

Music to My Ears

Skills Focus

Summarizing, Writing

Connection to Habits of Good Readers

Clarifying, Connecting, Visualizing

Overview

Does your family like music? If so, this activity is for you. Songs are not only fun to listen, sing and dance to; they also provide a great way to connect family members and shared experiences. Songs can help us celebrate our culture, remind us of special moments in our lives, help us express ourselves, or just provide a reason to dance! Song lyrics can be a lot like poetry, and reading and interpreting them can also be a great way to practice literacy skills.

Guiding Questions and Talking Points

Consider sparking a discussion about music by asking your child the following questions:

- What is a song that is popular right now?
- Do you like that song? Why/why not?
- Why do you think that song is so popular?
- When you listen to the lyrics of that song, what do you imagine in your mind?

You may also want to talk to your child about songs that you enjoyed when you were his/her age. If possible, let your child listen to songs that were popular when you were a child. Ask your child what the song(s) is about and how it compares to songs that he/she enjoys.

Intro Activity

Start singing a song that you and other members of your family enjoy. Dance around as you sing, and encourage your children to join in with moves of their own.

Before (Background Knowledge and/or Vocabulary)

The following are helpful terms for children to know when they are learning about poetry:

- Chorus: a part of a song that recurs at intervals, usually following each verse; helps the listener understand the songwriter's purpose for writing the song and the message.
- Composing: the creation or writing of a song (can be the tune and/or words).
- Lyrics: the words to a song.
- Melody: the tune of a song that is the main focus.
- Rhythm: the pulse or beat of the music.

Music to My Ears (cont.)

Skills Focus

Summarizing, Writing

During

Ask your child to select one of his/her favorite songs. Then, invite your child to recite and write the lyrics, or use a website to find and print the lyrics. If you don't have access to a computer at home, you can go to the local library to search for the song lyrics using one of the websites listed in the Web Resources section below.

Once you are finished writing the lyrics, read them aloud with your child, and discuss the "story" that the song is telling. As you read the lyrics together, have your child highlight or underline any unfamiliar words. Use the context of the song to figure out the meaning of the unfamiliar words. Encourage your child to explain the images he/she sees when listening to the song. Summarize what you believe to be the meaning of each verse. Then, talk about what message you think the songwriter is trying to convey with the lyrics. Finally, take some time to sing the song together. Be sure to give it your all.

- **Emergent readers** can use another resource (e.g., dictionary, computer, etc.) to look up the definitions of unfamiliar words. Talk about why the songwriter may have chosen those words, instead of other words, to get his/her message across.
- **Proficient readers** can discuss the chorus of the song. What message does the songwriter seem to be sharing in the chorus? Songwriters often write lyrics to persuade people to act differently, point out a problem in our society, illustrate a particular time in their lives, or celebrate an event or happy time. If there is a music video for the song, watch it together and decide if the video accurately conveys the song's message.
- **Advanced readers** can read the lyrics and identify any patterns that occur in the song. What words or phrases are repeated? Does the song's story follow a logical progression (beginning, middle, end) or some other structure? Encourage your child to discuss how the structure and techniques of the song help to promote the song's message.

After (Extension Activities)

Your child may enjoy doing the following activities independently or with your help:

- Compose original lyrics to a familiar song.
- Write a short story about your life and use song lyrics in the story.
- Gather pictures from magazines and create a collage of images to depict a favorite song.
- Write a song that is a musical adaptation of a favorite story.

Web Resources

Use the following websites to help you locate the lyrics to songs:

- www.azlyrics.com
- www.songlyrics.com
- www.letssingit.com
- www.lyrics.com

Suggested Readings

[The Composer Is Dead](#), Lemony Snicket

[How to Speak Moo!](#), Deborah Fajerman

[I See the Rhythm](#), Toyomi Igus

[John's Secret Dreams: The Life of John Lennon](#), Dorren Rappaport