

Music and Attitude  
Notes to Instructor  
For Written Expression



Because the controversy around music lyrics often involves highly charged issues (violence, sex, Satanism, etc.), you may not feel comfortable using these assignments. This group of activities seemed to take on a life of its own and ended up being too difficult for the level of students it was originally intended for. In addition, the use of offensive vocabulary and slang, as well as the visual images seen in many music videos, may not seem appropriate to some instructors and some students. Students will probably have some difficulty accessing the vocabulary and slang and will need to get help from native speakers of their own age. (Some vocabulary and slang may not be understood by many instructors.) The "gist" of the message that is being promoted by each artist is clear without understanding each and every image, so students should be encouraged not to spend hours on vocabulary. The three artists used in activity #1 were chosen because they are readily accessible on radio, TV, and in music stores. You may wish to substitute other artists. It would seem impossible to do the final project without having delved into those aspects that may seem offensive. However, most of the other activities could be done with any type of music and music artist.

An instructor interested in using music and music videos (or TV and movie appearances) for language, critical thinking, and information technology instruction but not interested in current artists could substitute jazz, the Beatles, Elvis Presley etc. as the controversial "subjects" to be considered for the activities.



Music and Attitude  
Activity #1  
For Written Expression

Functions of this assignment:

- Vocabulary building
- Practice expressing creative ideas
- Exploring current popular cultural themes
- Familiarization with the structure of subsequent activities

Assessment criteria:

- Increased vocabulary—especially of current slang and idioms
- Ability to express ideas in writing and discussion
- Ability to discern and discuss current popular cultural themes

Assignment: Music Video and a Story Line

Find a music video with a story line. Play the video for the class without the sound. Have the students write down all their ideas of what the story is about. Discuss these ideas.

Students can write a paragraph about the video story.

Play the video with the sound. Identify key words and themes from the lyrics. Give the students a copy of the lyrics. Compare their paragraphs with the actual video story line. Discuss any cultural themes of interest to the students.



Music and  
Attitude  
Activity #2  
For Written Expression

Functions of this assignment:

- Practice synthesizing and organizing information
- Practice using patterns to answer questions
- Practice making inferences

Assessment:

- Ability to write an organized short summary demonstrating the use of making inferences, using patterns, and synthesizing

Assignment: Classify and Compare Music by Certain Artists.

Go to a music store and look at the CDs or tapes for the following artists:

- A Marilyn Manson
- B Shania Twain
- C Eminem

Pay attention to the following:

- What is the cover design?
- What is the title of the CD or tape?
- What are the song titles? Can you tell from the title what a particular song is about? Is this true for all titles?
- What do you expect the message of the song lyrics to be? What information did you use to reach this conclusion?

On a sheet of paper, list each artist and then write a short summary of the information you gathered. You should include a few song titles and any other information that supports your observations about the music/artist.

Music and Attitude  
Activity #3  
For Written Expression



Functions of this assignment:

- Introduction to the WWW
- Practice using different search engines
- Practice evaluating and analyzing the message in song lyrics

Assessment:

- Ability to access information on the WWW
- Ability to accurately "decode" and analyze the content of the song lyrics
- Ability to report in clearly understandable written form the results of this activity

Assignment: Analyze Music Lyrics to Determine the Intended Message

Analyze the lyrics of the songs on one of the CDs by Marilyn Manson or Eminem. You can get the lyrics from the Web. Use at least two search engines to find the lyrics. Keep a record of the search terms you used and how easy it was to find the lyrics. You should study the lyrics of at least three songs in order to form an opinion about this music. Because you may not understand all of the vocabulary, slang, or images described, you should discuss these things with some native English speakers in order to understand more clearly.

Think about the following:

- Are the values and attitudes portrayed or described positive or negative?
- Are these values and attitudes that you share? Why or why not?

- If everyone agreed with and followed the messages in these lyrics, what would the result be?
- Does this CD have a rating which restricts who can purchase it? Do you agree with the rating?

Write a short report that has two parts. In the first part, describe the process you used to locate the lyrics on the WWW. Be sure to list the URL of the site(s) you used. In the second part, write a summary explaining your answers to the questions above.

Music and Attitude  
Activity #4  
For Written Expression



Functions of this assignment:

- Practice using patterns to answer a question.
- Practice synthesizing and organizing information.

Assessment:

- Ability to accurately match the visual message with the message of the content of the song lyrics.
- Ability to organize this information in a clear paragraph.

Assignment: Analyze the Connection Between Music Videos and Song Lyrics

Watch several music videos. Take notes on what you see.

- Who is the artist or group?
- What is the song title?
- How is the artist dressed?
- What do you see in the video in addition to the person(s) singing?
- If you watch more than one video by this artist, what patterns can you find in the videos?
- What message do you think this music represents? How do you think the artist wants us to think and feel after we listen to it?

Now locate the lyrics to at least one of the songs which you saw on the music video. You may do this on the web or by using the CD or tape insert.

Compare the lyrics to the music video.

- Does the video help reinforce the message in the lyrics?
- How? Do you see any patterns which repeat in the video and in the lyrics?
- Is this message appropriate for all ages?
- What is good about the lyrics and the video?

- What is bad?

Write a paragraph in which you answer the questions above.

Music and Attitude  
Activity # 5  
For Written Expression



Functions of this assignment:

- Understanding plagiarism and the ramifications of plagiarizing
- Practice using correct documentation
- Practice using EBSCOhost and library reference materials
- Practice Web search strategies

Assessment:

- Ability to locate information about a selected artist
- Ability determine whether there is a connection between the artist's message and the artist's life
- Correct use of documentation and absence of plagiarism in the report

Assignment: Does an Artist's Background Influence His/Her Music?

Use EBSCOhost and library reference materials to gather information on a selected music artist. AND/OR Use the WWW to gather information on a selected music artist. You may research one of the three artists used in activity #1 or any other person you are interested in.

Write a short summary of the artist's life. Explain whether you feel that the content of his/her music relates directly to his/her life.

Music and Attitude  
Final Project  
For Written Expression



Functions of this assignment:

- Introduction to and practice using library resources
- Practice using search strategies
- Practice using documentation

Assessment:

- Ability to locate information using library resources and the WWW
- Ability to accurately evaluate the sources used in gathering information
- Ability to form an opinion and support it using information gathered
- Ability to use correct form, grammar, mechanics to write a short paper

Assignment: Write an Argument Paper

Find two articles that support the right of free expression of music artists and demonstrate that no one can be hurt by music. Make a photocopy or print off a copy of each article.

Find two articles that argue that the lyrics, music videos, and concerts of some music artists are causing antisocial behaviors and even crimes. Make a photocopy or print off a copy of each article.

Prepare a short report in which you explain which of the attitudes above you agree with and why. Be careful to use appropriate grammar, mechanics, and paragraphing. When you hand in your report, attach the four articles you located in the library or on the WWW.

Music and Attitude  
Assessment  
For Written Expression



### Library Research Checklist

Students can use the checklist to guide, record, and revise their research. The instructor can use it to evaluate the process and the product of the students' work.

Prepare the checklist in accordance to your expectations and criteria. Be sure the students understand the scoring system and devise a method of providing specific instructions for revision if students' work is inadequate.

Consider the following for the checklist: thesis statement, outline, sources, bibliography, content, style, organization, mechanics, proofreading, etc.

### Vocabulary Quiz

Select appropriate vocabulary from music videos viewed and/or discussed in class. Have students access more than one possible definition for each word. Go over the definitions—say the definitions in a variety of ways.

The quiz is in the form of a game. One student defines the word for the rest of the class but cannot use the word or any word containing it in the definition. Continue until all words have been defined. Scoring—1 point per student for each correctly defined word they guess; definer gets 3 points for each word that  $\frac{3}{4}$  or more guess correctly; definer loses 2 points if cannot define the word in 2 minutes.

Encourage class to ask questions of the definers.

## Other

Assessment tools listed in the "Commercially Conscious" activities can also be used here.