive to full-on group songwriting.

   1. Characteristics of the age group
      1. They are interested in writing a "good" song
      2. They are willing and able to work as a group to accomplish a goal
      3. They all want to contribute, though some may be shy about it
      4. They can deal with their contribution getting changed or deleted.
         1. To facilitate no hard feelings, discuss this possibility up front
         2. Songwriting is a process - like a journey
         3. Every contribution along the way helps us get to the final destination

   2. The title is an excellent place to begin
      1. Preselect a broad topic, or limited choice of topics
      2. Brainstorm titles related to the chosen topic & write them down
      3. Don't allow critique until everyone has a chance to contribute
      4. Narrow it down
         1. Ask each student to state which title, other than their own, they like best and why
         2. Combine ideas where possible
         3. Eliminate the least spoken for ideas
         4. For each title left, discuss what a song with that title would be about
         5. Repeat from 1 as necessary
      5. Once you have it down to two or three
         1. If you have the option to work in small groups, create a group for each title
         2. If not, vote - encourage students to write the other titles on their own

   3. Outline the Song
      1. Start with some brainstorming. Ask for words and ideas that might go into the song.
      2. Focus on each aspect listed below as needed (in no particular order), using student's ideas from the brainstorming to spark discussion.
         1. Point of view / Voice
            1. 1st person, 2nd person, or 3rd person?
            2. What imaginary entity (voice) is singing? It could be a person, animal, or even an inanimate object.
            3. What does the voice know or feel about the topic of the song? What is the singer's attitude?
         2. Setting / Situation
            1. Place and time (in what context does the voice exist?)
            2. Who or what is the song being sung to?
            3. What is the back story - what happened before the song actually starts?
         3. Vehicles
            1. A vehicle is a repeating language structure that helps give logic to the way

the words are arranged. (For kids: "A trick to help you arrange the words")

    2. Vehicles not only make the writing easier but also more powerful and interesting

    3. Examples:

        1. Begin every other line with a question starting with the word why?

        2. Every other line starts: When I..... Then I....

        3. Each line starts with a number

        4. Each verse follows the pattern: He saw... He heard... He knew...

    4. The possibilities for vehicles are endless - limited only by imagination

    5. You can always discover a vehicle later in the process. Include one in your outline only if you stumble onto it early.

    6. Don't try to explain all this unless an example presents itself. Be ready to suggest a vehicle based on students' brainstormed ideas.

    7. A given vehicle is carried out through only one section of a song: the chorus, the bridge, one verse, or possibly all the verses.

4. Structure - This is how you arrange the different sections of a song

    1. A chorus embodies the message or theme, in general terms. Words and music are the same each time.

    2. Verses support the theme with details. Music is the same each time but words change.

    3. A bridge adds new meaning or depth or provides a twist. Music and words are unique to this section.

    4. Here are some standard structures that work well

        1. Verse/Chorus - VCVCVC...

        2. Verse/Bridge - VVBV

          (Title is repeated in a stanza at the end of each verse)

        3. Verse/Chorus/Bridge - VCVCBC

          (Use only if a bridge just screams out at you as being necessary)

3. Write down a brief description of the point of view, voice, setting, situation, and any vehicles you plan to use.

4. Follow this with one sentence to summarize each section of the song.

5. Once you have your outline, there is no one correct order to proceed in...

4. Writing Lyrics

  1. Collecting Details

    1. Brainstorm words and concepts that support each main idea in the outline. Sort these according to which section of the song they belong to.

    2. Also give students a chance to think and write on their own - some will only participate this way. Collect papers and add the best ideas to the group collection.

    3. Kids will try to write verses at this point - that's ok but let them know they are ahead of the game. Everything collected now will be treated as raw material.

  2. Write backwards

    1. Write each section backwards. You might start with the last word of the last line of the last verse

    2. The last line will drive a point home; it carries a punch. Make sure you agree what that punch is.

1. (If your song is VVBV, the last line of the verse will end with the title.)
3. List all the important words that might work in that last spot and their synonyms
4. List rhyming words for those words - use only words that might relate to the song. Try to come up with several rhyming pairs.
5. For each pair ask how those words might be used to express the concept that will end your verse.
    1. Kids tend to want to group rhyming words tightly together; usually this does not serve to clearly express the ideas from your outline.
    2. Use your outline to help students keep themselves on track.
    3. Use a sketch of blank lines with the rhyming words at the end to illustrate how space needs to be filled. Like so:

        -- head

        -- bed
    4. If you are using a vehicle, fill those words into the sketch as well.
    5. The last line will carry the punch; the previous line could rhyme or not, and may be part of the setup.
6. Consider a variety of rhyme schemes and line lengths. Go with what works best.
7. Once the ending punch is in place, consider how to set it up, if need be, with more leading lines. Again, begin with a choice of rhyming pairs.

3. Establish a Pattern for the Verses
    1. The first verse will establish a pattern that all others must follow. This includes:
        1. Rhyme Scheme / Number of lines
            1. 2, 4, 6, or 8 lines are usual
            2. Label the rhyme scheme: ABAB, AABAAB, AABB, xAxA, etc.
        2. Meter
            1. Just like in poetry class - remember iambic pentameter?
            2. Mark the stressed and unstressed syllables to show the pattern
            3. Stressed syllables will correspond to the beat in the music
        3. Line Length
            1. Count the number of beats per line
            2. It's not necessary to slavishly follow the meter - just count beats
    2. Let the writing process determine the structural elements listed above, then analyze.
    3. This may lead to a few quick revisions as students discover their own errors.
    4. Now you can split into small groups to write the other verses, making sure to follow the established pattern

4. Writing the Chorus
    1. The chorus usually includes the title; either as the first line, the last line, both, or as the only line.
    2. Add more words than the title only if necessary - keep it short and memorable
    3. Be creative with repetition
    4. Singing the title can be a good way to start
        1. Go around the circle giving every student a chance to try it.
        2. Encourage experimentation; added words, repetition, varying stresses,

rhythms, melodies, etc.

3. Just see what happens!

5. Rhyme scheme, meter, melody all should contrast with the verses
6. The chorus may pop out while you're focused on some other task - be ready to grab it if you hear it!
7. Sometimes what you think is a verse turns into the chorus or vice versa.

5. Writing the Bridge
1. Provides a contrast with the verses or chorus in meter, rhyme scheme, and melody
2. Lyrically the bridge raises the stakes, deepens the meaning, or provides a twist
3. The writing process is similar to writing the first verse

5. Writing Melody
1. Kids are capable of writing their own melodies!
2. When to look at melody
1. If the writing goes smoothly melody can come last
2. If you get stuck with the writing, melody can provide a good break
3. Melody can be a good place to start as well, especially when writing the chorus
3. Choose one line to start with - perhaps the title
1. Work on rhythm first
2. Demonstrate different ways the line could be laid out rhythmically
3. Speak the line while clapping the rhythm
4. Have each student try it, and ask that each try to make their own variation
5. Now go around the room and have each kid sing that line
1. Record each effort
2. The individual attempts may evolve into something
3. Or one attempt may get accolades from the group - go with that
6. Or sing the line as a group
1. Ask kids to listen to each other as they sing
2. Sing the line over and over
3. A melody may well appear out of nowhere
7. Other approaches:
1. Circle the most important words. Then construct a melody that puts those words on higher pitches and other words on lower pitches.
2. Allow the kids to use an instrument to work out melodies individually before sharing with the group.
3. Use a beat box or a guitar to create a rhythm for kids to sing with.
4. Once you have one line down
1. Melody often follows a pattern of repetition - AABA or ABAC
2. Kids have a natural ear for such repetition and for whether the last line resolves or sounds incomplete
3. Repeat your favorite process from above for each new line. Always include what you have so far at the beginning so that the new line will flow.
4. Take it one section at a time. Write a new melody for each different section.

6. Polishing

    1. You have a rough draft when
        1. Each section is filled in with words that rhyme in the right spots
        2. The words basically say what you wanted them to
        3. Each section has a melody
        4. You can sing through it together
    2. Now spend as much time as you have left polishing
    3. Sing the song together
    4. Ask for hands - are there any spots that give you trouble?
    5. Look for:
        1. Words that are difficult to sing
            1. Most likely the trouble is in the way they scan
            2. Simplify - substitute words with fewer syllables, or with stresses in the proper places
        2. Words that are uninteresting or redundant
            1. These words were just put in to fill space
            2. Look back to your brainstorming for details that didn't get put in
            3. Every word should contribute to the main idea and/or personality of the song
            4. You may discover and introduce a good vehicle at this point to make the writing more interesting
            5. Use alliteration, assonance, internal rhyme, simile, metaphor to keep it interesting
        3. Words that are unclear
            1. Someone may say - I don't get what this means
            2. Remember you can't explain it to your audience!
            3. Change the words so that the meaning is clear
            4. This often comes up when a compromise has been made for the sake of rhyme or meter
            5. You may have to brainstorm new rhyming pairs to fix the problem
        4. Words that are grammatically incorrect
            1. Don't compromise grammar either, for the sake of a rhyme
            2. If a line has an unnatural word order, turn it inside out to fix it
            3. look for a word in the middle that could become the rhyming word
    6. Sing the song for another class and get their reactions

5. Pre-K - 2nd Grade Groups

    1. Characteristics of the age group
        1. The process is more important to the kids than the result
        2. Every kid needs to hear his or her own words in the song
        3. You will have no shortage of crazy ideas
        4. It is difficult to get them to focus on one idea as a group
        5. Their attention span can be longer than you think if
            1. They feel ownership of the song
            2. They get to hear it / sing it a lot

2. Choose the song theme and structure ahead of time
    1. Use a theme and structure that will accommodate many wildly varying ideas
    2. Choose the theme ahead of time yourself and start by saying "We're going to make up a song together about ___."
    3. Have a structure in mind, but be willing to change it to fit the kids' input
        1. The AAAA song form (one repeating section) works best, i.e. many short (two or four line) verses.
        2. Some repetitive element or device is needed to hold the song together
            1. It works well for each verse to have one line the same (a refrain) with the rest differing lyrically verse to verse.
            2. The refrain can open the verse, possibly with a question, or close it, with a conclusion. It can be half a line long or a full line.
            3. Come armed with a suggestion for the device, but be ready to let the kids alter your idea or come up with their own.
    4. No need to explain the structure. It's best to start by getting kids' input, then incorporate it into your structure. They'll get the idea when they hear it.

3. Ask a simple clear question to prompt input
    1. Let your song theme and structure inform this question.
    2. Make it specific enough to focus their answers but also
    3. Open enough to provide a diversity of ideas
    4. Go around the circle; repeat the question and take one answer from each child.
    5. Encourage the kids to sing their answer if they want - listen for a melody you might use.
    6. Write the answers down as you go. Record them as well, especially if kids are singing.
    7. Don't allow criticism from kids about one another's ideas
    8. Don't make any criticism yourself - accept all answers. Be prepared for surprises and unrelated ideas.

4. Rough draft
    1. Sing the song using your structure with all the answers plugged in
    2. Use the kids' melodies if they suggested any
    3. Give yourself free reign - just sing
    4. Don't worry about the quality, uniformity, or even absence of meter, rhyme, melody, etc. - just sing
    5. It may sound long and unstructured to you but the kids will love it
    6. Record it and listen back

5. Polishing
    1. Now that they've heard their ideas in context, the kids will start to get more ideas.
    2. Go around the circle again to ask if anyone wants to change their idea
    3. Keep the originals and write new ideas on a new sheet
    4. Some kids may copy others - that's ok - it shortens the song and may improve it
    5. Encourage the kids again to sing their own melodies
    6. Sing, record, play back, and repeat from step 2 as many times as seems fruitful

6. Further polishing
    1. Depending on how much time you have, your goal for the song, and the maturity of the group, you may wish to direct the song into a more useable form, with a constant meter,

rhyme scheme, and melody

2. Start with the line that works the best in each of these respects and tell what you like about it.
3. Also work from their cues - if they seem dissatisfied with a line, start there. Try to help them discover the trouble themselves and fix it.
4. Sample dialog: So we like verse three because the words at the end rhyme here and here. Do all the verses rhyme like that? What's one that doesn't rhyme? Can we make it rhyme? What words rhyme with ____?
5. Try to preserve the essence of each original contribution.
6. Make your own suggestions as needed, but make sure you get group approval of any change. (They will almost always approve of an improvement.)

6. 6th - 12th grade

1. Characteristics of the age group
    1. They are rugged individuals
    2. They are heavily influenced by their own taste in popular music
    3. They are too diverse in opinion to cooperate on a song

2. Group work on a song is unlikely to fly.
    1. Art is a personal process at this age.
    2. Only a certain percentage will be all that interested to begin with
    3. Those that are will not want to make room for someone else's vision in their own song.
    4. If there's a way to do it I haven't found it.

3. What will work
    1. Groups of two or three might work on a song together. When possible pair a student talented with words and a student talented at music.
    2. A group project that incorporates songs written by individuals (possibly all around a given theme), such as a CD or a review would be appropriate. If other nonmusical jobs are available that can be a plus.
    3. Group work should be confined to sharpening general skills and constructive critique methods.
    4. Exercises can be assigned, with 10-15 minutes of individual work, followed by group evaluation. Or songs in progress can be presented to the group for evaluation.

4. Group critique.
    1. A good critique method will help every participant to feel safe in presenting their work and receiving feedback.
    2. The writer should be able to receive feedback that will help him write his best song, as opposed to receiving opinions that are irrelevant to his own vision.

5. Liz Lerman's critique method
    1. A group moderator is needed to insure that the format is followed and to help the writer and respondents express themselves clearly and respectfully.
    2. Start by having the writer sing the song for the group. If he is uncomfortable singing, just reading the lyrics will do. If the song is incomplete the writer presents whatever portion is

ready and explains what still needs to be done.

3. The response is a four step process. The order is important. You can always jump back to a previous step if needed, however you may not jump forward.

   1. Affirmations
      1. Each respondent offers positive comments or observations.
      2. Be specific about elements of the song you like and why.
      3. If you can't say something positive, make a neutral observation.
      4. Make sure each respondent has one or two chances to comment - don't skip anyone.
      5. Respondents are not allowed to repeat a comment that was already made.

   2. The writer asks questions
      1. The writer asks specific questions of the group. This allows the writer to bring up issues that he or she is concerned about with the song.
      2. Respondents must confine their answers to address the writer's questions and not say more.
      3. Some example questions would be, "What did you picture in your head during the second verse?" "Did you understand the ending - what did it mean to you?" "Was the melody catchy - can you still hum it?"

   3. Respondents ask questions of the writer.
      1. This is your chance to clarify the attitude or intent of the writer. What is he/she trying to accomplish with the song?
      2. Questions should not be veiled criticisms such as "Why didn't you end it properly?"
      3. Questions should be true attempts to understand the writer's intent, such as, "How did you want the ending to make your audience feel?"

   4. Suggestions
      1. Now is the chance for respondents to make suggestions. However, it is important to leave control with the writer.
      2. Respondents must ask permission each time before making a comment.
      3. Ask as specifically as possible without revealing the comment. For example, "May I suggest an alternate way to end the song?" (But not "May I suggest you change the end to (specific idea here)."
      4. The writer is allowed to say "No!" If he does, the respondent must respect that and refrain from making the comment.

7. Resources - here are a few URLs that might be of help
   1. www.montyharper.com - My own website features a regular column called "Tips For Young Songwriters."
   2. www.misterbilly.com - Mr. Billy writes songs with kids using a six traits method.
   3. www.cmnonline.org - The Children's Music Network
   4. www.oksongwriters.org - Oklahoma Songwriters and Composers Association
   5. www.musesmuse.com - The Muse's Muse offers many great songwriting resources

Write a Song

With Monty Harper

Part I
Prosody + Focus

A Song Has 3 Things

1. **Words (Lyrics)**

2. **Melody**

3. **Fixed Form**

Words + Melody =

- # PROSODY
How do melody and lyrics fit together?

Prosody!

- **Prosody affects:**
  - ‣ **Pronunciation**
  - ‣ **Meaning / Emphasis of Words**
  - ‣ **Mood / Emotion**

Focus

- **How many things is a song about?**

·1

Narrow Your Idea Down

➡**Everything**

➡**General subject**

➡ **Specific topic**

➡ **Your angle**

Example

- **My song, "You're a Dinosaur"**

➡️**Everything**

➡️**Dinosaurs**

➡️ **Dinosaur behavior**

➡️ **You can be a dinosaur**

Focus!

- **Finding your focus:**
  - ‣ **Audience**
  - ‣ **Purpose**
  - ‣ **Topic**
  - ‣ **Title**

Audience

- **Age of listeners**

- **Genre - what kind of music do they like?**
  - ‣ **Rap, Country, Alt. Rock, Hip Hop**

- **Context - where will they hear it?**
  - ‣ **Car radio, School, Dance club, Theater**

- **Mood - how do they want to feel?**
  - ‣ **Sad, Silly, Energetic, Inspired, Relaxed**

Purpose

- **What will your song do?**
  - **Tell a story**
  - **Set the mood**
  - **Teach something**
  - **Change minds**
  - **Ask a question**

Song Topics

- **What makes a good topic?**
  - **Universal - everyone "gets" it**
  - **Interesting - keeps your attention**
  - **Simple - one sentence describes it**
  - **Charged - with attitude or emotion**

Song Titles

- **Start with a good title**
  - ‣ **Especially in group writing**
- **Spend some time on it**
- **A great title "writes itself"**
- **Will be repeated in the song**
- **Will go in a prominent place**

Song Titles

- **Some tricks to thinking up good titles:**
  - **Alliteration / Assonance (sounds cool)**
  - **Names, Days, Months, Colors, Places**
  - **Ask a question**
  - **Give a command**
  - **Clever twist on a common saying**

A Short Song

- **Happy birthday to you**

- **Happy birthday to you**

- **Happy birthday dear whatshisname**

- **Happy birthday to you**

Shocking Facts

- **"Happy Birthday to You"**
  - ✓ **is the most well-known song in the English language**
  - ✓ **earns about $2 million per year in royalties**

Let's Write a 4 Line Song

1. Audience
2. Purpose
3. Topic
4. Title
5. Prosody

Write a Song

With Monty Harper

Part II
Song Structure + Pre-writing

Parts of a Song

1. Title

2. Verse

3. Chorus

4. Bridge

5. Introduction & Ending

Song Structures

1. **A (just a verse)**

2. **AAA (many verses)**

3. **ABAB (verse/chorus)**

4. **AABA (verse/bridge)**

5. **ABABCB (verse/chorus/bridge)**

Special Structures

1. **Zipper Songs (AAA)**

   ‣ **Each verse differs by one or two words**

2. **Cumulative Songs (ABAB)**

   ‣ **The chorus gets longer and longer**

Pre-writing

- **Audience**
- **Purpose**
- **Topic**
- **Title**
- **Point of view**
- **Attitude**
- **Plot**
- **Structure**

Point of View

- **Who is the object? Who do things happen to?**
  - ‣ **First Person (I, me, mine)**
  - ‣ **Second Person (You, yours)**
  - ‣ **Third Person (He, she, it)**
  - ‣ **Mixed (I talking about you or he)**

Point of View

- **Who is the persona?**
  - **Narrator**
  - **Yourself**
  - **A character**
  - **Human, animal, object**

Attitude

- **How does the persona feel about the topic?**
    - **Love**
    - **Hate**
    - **Excited**
    - **Aloof**
    - **Confused**

Plot

- **What will happen in the song?**
  - **It doesn't have to tell a story**
  - **It does need to "develop"**
  - **Don't say the same thing over and over**
  - **From beginning to end is a mental journey**

Plot Types

- **Three ways to approach a song:**
    - **Attitudinal**
    - **Situational**
    - **Tells a story**

Plot Development

- **Some good ways to plot a song:**
  - **From small to big**
  - **Traveling; changing locations**
  - **Changing through time**
  - **Reversal of fortune**

Plot Development

- **More good ways to plot a song:**
  - **Start with a question, end with answer**
  - **Conflict**
  - **Discovery - reveal a secret at the end**
  - **Twist - surprise ending**

Let's Plan a Song

- **Audience**
- **Purpose**
- **Topic**
- **Title**
- **Point of view**
- **Attitude**
- **Plot**
- **Structure**