Using Lyrics to Enrich the English, Reading, and Social Studies Curriculum

Improved literacy is a focus of educators at all levels. Students need to be able to read and write in order to become independent learners. Students need to be able to apply their literacy skills to real life products to demonstrate their level of proficiency. What better way is there to demonstration competency than through the writing of lyrics that link to newspaper current events, English and reading?

Music is a universal language. It speaks to us through common rhythms, tones, moods, and beats. It involves authentic writing. Nothing is more motivational to a student than the message that he/she hears in a musical venue. Lyric writing is interactive, multi-sensory, and involves the musical multiple intelligence. Lyrics are similar to poetry, yet they add another level of skill development. This level helps promote insight, response, creativity, and self-understanding. A student’s lyrics will be remembered long after students have been tested on the subject content.

The majority of students prefer to learn figurative language, the descriptive quad, the 5 W’s and H of summarization, and vocabulary development through listening to and writing their own lyrics. Stereotypical workbook pages and exercises help few students to meaningfully master essential literacy skills. It does not matter what form of music a students prefers to use for their writing venue. What matters is that comprehension, along with the essential writing tools, are demonstrated through an effective lyric.

Allow your students to have a choice when developing an application project. Give these students the tools they need for writing lyrics, painting a mural, writing a poem or role-playing an event that links to a time period and an event. Both musical and non-musical students can gain an appreciation and/or skill development in the musical arts while using lyrics to build critical thinking skills. The techniques developed as a lyricist can then be readily transferred to other types of writing.

This guide has been developed so that any teacher, with or without a musical background, can assist students in lyric writing. The pages for vocabulary development, the 5 W’s and an H, the descriptive quad and tools for writing can be developed through mini lessons. Then the pages with formats and graphic organizers can be used by individual students to help prepare their original lyrical pieces. Whether lyrics are read or performed with the voice and/or musical instruments is up to the individual talents of the students. Lyric writing gives students the freedom to respond to their learning in one of the most meaningful ways for the 21st century.

Recommended Books for Teachers and Students to Learn More About Lyric Writing:

The Art of Writing Great Lyrics by Pamela Phillips Oland
Successful Lyric Writing: A Step-By-Step Course & Workbook by Sheila Davis
USING THE GUIDE TO LYRIC WRITING

The goal of The GUIDE to LYRIC WRITING is to help students write original lyrics based on the news of the day. Lyric writing is not a frill or add on. It is a method of allowing students to show comprehension in a realistic application mode.

Newspaper activities found in this guide are easily linked to state standards. Giving students the option of using lyric writing for product production not only helps students meet state standards but also addresses the need for meeting a variety of learning styles, including a number of the multiple intelligences.

Students should not be given any portion of this guide until key mini lessons have been developed in lyric writing formats. These mini lessons can be effectively delivered by the classroom teacher in English, social studies, science or any other area. The classroom teacher can also work cooperatively with the music teacher to make the unit even more meaningful.

SHEETS TO GIVE TO STUDENTS:
Key mini lessons for the students should include the following components of the guide:

- How poetry and lyrics differ and some of the lyric writing formats;
- Vocabulary associated with lyric writing;
- Historical periods in music;
- Rubrics /checklist for students to assess their work along with the lyric writing acronym.
- Methods of making lyrics more meaningful through use of figurative language, the descriptive quad, the 5 W's and the H, and the charts involving the song writing overview, the lyrical outline, the narrative, the situational, and the attitudinal formats.

Worksheets to accompany each of the topics mentioned above should be given to the students only after the mini lessons are completed.

For teachers who want to get into some musical history, a chronology of music has been included. This historical element can be very beneficial in helping students create their own lyrical style.

This teacher’s guide for lyric writing is excellent for students who need additional enrichment, for creative homework assignments, or for production pieces used in place of a test. The guide can also be packaged differently for use in a musical classroom center for independent work.

The Guide to Lyric Writing has been organized so that it meets many academic, social, and psychological needs of students. There is no one-way to use this guide. It is all up to the imagination, organization, and purpose(s) set by the teacher. Remember nothing speaks to students the way that music can speak, therefore, don’t let the lyric writing opportunity slip away when it can replace a mundane, non challenging comprehension activity.
### COMPARISON BETWEEN POETRY WRITING AND WRITING LYRICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Poetry</strong></th>
<th><strong>Lyrics</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A poem usually has more than two sections in a row that follow the same pattern.</td>
<td>The set up of a song usually follows one of a variety of common lyric writing patterns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The title of the poem may be difficult to locate or may not be included in the poem.</td>
<td>The title of the lyrics is usually easily found in the first or last line of a verse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poems do not necessarily leave the reader with a reoccurring message or a hook.</td>
<td>Good songs have a hook, which people continue to hum after hearing the song.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry language is not necessarily conversational. The word order may be reversed.</td>
<td>Lyrics are usually conversational. They use language heard on a daily basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poems may make use of archaic or old-fashioned phrases.</td>
<td>Lyrics do not usually use old English or outdated phrases. Lyrics are topical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words in a poem can’t usually be sung.</td>
<td>Good lyrics do not necessarily make good poetry. Lyrics need to be sung. Poetry needs to be read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A poem may not have a definite beginning, middle or end</td>
<td>Lyrics need to have a beginning, a middle, and an end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A poem may be totally depressing in nature with no reason for hope.</td>
<td>Lyrics may be depressing but usually end with a sense of hope.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A poem is usually much more personal than lyrics. The listener/reader should not be embarrassed by what is being said.</td>
<td>Lyrics are usually not overly introspective. These thoughts are best left to poetry.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NECESSARY VOCABULARY FOR LYRIC WRITING

**The Hook:** The part of the song that you walk away humming and remembering is the hook.

**The Verse:** The main body of the storytelling is the verse. It includes the when, where, who or what, why and how of the story.

**The Build:** This is the pre-chorus section of the song. It leads out of the verse and builds to a dramatic chorus.

**The Chorus:** The purpose of this section is to hammer home the hook, or part of the song you like to hum. The chorus resolves the action and explains your need for writing the song.

**Turnaround:** This technique gives the chorus a strong payoff. It is used not only at the beginning of the chorus, but at the end of the chorus, slightly turning around the meaning of the hook line.

**Vocal Bridge:** This bridge is in the middle of the song. It helps you to understand the singer’s point of view on the subject. It gives additional information to make the story lines of the song come together.

**Break or Breakdown:** This is an instrumental bridge. It comes before the final section of the song.

**Rap:** Rap is a musical art form in which the entire song is chanted in rhythmic speech.

**Meter:** A line must always have a measure, patterned arrangement of syllables, organized by stress and length. This creates a rhythm that can be sung or played instrumentally.

**Rhyme:** Within a song, there can be several different rhyme patterns. Lyricists must be aware of which rhyme pattern(s) they wish to use.

**Space:** Not every moment of the song has to be filled up with words. There needs to be empty spaces where the listener can digest the message.

**Fade:** At the end of a verse-chorus style song, the chorus can be repeated over and over again and faded out slowly.

**Ending:** If there is no fade, the last line of the song must draw the song to a definite conclusion.

**Tag:** If a song has a definite ending, lyricists sometimes insert one or two lines before the last line. These last few lines are a build up to make the last line more dramatic.
HISTORICAL TIME PERIODS IN MUSIC

FORTIES
Classical, Big Bands, Jazz, Bebop, Rhythm and Blues, Swing

FIFTIES
Rock and Roll, Country, Soul, Broadway Show Tunes

SIXTIES
Motown, Pop, Rhythm and Blues

SEVENTIES
Disco, Soft Rock, Hard Rock, Punk Rock, Folk

EIGHTIES
New Wave, Rap

NINETIES
Computerized Music, Slamming, Hip Hop

TWENTIES
All of the above
CHECKLIST FOR YOUR LYRICS
Strive to have at least 3 or 4 items in each category

Beginning of the Process:
____ A genuine idea based on a newspaper article, history or current events
____ A memorable title: word, question, pun, dynamic phrase, quote, theme statement
____ A strong beginning that will keep people’s interests
____ The appropriate format: AAA, ABAB, etc.
____ A strong time frame
____ Characters that people will care about and understand
____ Lyric information that is worthwhile and newsworthy
____ A new way of looking at an old theme
____ Inclusion of something novel in the lyrics

Middle of the Process:
____ Word elements that will keep repeating in a listener’s mind
____ Use of antonyms, alliteration, time periods, colors, location, colloquialisms, and/or highly descriptive terms
____ Use of questions, quotes, greetings, requests, responses and/or provocative statements
____ Use of types of irony, puns, personification, similes, metaphors and/or other figures of speech
____ Strong visual images and use of the five senses
____ Showing of emotions, attitudes, strengths and weaknesses
____ Directed lyrics focusing on saying, being or alluding

End of the Process:
____ A pay off for the listener, a final message or learning
____ A retained memory of the lyrics and their message
____ Repetition that highlights the key message
____ An ending that makes the listener reflect
ACRONYM FOR WRITING SUCCESSFUL LYRICS

S  Simplicity

U  Unified story line

C  Clarity and compression

C  Consistency and coherence

E  Eloquent characterizations

S  Systematic rhymes and rhythms

S  Systematic repetitions

F  Focus on feelings

U  Universally understood situation

L  Learning a life lesson
**USING THE LYRICAL OUTLINE TO MAKE LYRICS MORE INCLUSIVE**

Use this lyrical outline to make decisions regarding your lyrics and to give your listeners a clue about where your song is going through your use of viewpoint, voices, time, and setting. In each section write a brief description that creates the framework for your lyrics. Write your lyrics on a separate sheet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>VOICE:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>VIEWPOINT:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I/We</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You/You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/She/They</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>TIMEFRAME:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>SETTING:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particular Place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undefined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NARRATIVE LYRICS PLANNING SHEET / TELLING A STORY

Use this lyrics planning sheet to create the title and theme you want to write about. Then describe the key characters and their situations and create the storyline. Write the lyrics on a separate sheet of paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC / POSSIBLE TITLE(S) FOR YOUR SONG:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme, Message, or Insight that you want to convey.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY CHARACTERS:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character Emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characters Thoughts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characters Actions/Conflict, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STORY LINE:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of Story / Setting / Time &amp; Place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle of Story / Conflict &amp; Solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Story / Conclusion &amp; Resolution, Universal Message</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ATTITUDINAL LYRICS PLANNING SHEET / TAKING A CRITICAL STANCE

Use this lyrics planning sheet to create the title and outline the story using the 5W’s and H. Then describe the attitude of characters and their emotional situation. Describe what needs to be done and the solution and then the universal theme or payoff for the listener. Write the lyrics on a separate sheet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC / POSSIBLE TITLE(S) FOR YOUR SONG:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTITUDE OF KEY CHARACTERS:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Possible Reasons for Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions Linked to Attitude</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE? / VISUALIZATION OF THE SOLUTION:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIVERSAL THEME / FINAL PAYOFF OF THE LYRICS:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
SITUATIONAL LYRICS PLANNING SHEET
CHARACTER STUDIES / EMOTIONAL OUTLET

Use this lyrics planning sheet to create the title, the set of circumstances and how they came about that you want to write about. Then describe the situation, how people react to it and what you want the listener to learn or remember. Write the lyrics on a separate sheet of paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC / POSSIBLE TITLE(S) FOR YOUR SONG:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Set of Circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Did The Circumstances Come About?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHERE IS THE SITUATION(S) GOING:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People involved and their reaction to the situation(s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIVERSAL LEARNING FOR THE LISTENER:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What should the listener remember?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
USING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN LYRIC WRITING

Lyric writing requires that the lyricist be as colorful and expressive as possible. In many cases this means using figurative language. Given below are some of the types of figurative language that will help to build your writing skills. Use them freely in your lyric writing, without being redundant.

The Pun: The pun is a play on words. Many good newspaper headlines are puns because they attract the reader’s attention and make the reader think. In a pun the writer contrasts a similarity of sound with a dissimilarity of meaning. Puns often come with the use of homonyms, words with the same sound and spelling, but different meanings.

The Simile: This figure of speech equates dissimilar things explicitly using like, as, or than. It is a figure of comparison that helps the listener visualize what is being said while also visualizing the comparison to another item.

The Metaphor: This figure of speech is similar to the simile except the words like, as, or than are not used. These words are inferred and don’t really hinder the metaphor. Good lyrics often include at least one effective metaphor or simile.

Understatement/Overstatement: To make a point come alive the writer can always use understatement or overstatement. These figures of speech will help attract the listener’s attention and engage the thinking process.

Sarcasm: This figure of speech must be carefully used in lyric writing. This format brings a strong tone to a lyric and can sometimes be misread. Sarcasm is usually used to put down or make fun of a particular situation, person, or event. Satire is a form of sarcasm.

Irony: The irony is the twist in the event. There is a lack of congruity when the twist or irony is part of the lyrics. The ironic format can make lyrics memorable. However, if not used properly, the irony or twist can be confusing.

Personification: This figure of speech can be extremely beneficial to a lyricist. It gives human qualities to inanimate objects or abstractions. It makes the song come alive with all sort of visual images that would otherwise not be possible. If properly utilized, personification can keep the words revolving in the listeners mind.

Apostrophe: This figure of speech is interesting in that with this format a person who is absent or dead, a place, an object or an abstraction, etc. can be addressed as if alive. In fact, in the song the person, object, or abstraction, can even presumably answer. Anything is possible with an apostrophe.

Oxymoron: This figure of speech is a form of irony. It takes two items or situations that are totally out of sync with each other and puts them effectively together in a meaningful phrase. Many of these effective phrases become quoted later on. Examples: "It was the best of times, It was the worst of times." Charles Dickens A Tale of Two Cities "

Onomatopoeia: Means choosing a word that sounds like its meaning. Buzz is a perfect example.

Hyperbole: This figure of speech utilizes an exaggerated or extravagant statement that may not be entirely accurate.
USING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE AS A LYRIC TOOL

A good mix of figurative and literal language makes for effective lyrics. Rely on the figures of speech listed on these pages to create vivid pictures in the minds of listeners. Use the dictionary definitions given and find examples of each figure of speech in the newspaper or on the Internet to develop a better understanding of how to use each of them. Use the boxes below to make note of the figures of speech you may want to include in your lyrics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Pun</th>
<th>Contrasts a similarity of sound with a dissimilarity of meaning. Examples: A chicken crossing the road is <em>poultry</em> (poetry) in motion.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Simile</td>
<td>Comparing dissimilar things using like, as, or than. Example: The snow was like a blanket. As good as gold — <a href="https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/371067-as-good-as-gold">Charles Dickens</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Metaphor</td>
<td>Compares dissimilar things like the simile except the words like, as, or than are not used, but are implied. Example: The snow was a blanket over the earth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understatement/Overstatement</td>
<td>Using very low-key expression or exaggeration. Example: an Army officer has just lost his leg. Asked how he feels, he looks down at his bloody stump and says, &quot;Stings a bit.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarcasm/Satire</td>
<td>Poke fun at or put down someone or something. Example: If you be the son of God, descend from the cross — <a href="https://biblehub.com/mat/27-43.htm">Matt. 27</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Irony:** Perception that events are not what they are said to be or what they seem. Example: You stay up all night studying for a test. When you go to class, you discover the test is not until the next day.

**Personification:** Inanimate objects are given human characteristics. Example: A tree whose hungry mouth is prest, Against the earth's sweet-flowing breast. *Joyce Kilmer*, Trees

**Apostrophe:** When a person who is absent or dead, a place, an object or an abstraction, etc. is addressed as if alive. Ex.: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" 1 Cor. 15:55

**Oxymoron:** When two items or situations that are out of sync are put together. Example phrase: One long day in the middle of the night, Two dead men came out to fight. Back to back they faced each other, Drew their swords and shot each other.

**Onomatopoeia:** Use of words that sound like what they mean i.e. buzz, fizz, boom, hush, click, etc.

**Hyperbole:** An exaggerated or extravagant statement that may not be entirely accurate. Examples: He is as big as a house! That's the worst idea in the world. I'm so hungry I could eat a horse!
THE DESCRIPTIVE QUAD OF LYRICS

Lyrics become more meaningful when the various parts of speech become enhanced through the **Descriptive Quad**. The quad involves **nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs**. When you are a lyricist you need to use all four parts of speech in the most effective forms possible.

When you use a **noun, adjective, verb or adverb**, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is this the best part of speech (**noun, adjective, verb or adverb**) to use for what I want to say?
2. What can I add to the part of speech to make it more detailed, more descriptive, more visual to the listener?
3. What question might the listener have that I can answer with a new word or a more descriptive phrase?
4. Are there words or phrases than might sound better as lyrics because of the phrasing and their impact on the content of the message?
5. Can I use some of the parts of speech in a unique combination to make the song more interesting?

**Applying the Descriptive Quad to your own Lyrics:**

Choose at least one noun from the lyrics that you have written. Take this noun and read its place in the song carefully. Now think if there is a better noun to convey your meaning.

If there is not a better noun think about adding other words to the noun to make it more descriptive. Close your eyes and visualize what you have just written. Are the words you have written and what you see in your mind, one and the same?

Now read your lyrics to another person and see if they can visualize what you are trying to say to the listener. Ask for their input. Make possible changes based on their perceptions.

Reexamine the lyrics again. Are there words that need to be changed because they do not fit the rhyme and rhythm of the song? Might there be better words to keep the lyrics ringing in your ears? You need to utilize “catchy parts of speech” in your lyrics to keep the listener’s attention. You need lyrics that people will want to hear repeatedly.

If your lyrics are not catching your eye, your mind and your ear, think of how you can use the same words in a somewhat different pattern. There are so many ways to say the same thing. Instead of always starting in the beginning, start at the end, in the middle, etc. You have a great deal of freedom when you are a lyricist.

Remember the message, how you convey meaning and how your words affect people is what song writing is all about. You want your listeners to react positively to your message through remembering the words, reacting reflectively, and wanting to repeatedly replay your message.

Once you have completed your comprehensive visitation with key nouns in your lyrics, do the same with **key verbs, adjectives, and adverbs**. All of these parts of speech need to be extremely well developed to bring true meaning to your lyrics. In essay writing, the key is revision, revision, revision. The same revision is necessary for lyric writing. There is no such thing as doing too many revisions.
**USING THE DESCRIPTIVE QUAD TO IMPROVE YOUR LYRICS**

Choose nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs from newspaper articles for use in your lyrics and place them in the boxes below. Now look in the newspaper for even better words: nouns that come alive; verbs with more action; adjectives that are more descriptive; adverbs that are more authentic. You may also use a thesaurus or dictionary to help find new, stronger words. Then write a few lyrical lines using the words you have chosen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nouns From The Newspaper:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Nouns That Really Come Alive:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyrical Lines Using Your Best Nouns:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs From The Newspaper:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Verbs With More Action:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyrical Lines Using Your Best Verbs:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjectives From The Newspaper:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Adjectives That Are More Descriptive:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyrical Lines Using Your Best Adjectives:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adverbs From The Newspaper:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Adverbs That Are More Authentic:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyrical Lines Using Your Best Adverbs:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE 5 W’S AND AN H OF LYRIC WRITING

Good lyrics require that the listener understand fully what the lyricist is trying to say about himself/herself and the world. Of course, there is always room for inference but the listener must be able to make out the when, where, who or what, why and how of the song. Along with these six key elements, the listener also needs to be able to detect a clear beginning, middle, and end to the story or situation.

When a song has a strong structure such as the one outlined above, the listener will be more appreciative of the lyrics. The lyrics will have great meaning as well as serve the purpose for which they were meant.

For years newspapers have been relying on the 5W’s and an H to help with writing clarity. Now these same six areas can be applied to effective lyric writing. Given below is information on the six areas and what they should include

**Who:** The who of the song focuses on the singer or who the singer is telling us about. We need to understand the relationships in the song, what has happened in the past, and what is presently taking place. The song might also project into the future.

**What:** The what must provide a clear understanding of the situation as it stands right at this moment. If there is a problem, how did it take place, what’s being done to make it better, and are people and/or events falling apart?

**When:** The when of the song establishes whether the song is about the past, the present, or the future, or whether it is traveling through all three time zones. If the song is about something that’s happening at the instant of the singing, we must know that it is presently unfolding, and the lyric must convey the urgency or passivity of the moment.

**Where:** This aspect of the song must put us into the intimacy of the situation. We need to know the location of the various settings in the song. We also need to have some highly descriptive visualization for these locations.

**Why:** The why of the song must explore the details of the situation and why things are the way they appear to be. Examination into causes and effects, problems and solutions come into play in this part of the song. At this point, fingers can be pointed and judgments can be made.

**How:** The how portion of the song is usually the most difficult. This portion of the song is where the problem is possibly solved or solutions given. Here we discover possible alternatives for success. Here is where we find hope.
**USING THE 5W’s and H & STORY MAPPING TO STRUCTURE YOUR LYRICS**

Examine newspaper articles to understand how the 5W’s and H are incorporated in news stories. Then use the 5W’s and H from one story and organize them in each section below. Then write one or more lyrical lines for each section to use in telling the story as a song.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SETTING / When/Where:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CHARACTERS / Who:</th>
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<th>PROBLEM / Why did it happen?:</th>
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<th>ATTEMPT AT RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM / What can be done?</th>
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<th>CONCLUSION or RESOLUTION / How will everyone be affected?:</th>
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PUTTING PERSUASIVE MESSAGES IN YOUR SONG

Examine ads in the newspaper to find use of these five persuasive techniques. Describe the example below and then write a lyrical line or song using each technique.

TESTIMONIAL: A picture or statement from a famous living person endorsing the advertised product.

TRANSFER: Associating something we view with pride with a product i.e. US Flag, Statue of Liberty.

GLITTERING GENERALTIES: General positive statements without specifics i.e. it's good for you; four out of five agree.

PLAIN FOLKS OR ELITISM: Techniques that are designed to appeal to the common person or those with high economic status.

BANDWAGON: Attempts to persuade by stressing the popularity of the product.
### USING CAUSE & EFFECT AND CONFLICT EFFECTIVELY IN YOUR LYRICS

Examine news articles in the newspaper to determine causes & effects and conflict in news events. Describe a few examples below. Then use one of the events to write a song describing the cause & effect and conflict with the solution or your own solution.

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Lyrical Patterns With Worksheets
# Lyrical Song Pattern Examples

### Somewhere Over the Rainbow
**Lyrics by E.Y. Harburg**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>A - B - A</th>
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A

Somewhere over the rainbow
Way up high,
There's a land that I heard of
Once in a lullaby.

A

Somewhere over the rainbow
Skies are blue,
And the dreams that you dare to dream
Really do come true.

**B - Bridge**

Someday I'll wish upon a star
And wake up where the clouds are far
Behind me.
Where troubles melt like lemon drops
Away above the chimney tops
That's where you'll find me.

A

Some say love it is a river
That drowns the tender reed.
Some say love it is a razor
That leaves the soul to bleed.
Some say love it is a hunger
An endless aching need.
I say love it is a flower
And you, it's only seed.

A

It's the heart afraid of breaking
That never learns to dance.
It's the dream afraid of waking
That never takes a chance.
It's the one who can't be taken
Who cannot seem to give,
And the soul afraid of dying
That never learns to live.

A

When the night has been too lonely
And the road has been too long,
And you think that love is only
For the lucky and the strong,
Just remember in the winter,
Far beneath the bitter snows,
Lies the seed that with the suns love
In the spring becomes the rose.

**EXAMPLES:** "Yesterday" (Beatles), "Just the Way You Are" (Billy Joel), Bruce Springsteen's "Fire" and "Streets of Philadelphia," Shania Twain's "From This Moment On".

Find most lyrics on [www.lyrics.com](http://www.lyrics.com)

### The Rose
**Lyrics by Amanda McBroom**

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A

Some say love it is a river
That drowns the tender reed.
Some say love it is a razor
That leaves the soul to bleed.
Some say love it is a hunger
An endless aching need.
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And the road has been too long,
And you think that love is only
For the lucky and the strong,
Just remember in the winter,
Far beneath the bitter snows,
Lies the seed that with the suns love
In the spring becomes the rose.

**EXAMPLES:** Johnny Cash, "I'll Walk the Line"; "By The Time I Get To Phoenix" (Jimmy Webb), Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are A Changin'"

### Tie a Yellow Ribbon
**Lyrics and Music by Irwin Levine and L. Russell Brown**

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<th>C - V - C</th>
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**Verse**

I'm comin' home, I've done my time
Now I've got to know what is and isn't mine
If you received my letter telling you I'd soon be free
Then you'll know just what to do
If you still want me
If you still want me

**Chorus**

Whoa, tie a yellow ribbon 'round the ole oak tree
It's been three long years
Do ya still want me? (still want me)
If I don't see a ribbon 'round the ole oak tree
I'll stay on the bus
Forget about us
Put the blame on me
If I don't see a yellow ribbon 'round the ole oak tree

**Verse**

Bus driver, please look for me
'cause I couldn't bear to see what I might see
I'm really still in prison
And my love, she holds the key
A simple yellow ribbon's what I need to set me free
I wrote and told her please

**Chorus**

Whoa, tie a yellow ribbon 'round the ole oak tree
It's been three long years
Do ya still want me? (still want me)
If I don't see a ribbon 'round the ole oak tree
I'll stay on the bus
Forget about us
Put the blame on me
If I don't see a yellow ribbon 'round the ole oak tree

Now the whole darn bus is cheerin'
And I can't believe I see
A hundred yellow ribbons 'round the ole oak tree
THE 12 BAR LYRIC PATTERN

Cause and Effect/Problem Solution Articles

The most common pattern for song writing is the 12 bar pattern. It is a good pattern with which to begin lyric writing. The 12 bar lyric pattern includes 12 lines broken into four verses with three lines each. The first two lines of each verse are the same. The third line has a new message. The third line is usually a summation of the first two lines. Each of the lines in the pattern is usually 7 – 9 beats, but this does not have to be uniform. The 12 Bar Lyric Pattern is excellent for telling a story that includes cause and effect. Protest songs often use this pattern.

Verse Pattern:

• 12 line total
• 4 verses of three lines each
• Line 1 and line 2 of each verse are identical
• Line three of each verse includes new material that helps build an understanding of the event
• Usually 7 – 9 beats to a line.

Verse Content:

• The first verse usually focuses on a statement of the problem or cause
• The second verse discusses the cause of problem and how it came about
• The third verse continues to give more pertinent information regarding the cause or problem.
• The fourth verse talks about effects of problem and/or how they were or might be solved.

Modifications

• Add more than 12 lines for additional description and information.
• Add another verse with your suggestions for solutions
• Repeat the first verse at the end to give a circular effect to the lyric
• Add any other features that will make your lyric more effective.
THE 12 BAR LYRIC PATTERN:

\[ V - V - V - V \]

Title of Song

Verse 1

1

2 same as line 1

3

Verse 2

1

2 same as line 1

3

Verse 3

1

2 same as line 1

3

Verse 4

1

2 same as line 1

3
ABAB LYRIC WRITING PATTERN:  
MODIFICATIONS FOR ABAC AND ABCD

Descriptive/Narrative Writing, Main Ideas, Character Study, Drawing Conclusions, Point of View

The ABAB lyrical writing pattern usually starts with an eight bar verse, which embodies the main musical idea. This verse is then followed immediately by a B eight bar section which helps to further develop the main idea or theme. This B section must also move the song along so that listeners will understand the need for the next A section. Sometimes the final 16 lines of the song are repetitions of the first 16 lines. Sometimes the final 16 lines, the AB, continue with new information.

Verse Pattern:
- 32 lines
- Four verses 8 lines each
- Title can be the first line of the song
- Title can be in the last line of the song
- The first AB and the second AB can be identical twins.
- AB can be repeated three times for triplets
- Instead of singing AB over and over, the AB music may play without any vocals.
- Meter may change from one syllable to two-syllable word in ABAB
- An ABAB title may be one word. It may be in the beginning or ending line of each or any verse.

Verse Content:
- Emotional payoff found in the lyrics
- Detailed character study
- Strong use of figurative language and comparisons
- Very descriptive phrasing
- Inclusion of very strong phrases, or focus words
- The A verse could be one person speaking, while the B verse could be another person
- Need for strong reinforcement of content message
- Topic and given opinion should be strongly reinforced by lyrics
- ABAB lyrics should move audience on a deeper level than most songs
- Lyrics can involve one or more points of view

Modification:
- ABAC: This format is an extension of ABAB. The final C may introduce all new material necessary to the lyrics or start off with the first two or three lines of B, eventually ending with dynamic new concluding ideas.

- ABCD: This format is an extension of ABAC. Instead of numerous repetitions new material is constantly being added. These lyrics are linear in nature and usually have much depth to them. If the lyricist needs to repeat any portions of the song, he/she can do so by adding more verses. The D section in this case must bring strong closure to the song.
ABAB LYRIC WRITING PATTERN: MODIFICATIONS FOR ABAC AND ABCD

A – B – A – B

Title of Song

A - Title
2
3
4
5
6
7
8

B
2
3
4
5
6
7
8

A/C - Title
2
3
4
5
6
7
8

B/C/D
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
THE AAA LYRIC PATTERN

Comparison and Contrast — For use with newspaper articles dealing with people in the news, places in the news and changing times.

The AAA lyric pattern is usually 16 bars long with two verses made up of eight bars each. The title of the song or a newspaper headline starts each of the two verses. There is no particular number of beats per line in the AAA lyric pattern. This pattern is used more for telling a story about a person, a place or changing times. The format is quite free form and what matters most is the content and what is being told in the story. A good AAA lyric pattern writer is usually a good storyteller.

Verse Pattern:

- 16 bars long
- 3 verses of eight lines each (more verses can be added)
- The title of the song is the first line or the last line of each verse
- Freestanding structure, no specific number of beats

Verse Content

- Show instead of tell in the lyrics
- Highly descriptive elements
- Compelling story telling that includes people, places or times and how they change
- Social commentary
- Carefully choose vocabulary
- Lyrics that are attitudinal or situational in character
- Free use of repetition
- Use of alliteration, anaphora (echoes) and allusions to other people, times and places.
- Inclusion of universal truths
- Exposure to strong characters and their inner workings
- Strong statement in the title and strong story line statements.

Modifications

- Add another eight lines with the title at the beginning of verse
- Place the title at the end of the eight lines instead of at the beginning
- Repeat certain passages within the eight
- Add a refrain at the end of each verse
- Add any elements that will enhance lyrics
AAA LYRIC WRITING PATTERN:

A – A – A

Title of Song

A - Title
2
3
4
5
6
7
8

A - Title
2
3
4
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6
7
8

A - Title
2
3
4
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8
AABA & AABABA LYRICAL PATTERNS

Taking a Critical Stance, Expressing Emotions, Tonal differences, Flashbacks and Flash forwards, Characterization, Prediction, Story Elements, Compare and Contrast, Chronology

The AABA lyrical pattern is 32 bars. The 8-line A bars are made up of repetitious elements. The B, bridge, forms a contrast between the content in the A verse. AABA can be extended to the AABABA lyrical pattern, which consists of 48 bars with two bridges of 8 lines each instead of only one.

Verse Pattern:

• 32 lines, which can be extended to 48 lines with AABABA
• 16 lines of A followed by a B, and another A (can be extended by a B and a final A)
• B should provide a rhythmic, melodic, or tonal contrast to A
• A tells us what is needed in the story; B tells us how to get there.
• The final A is usually very dramatic
• B is usually a foil (a useful or interesting contrast) for A
• Pronouns should be changed at different points in the song for contrast.

Verse Content:

• Key words phrases sometimes found in the lyrics are:
  "so now I, but once we, I guess, remember when we'd, I can tell you that, I wish you'd, if only, maybe someday."
• Allusions, idioms and figurative language are prominent in AABABA lyrics
• A proposal for people’s acceptance is usually part of the song
• The focus from general to more specific may keep changing in AABABA
• Emotions intensify in the song as the story develops, however, they must be natural.
• Research information may be needed to give the song depth.
• Belief in the major characters and their proposal is essential in this format

Modifications:

• AABABA is based on the AABA format of lyric writing. However, this format incorporates an additional sixteen lines to become more comprehensive. These 16 extra lines can also be extended for an even more chronological emphasis.
• Many writers also like to use additional lines for comparison and contrast or for getting into the mind of the main character in the song.
AABABA LYRICAL PATTERN

| A - A - B - A |

**Title of Song**

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8 - Title

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8 - Title

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<th>B - Bridge</th>
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VERSE CHORUS LYRICAL PATTERN

Story Retelling Life Tales, Story Grammar, Story Mapping, 5W’s and an H for Summarization, Comparison and Contrast, Reflection

The Verse Chorus Lyrical Format allows the writer many options. He/she can use verses and a repeated chorus or include bridges and climbs. The verse is very musical and lyrical and introduces the listener to the central idea. The chorus allows the writer to repeat the title phrase over and over to get a message across to the listener. The chorus embodies the melody and is the most memorable. The title is usually found in the first line of the chorus. The bridge adds something new and exciting before the message is repeated. The bridge also gives us new ideas about the personality or the situation in the song. Bridges bring a fresh prospective to the song. The climb, on the other hand, helps to introduce the chorus in a way that it will have a stronger impact on the song.

Verse Pattern:

• 32 lines divided into 4 sections or additional lines
• The first eight lines can be followed by a chorus and then repeated. The chorus includes a hook or memory grabber that stays in the listener's mind. This hook can be a title or catchy phrase
• The title can come at the beginning or end of the chorus. It can be in the form of a question.
• Words in the chorus may vary from time to time
• The last chorus should be very climatic and complete the thought in the previous chorus
• Climbs, chorus, and bridges may be two, four, or six lines
• The climb can be a couplet with two rhymed lines

Verse Content:

• Verse usually sets up situation, chorus sums up attitude
• Material needs some elements of repetition
• Verse should be a retelling of a story in a dynamic way
• Detailed and descriptive information should be included in every verse
• First person reflections help build the lyrics
• Words are strong, compelling, memorable, provocative, playful, clear, well crafted yet simple
• Chorus should be a natural outcome of final thoughts

Modifications:

• The first eight line verse can be followed by a climb, a chorus, and another verse
• The first eight lines can be followed by a chorus, another verse and chorus, and then a bridge to the final chorus.
VERSE CHORUS LYRICAL PATTERN

Verse – Chorus – Verse – Chorus Optional to add Bridge – Chorus

Title of Song

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8 - Title
NEWSPAPER-RELATED IDEAS FOR LYRIC WRITING

**Word Find Song:** Clip key word from news headlines and use them to develop a song.

**Dear Abby Song:** Take a personal problem and answer the problem through lyrics.

**Sports Chant:** Develop a chant for your favorite sports team.

**Patriotic Song:** Write a song on patriotic issues in the news.

**Hero Song:** Write a song about a real-life hero in the news.

**What’s in a Photo Song:** Clip a photo from the paper and write a song based on it. Use language that creates a clear visualization of the photo for listeners.

**Solve a Problem Song:** Write a song that addresses a problem in the community, nation or world. Define the problem and then recommend possible solutions in your song.

**Protest Song:** Write a protest song against something in the news with which you disagree.

**Issue Song:** Choose an issue that you feel strongly about and write persuasive lyrics.

**5 W’s & H Song:** Use the 5 W’s and H from a news story to create a song.

**Cartoon Song:** Create a song based on your favorite newspaper cartoon characters.

**You in the News:** Place yourself in the middle of a news article in your lyrics.

**Weather-Related Song:** Review the weather page and write a song about what is going on with the weather.

**Advertising Jingle:** Find an ad for something that interests you and write an ad jingle to sell it.

**Satirical Song:** Put down, make fun of, or spoof a real event in the news in lyrics.

**Current Event Song:** Write lyrics on what is happening now in the news.
INSPIRATION – Deciding What To Write About Using the Newspaper

Lyrics can be written about anything that interests you. The only limit is your imagination. Anything thought that crosses your mind might be a potential starting place for a lyric. Some songs describe feelings or ideas. Some songs are more poetic, often making little literal sense when read without music. Others describe actual events, places, people or things. These are called topical lyrics.

Topical Lyrics: The newspaper is a great place to find inspiration for lyrics – especially topical lyrics. Artists as diverse as Bob Dylan, Tupac Shakur, Marvin Gaye, Green Day and Eminem have described events found in newspapers in their lyrics. Topical lyrics can be written from any point of view. You can write a lyric protesting an injustice you have read about, or celebrating a story about a great endeavor someone has accomplished. You can write a topical lyric about a trend found in a fashion advertisement, or a recipe described in the Food section of the newspaper. The possibilities are endless.

| Topical Lyrics Exercise: | Choose a story out of today’s newspaper. Using the melody to a song that you know very well (perhaps something as simple as a nursery rhyme) write at least four rhyming lines describing the subject of your chosen story. If you feel like writing more, you can add more describing your personal feelings about the events or things in the article. |

Fictional Lyrics: Fictional lyrics are similar to topical lyrics in that they both tell a story of some kind, but in this case the story is largely made up from the writers imagination. Often the writer of this kind of lyric begins without knowing exactly how the story will end. Writing a fictional lyric can be a bit like putting together a puzzle without ever having seen the picture on the front of the box. The writer starts off with an idea, character or group of words that intrigues them, and then uses their imagination to elaborate from there.

| Fictional Lyrics Exercise: | Cut out a picture from today’s newspaper. Be careful not to read the story accompanying it. Looking at the picture out of the context of its story, describe what seems to be happening in it. Imagine what might have happened just before, and what might happen next. Write several rhyming lines telling your new story, adding more to it as you go. Then compare your lyrics to the original story. |

Poetic Lyrics: Some lyrics are based on feelings or impressions instead of concrete ideas. They seek to create moods more than to communicate a specific predetermined idea or story. The sounds, feelings and pictures created by words often inspire the writer to include them in their lyrics. Sometimes these words can make sense, other times they can be completely abstract and/or dreamlike.

| Poetic Lyrics Exercise: | Cut out several random groups bits of newspaper. You can cut out single words, groups of words, advertisements and pictures. Arrange them in several different combinations until they suggest something interesting to you. If one scrap has a picture of a baby and the next has the words “Atlantic Ocean” – try to imagine a connection between these things. Add more scraps of newspaper and keep making these connections for several more rhyming lines. The resulting lyrics might form a story that makes its own kind of sense, or it might just be a random collage of interesting words and images. It is completely up to you. |
Newspaper Activities Related to Lyric Writing

Lyric writing is not the only way to use music and newspapers in the classroom. Here are some additional activities that can motivate students and help them master essential skills. After completing mini-lessons related to lyric writing and the newspaper have students:

1. Collect articles from the newspaper that relate to music. Have these articles categorized according to type of music featured: classical, popular, country, jazz, contemporary, hip hop, sacred, rhythm and blues, etc. Have student explain the thinking behind the choices.

2. Use newspaper articles and other resources to develop a timeline of various types of music, when they were popular, and the characteristics of each type of music.

3. Study and analyze a number of newspaper musical reviews before creating original reviews for a new CD, a band, a local musical performance, a tour, etc.

4. Use newspaper material, headlines and photos to inspire original lyrics. Students may also use established tunes and just change the words.

5. Write a commercial jingle for a newspaper ad, classified or print. Tunes may be borrowed from another song.

6. Read a particular newspaper article and then suggest a recognizable tune that relates to the content of the reading.

7. Suggest a particular theme song for a person read about in a newspaper article. Justification for the choice of the song must then be given to the class. This activity works particularly well with famous people or community heroes.

8. Make instruments from recycled materials to accompany the lyrics to songs.

9. Listen to music from different genres and time periods to identify their characteristics and how they relate to the culture and events of their times. Link this information to original lyrics.

10. Link a particular song, or a newly written one, with various cartoon characters. Explain the reasons for the linkages.

11. Research various musicians, singers, and songwriters. Write a song to tell about the musician’s life and his/her impact on listeners.

12. Make a musical quilt with key historical lyrics from various time periods. Have students explain the importance of each quilt piece.

13. Take a poll of students regarding their favorite musical groups, singers, songs, etc. Make a bar graph from the results and write up the findings.

14. Use lyrics, original and/or established lyrics, to learn more about grammar and various figures of speech. Learning from a lyric sheet can be more beneficial than using a workbook page.

15. Use different types of music playing in the background as students write. Have students note the difference that music made in their work.

16. Keep a listener response journal filled with personal insights. Students should write in this journal following the listening to musical selections.

17. Nominate a favorite song for the song of the year. Write up a justification for this
nomination. Present the nomination to the class along with the actual music playing in the background.

18. Write a song entitled, The Day the Music Died. Tell what it might be like to go a day or a longer time period without music. Stress the importance that music has on our lives.

19. Talk to parents, neighbors and relatives about the music they enjoy and why. Be ready to discuss how music is associated with both the good and the bad times in people’s lives.

20. Use Dear Abby as a format for a song. Tell students to take a particular problem and suggest solutions using musical lyrics.

21. Compare and contrast the lyrics from two different songs that were based on compatible newspaper articles.

22. Think of critical national issues, areas of protest, our need for patriotism etc. and turn them into a rally song or a song for taking action.

23. Create a Found Song. A Found Song is based on pulling personal choice photos key words, parts of headlines, etc. from the newspaper to create an original song.

24. Create a List Song. A List Song gives us numerous alternatives once the topic has been introduced.

25. Turn the Newspaper 5W’s and an H into a song with strong definition.

26. Focus on a key vocabulary word found in the newspaper. Give ample information in the lyrics to help us remember this word.

27. Have students place themselves as a key participant in a newspaper article.

28. Take the weather reports in the newspaper and have students create weather related songs.

29. Have students take information from the newspaper on their favorite sporting team and create sporting chants, raps or cheers.

30. Use a newspaper headline to form the basis for the song. The actual headline may be highlighted in the chorus.

31. Select an inspiring photo from the newspaper and write visually documented lyrics to help someone else see the photo in their mind.

32. Select a newspaper story that is just so unbelievable you have to make fun of it or spoof it through lyrics.

33. Select a question that is posed inferentially or directly in a news article. Address the answer to this problem through lyrics.

34. Select an ongoing newspaper topic and write chronological lyrics to address the issues in the articles.

35. Write lyrics from different viewpoints in a variety of people. Have students address the first person, the second/third person viewpoint, and the complete outsider’s viewpoint.

36. Write a lyrical autobiography or biography based on the obituary format in the newspaper.

37. Start each day with a recap of the news from the previous day in lyrical form. This activity can be assigned to different groups.