

## Music Project

Over fifteen years ago in her ninth-grade classroom, Katie blasted Suzanne Vega’s melancholy tune, *Calypso*, over an ancient tape player. Although it was an uncomfortably hot spring day, students listened intently. After the song was over, the students sat silently, until one young girl spoke up and said, “Can we listen to it again?” The other students nodded their heads in agreement. At the students’ request, they listened to the song twice that day, their facial and bodily expressions mirroring the mood conveyed in the song. Little did the students know it, but Katie had used Suzanne Vega’s song to sneakily guide them into the text world of their current reading—Homer’s epic, the *Odyssey*. As the song came to a close, she asked the students what they thought of it and made a correlation to the novel they would be reading soon. “She loves this guy but she lets him go and she’s all alone and sad. Is the *Odyssey* all sad?” one student asked. “Is all of it like this?” As Katie had hoped, the seed had been planted and the students’ curiosity had been piqued. Now that the students had a sense of what was about to come next in Homer’s words, the stage was set to explore this text.

Music is an outstanding pre-reading tool—an effective building block for students to develop a stance on a topic before they start reading the related text. Contemporary songs that echo the stories found in canonical literature are another pathway that leads to a connection between the times of our students and the seemingly long-ago stories.

Music as a pre-reading strategy does the following:

- Addresses the needs of auditory learners and those with musical or rhythmic intelligences
- Allows students to learn a great deal about the text before tackling the more complex language of the literature
- Allows students to envision connections between stories
- Offers thematic, mood, or other literary devices to connect to the texts
- Activates prediction and other important reading skills when listened to before reading a given text

Contemporary songs and music can unleash powerful connections to canonical literature, as students explore the themes and stories that authors present to their readers. Through the use of music as a pre-reading strategy, students learn the basic plot of the classic literature they are studying. Through the renditions by contemporary artists, they also discover that they can relate to the classic literature in a way that they weren’t aware of. Songs also provide students with the opportunity to explore how the two versions of a story differ, as well as discuss the decisions that these artists made as they created their own versions of the works. The most important question that a teacher can ask students is, “Why did this musical artist make a musical version of this canonical text?” Perhaps it’s because the story is so interesting.

It is particularly enjoyable to bring in music that’s commonly heard on the radio for pre-reading activities. To prepare for incorporating music into lessons, it is helpful to identify the radio stations that students listen to and to check these stations out during the drive to work; more

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than likely, there will be songs, like the one described next, that are renditions of classical pieces of literature. In addition, valuable information about students can be revealed in the songs, which can help teachers and students connect.

### **The Rime of the Ancient Mariner**

Iron Maiden has performed a version of Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (see Exhibit 2.6), which Katie began using in her classes. Her students were often suspicious when she entered the classroom with a boom box on her shoulder and her Iron Maiden CD, ready to crank the volume for her sleepy first-period class. As the students considered the lyrics, however, they began exploring the ideas presented in Coleridge's poem. As the students continued listening to the song, more clues were revealed. Not only were they being exposed to the basic plot of the poem and the overall thematic messages, this heavy-metal musical interpretation also employed some of Coleridge's poetic elements. When the musicians wrote, "And the curse goes on and on at sea / And the curse goes on and on for them and me," the lines mimic the repetitive phrases, alliteration, and assonance that Coleridge employs in his poem. As do readers of Coleridge's poem, those in Iron Maiden's audience discover the sufferings of the mariner. Exhibit 2.7 presents several songs and lyrics that are useful for pre-reading before tackling larger works. Students will probably make many of their own contributions to this list. Exhibit 2.8 contains a pre-reading lesson plan. Here are some resources to help in gathering materials for the two previous lessons, using music and art for pre-reading:

#### **Free Music**

[http://www.edu-cyberpg.com/Music/m\\_sites.html](http://www.edu-cyberpg.com/Music/m_sites.html)

#### **Free Art**

<http://eduscapes.com/tap/topic98.htm>

#### **Copyright-Free Art**

##### ***Large-Image Resources and Indexes***

Copyright-Free Photo Archives—27,000 images from NASA, NOAA, and FWS

<http://gimp-savvy.com/PHOTO-ARCHIVE/>

DHD Multimedia Gallery—Selection of images and sounds

<http://gallery.hd.org/index.jsp>

#### **Free Foto**

<http://www.freefoto.com/>

Free Images—2,500 stock photos (most free, some members-only)

<http://www.freeimages.co.uk/>

#### **Free Stock Photos**

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<http://freestockphotos.com/>

Imageafter

<http://www.imageafter.com/>

MorgueFile

<http://www.morguefile.com/>

Pics4Learning—great for general topics

<http://pics4learning.com/>

Smithsonian Institution's Office of Imaging and Photographic Services

<http://photo2.si.edu/>

### **Photo Resources**

ARS (Agricultural Research Service) Image Gallery

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/graphics/photos/>

Art Images for College Teaching

<http://arthist.cla.umn.edu/aict/index.html>

Free Public Domain (PD) Images—small collection

<http://www.pdimages.com/web6.htm>

Great Images in NASA

<http://grin.hq.nasa.gov/>

JSC Digital Image Collection (NASA)—search or browse 9,000 NASA images

<http://images.jsc.nasa.gov/>

NASA Multimedia Gallery—images, video, and interactive features

<http://www.nasa.gov/multimedia/highlights/index.html>

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Photo Gallery

<http://photogallery.nrcs.usda.gov/>

NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) Photo Library —search 20,000 NOAA images

<http://www.photolib.noaa.gov/>

Planetary Photojournal from NASA

<http://photojournal.jpl.nasa.gov/>

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Public Health Image Library (PHIL) from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<http://phil.cdc.gov/Phil/default.asp>

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Pictures/Graphics  
<http://pictures.fws.gov/>

### **Images on Specific Topics**

Abraham Lincoln—5 pictures

<http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/resource/freepix.htm>

Images from the History of Medicine (IHM) from National Library of Medicine  
<http://wwwihm.nlm.nih.gov/>

Images of American Political History  
[http://teachpol.tcnj.edu/amer pol hist/](http://teachpol.tcnj.edu/amer%20pol%20hist/)

Map Collections: 1500–2003 from *American Memory*, Library of Congress  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/gmdhome.html>

Moving Image Archive from *Internet Archive*  
<http://www.archive.org/movies/movies.php>

### **Text Resources**

Project Gutenberg(electronic texts)  
<http://gutenberg.net/>

Stories and Characters That Have Had Their Copyright Expire  
<http://www.pdimages.com/stories.htm>

### **Music**

Links to Search for PD Music and Lyrics  
<http://www.pdinfo.com/link.htm> (not completely free and have some restrictions; see the site for further information.)

American Memory from the Library of Congress  
<http://rs6.loc.gov/amhome.html>

Free Photographs  
<http://www.free-photographs.net/Stockphoto>  
<http://www.istockphoto.com/>

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
<http://www.metmuseum.org/home.asp>

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NASA Image exchange (NIX)  
<http://nix.nasa.gov/>

New York Public Library Picture Collection Online  
<http://digital.nypl.org/mmpco/>

Collection of 30,000 digitized images from books, magazines, and newspapers, as well as original photographs, prints, and postcards, mostly created before 1923.

Caveats regarding the use of music and images:

(1) fair use of these images for education and research is permissible; (2) avoid using trademarked images like those from Disney or other large media outlets.

## Exhibit 2.6 “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and Iron Maiden Lyrics

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### Iron Maiden’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” Pre-Reading Insight

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Hear the rime of the ancient mariner  
See his eye as he stops one of three  
Mesmerizes one of the wedding guests  
Stay here and listen to the nightmares of  
the sea  
And the music plays on, as the bride  
passes by  
Caught by his spell and the mariner tells  
his tale.

Students can determine that the setting is at a wedding and that the ancient mariner has troublesome stories about his adventures on the sea.

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Driven south to the land of the snow and  
the ice  
To a place where nobody’s been  
Through the snow fog flies on the albatross  
Hailed in god’s name, hoping good luck it  
brings.  
And the ship sails on, back to the north  
Through the fog and ice and the albatross  
follows on.

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They know that mariner travels to colder regions of the planet and that the albatross is a bird of “good omen.”

## Exhibit 2.7 Canonical Text and Related Music

Author	Text	Song Title/ Artist
Edwin Arlington Robinson	"Richard Cory"	"Richard Cory" by Wings
Maya Angelou	<i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i>	"Caged Bird" by Alicia Keys
Emily Bronte	<i>Wuthering Heights</i>	"Wuthering Heights" by Kate Bush
Samuel Taylor Coleridge	"Kubla Khan"	"Xanadu" by Rush
Samuel Taylor Coleridge	"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"	"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" by Iron Maiden
Dante	"The Inferno"	"Dante's Prayer" by Lorena McKennitt
John Donne	Poems by John Donne	"Rave on John Donne" by Van Morrison
Nathaniel Hawthorne	"Young Goodman Brown"	"Shohhoth's Old Peculiar" by The Kindly Ones
Homer	<i>The Odyssey</i>	"Tales of Brave Ulysses" by Cream "Home at Last" by Steely Dan "Lotus Eaters" by Moloko
Aldus Huxley	<i>Brave New World</i>	"Brave New World" by Iron Maiden
John Milton	"Paradise Lost"	"Song of Joy" by Nick Caves
George Orwell	<i>1984</i>	"1984" by David Bowie
Edgar Allan Poe	"Cask of Amontillado"	"Cask of Amontillado" by Alan Parsons Project
Edgar Allan Poe	"Lady Legeia"	"Vanishing Act" by Lou Reed

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**Exhibit 2.7** (continued)

<b>Author</b>	<b>Text</b>	<b>Song Title/ Artist</b>
Edgar Allan Poe	"Murders in the Rue Morgue"	"Murders in the Rue Morgue" by Iron Maiden
William Shakespeare	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	"Romeo and Juliet" by Dire Straits "Romeo and Juliet" by Indigo Girls "Kissing You" by Des'ree
William Shakespeare	"Tempest"	"Prospero's Speech" by Lorena McKennitt
William Shakespeare	"Sonnet 142"	"The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" by Lauryn Hill
Sophocles	"Oedipus Rex"	"Oedipus Rex" by Tom Lehrer
Alfred Lord Tennyson	"The Lady of Shallot"	"Left Me a Fool" by Indigo Girls
J.R.R. Tolkien	<i>The Lord of the Rings</i>	"Ramble On" by Led Zeppelin
Mark Twain	<i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i>	"Barefoot Children in the Rain" by Jimmy Buffet
Mark Twain	<i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i>	"Tom Sawyer" by Rush
William Wordsworth	The Lucy Poems	"Lucy" by The Divine Comedy
W. B. Yeats	"Before the World Was Made"	"Mofo" by U2

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## Exhibit 2.8 Music Pre-Reading Lesson Plan

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<b>Pre-Reading Lesson</b>	<b>Music as a Pre-Reading Strategy</b>
Objective	To develop connections between contemporary popular culture and canonical literature. To offer thematic, mood, or other connective literary devices.
Materials	Musical device (CD player, tape player, or computer)
Example	Author: Homer Work: <i>The Odyssey</i> Related Music: Suzanne Vega's "Calypso" Assignment: Have students listen to music before reading a story.
Time	One to two class periods
<hr/> <b>Procedure</b> <hr/>	
Step 1	Choose a contemporary song that relates to the canonical literature you are working with.
Step 2	Play the song twice for the students.
Step 3	Have a classroom discussion about the song. Questions could include What was the song about? What did you think of the song? Why do you think this artist chose this song?
Step 4	Relate the song to the text you are working with.
IRA/NCTE Standards	<b>3.</b> Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).  <b>11.</b> Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

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