



Everyone has a Soundtrack

"I think music in itself is healing. It's an explosive expression of humanity. It's something we are all touched by. No matter what culture we're from everyone loves music."

-Billy Joel

Music can be the great connector across time periods. In every generation and in every culture there is a musical legacy that is passed down. Music can also be very personal. A country song may have significant meaning and might provoke a strong emotion in one person, while causing another person to clap their hands around their ears to drown it out.

We all have favorite songs and favorite genres of music, but which ones really move us to another time and place? Which songs bring up either wonderful or sad memories? The goal of this lesson is to get students thinking about what music has really shaped their lives and how that music selection can help reveal their own personal story.

This activity can be done at any time of the year, but I have found it most useful as a beginning activity to help break the ice.

THE BASIC IDEA:

1. Have students create a personal playlist of 5 or more songs that compose the soundtrack of their life. It might be a song that a parent sang to them as a child. It could be the theme of a television show that they simply could not miss. It could be a song that was a rallying song for their favorite sports team.
2. Encourage them to move beyond their favorite songs of the moment. The purpose is to get a broad perspective and really think about what songs are important to them rather than just their current favorite.
3. With the personal playlist they should also include the reason they included that song. For example on my playlist I would include the following;

Rainbow Connection by Kermit the Frog: I chose this song because it was a song that I had to sing in my first grade play. To this day, every time I hear the song, it makes me feel nervous.

Basically the point of the activity is to get students to share something about themselves through the music that matters to them. In the years of doing this lesson, my own students have astounded me with some of their choices. Some funny, while others are kind of heartbreaking.

VARIATIONS:

1. In addition to creating the playlist, students can burn a CD of their music or put together the playlist on their iPod or other device. One or two students can start the class by being a DJ for the day, playing portions of some of their songs.
2. Guess That Student! One game that has been very popular in my own class has been to play some of the music at the beginning of class and have students try to guess who it is.
3. Make a top ten list that represents their class. Encourage them to change or modify it throughout the year.
4. Have the kids create an album or CD cover to accompany their playlist.

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

1. Encourage the students to be as open as possible with the assignment. When playing the music or discussing the songs they chose, ask what they are comfortable with sharing with the overall group. In my experience, some students have shared very personal songs that have reflected a very sad time like the death of a grandparent. Students should be encouraged to share but only what they are comfortable with.
2. Make sure that they understand what is appropriate for a school activity especially if playing the song in front of the class.
3. If you use music in your curriculum, then this is a great way to introduce students to the idea of using music as a teaching tool.



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Name: _____

Directions: If you were given the opportunity to tell about your life through songs, which songs would you choose? What songs best tell your story? In the spaces below, write the name of the song and why the song is significant.

Example

Twinkle Twinkle Little Star: I chose this song because it is the song my grandmother used to sing to me before going to bed. I used to also sing it all the time in 1st grade, but I used to say “tinkle tinkle little star”. Apparently it was my potty song too.

Song 1: _____

Reason:

Song 2: _____

Reason:

Song 3: _____

Reason:

Song 4: _____

Reason:

Song 5: _____

Reason:
