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English 112B

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### Works of Hope

Many young adults search for and desperately need one thing in particular to get them through hard situations and just every day life. They need something they can lean on, something they can depend on, something like hope. Hope is always there if you take the time to look for it, and especially in today's world hope is something everyone needs. Hope can be found in novels and plays taught in the high school classroom, however I feel there are some new and different ways to introduce the ideas as well as to engage the students. With so much technology and areas other than academics that students are overwhelmingly choosing to spend their time with, I feel I can bring a different perspective to the class that will show them they can apply ideas and notions taught at school to their lives outside.

My particular category under which to do my unit of study was 'Poetry, Drama, Humor, and New Media.' I started with poetry, but decided to begin with a different kind of poetry to begin the lesson: music. As Professor Warner did in her sample unit of study, I plan on introducing my lesson with a song widely known by most adolescents as well as many adults. In a clever article titled "Creative State of Mind," writers Amanda Christy Brown and Holly Epstein Ojalvo offered a different take on the popular song "Empire State of Mind" by Jay-Z. They ventured to write an article for the New York Times online education blog about how to incorporate this song into the typical english class to inspire students to see poetic devices often

used in music, even rap. This not only will grab the attention of a class but can encourage them to start keeping a journal of their own like Jay-Z himself did to write down anything; thoughts, feelings, whatever comes to mind that they want to remember. This turned into his form of songwriting, yet it provides a level playing field to engage students in an otherwise deemed 'boring' subject. This song also speaks of the great things that one can accomplish using New York as the vehicle for achieving those goals, offering hope to listeners.

Following the song introduction, Brown and Ojalvo also included a worksheet in the article asking students to listen and look at the lyrics, then identify poetic devices from similes to allusions and biblical references. This may also lead into a project perhaps to keep journals and write their own songs or poetry.

Another commonly known character, although fictional, leads a life in books that is filled with another form of poetry: haikus. In any one of the Harry Potter books, J.K. Rowling has done a fabulous job of creating a magical world of dragons but also of language and words. On a website from Professor Warner's link page, Teacher Vision brought me to Harry Potter and Haikus when searching for poetry. There was a handout showing what a haiku is and giving examples found in some of the actual books. Students are then encouraged to write their own haikus, share and edit with a partner and then with the class. This allows them to see that poetry can be in unlikely places like stories as well- yet be sure not to forget to follow the lines of hope being created, showing how Harry always stays positive and is able to win against everyone he comes up against.

There are many fun and creative ideas about how to find poetry in songs and books, but there must be classic poetry examined as well. I picked two poems absolutely perfect for this

unit, sticking with the theme but also providing a stage to build off of terms and techniques defined in the first handout activity. Langston Hughes' "I, Too, Sing America" and Emily Dickinson's "Hope is the thing with feathers (254)" are poems taught in high school english classes regularly. They are both by poets necessary to discuss, and they also both inspire the reader to feel the warmth that hope may provide, which is essential to the lives of young adults worldwide.

Finishing with the classic poets, this unit of study exhibits unorthodox methods of intriguing students and showing them where they can find poetry even when they don't expect it. It also casts a light on poetry that it can truly remind you to keep your head up, not to mention that if you look hard enough, everything around you somehow tells you to not lose sight of what you want. Hope gets us through the toughest times in life, and many times the toughest is adolescents making it all the more important.

## Works Cited

Brown, Amanda C., and Holly E. Ojalvo. "Creative State of Mind: Focusing on the Writing Process." New York Times. 2 Dec. 2010. Web. 9 May 2011. <<http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/12/02/creative-state-of-mind-focusing-on-the-writing-process/#more-42377>>.

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"Harry Potter: Haikus." Teacher Vision. Family Education Network. Web. 9 May 2011. <<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/harry-potter/lesson-plan/2677.html?detoured=1>>.

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## Harry Potter Haiku Handout

### 1. What is a haiku?

Haiku is a very old form of poetry from Japan. It consists of three unrhymed lines. Traditionally, the first and last lines have five syllables each, and the middle line has seven syllables. Notice how many syllables are in each line of this haiku by the 17th-century Japanese poet Basho. (Often when haiku is translated, however, the number of syllables is changed.)

**from all directions  
winds bring petals of cherry  
into the bird lake  
—Basho**

Having few words and pausing at the end of each short line gives a special feeling to haiku. Even a simple statement sounds thoughtful—as though it has a deeper meaning.

### 2. How do you write a haiku?

- Make sure your first line has five syllables, your second line has seven syllables and your final line has five syllables in it.
- Check out the examples below. These are dialogue taken from *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, and written as if they were haiku. Count the number of syllables in each line.

Behold the Wisdom of Hogwarts	
I hope you're pleased with yourselves. We could all have been killed — or worse, expelled. —Hermione Granger	I can teach you how to bottle fame, brew glory even stopper death —Professor Snape
Flint with the Quaffle — passes Spinnet — passes Bell — hit hard in the face —Lee Jordan, at Quidditch	how many times in our lives are we going to see a dragon hatching? —Ron Weasley
I can't see you. Are you ghoulie or ghostie or wee student beastie? —Peeves the Ghost	Hagrid, we saved the Stone, it's gone, he can't use it. Have a Chocolate Frog —Harry Potter

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

**4. Here is an example of a haiku written by a student:**

Harry soars past us  
a song in his heart, the Snitch  
in his sweaty palms  
—*Mirror Girl*, 12

**5. Now you try it!**

Line # 1 (five syllables):

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Line # 2 (seven syllables):

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Line # 3 (five syllables):

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## Creative State of Mind: Focusing on the Writing Process

By [AMANDA CHRISTY BROWN](#) and [HOLLY EPSTEIN OJALVO](#)

Astrid Stawiarz/Getty Images Jay-Z signs copies of his book “Decoded” at a Barnes & Noble in New York. [Go to related article »](#)

**Overview** | How can using writer’s notebooks and practicing the use of literary elements help writers develop ideas? In this lesson, students examine the lyrics of rap artist Jay-Z for literary elements including rhyme, metaphor, puns and allusions, then consider what he says about his own writing process. Finally, they analyze additional lyrics and apply lessons from Jay-Z’s process to their own reading and writing.

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Language Arts  
Teaching ideas based on  
New York Times content.

- [See all in Language Arts »](#)
- [See all lesson plans »](#)

**Materials** | Computer with projection equipment and speakers; music player (for student presentations); [copies of the lyrics to “Empire State of Mind”](#) and the handout [“Empire State of Mind Literary Elements Hunt” \(PDF\)](#)

**Warm-Up** | As students enter class, play on audio or video Jay-Z’s popular song [“Empire State of Mind”](#). (Note: The lyrics are provocative. Be sure to preview them to gauge appropriateness for your group.) Ask for reactions to the song. What do they like about it? What are the main ideas and themes of the lyrics? Is it literary? Why or why not?

Distribute [the lyrics to “Empire State of Mind”](#) and the handout [“Empire State of Mind Literary Elements Hunt” \(PDF\)](#). Challenge students to identify an example of each of the literary elements on the sheet in Jay-Z’s lyrics.

Once students have shared their examples and you have discussed their accuracy, ask: How has Jay-Z used these literary elements to express his own experience? Why does he use them? What effect do they have on you?

**Related** | In the article [“Jay-Z Deconstructs Himself,”](#) Michiko Kakutani reviews Jay-Z’s “Decoded,” a memoir chronicling his evolution as a writer and artist:

“Everywhere I went I’d write,” Jay-Z recalls in his compelling new book, “Decoded.” “If I was crossing a street with my friends and a rhyme came to me, I’d break out my binder, spread it on a mailbox or lamppost and write the rhyme before I crossed the street.” If he didn’t have his notebook with him, he’d run to “the corner store, buy something, then find a pen to write it on the back of the brown paper bag.” That became impractical when he was a teenager, working streets up and down the eastern corridor, selling crack, and he says he began to work on memorizing, creating “little corners in my head where I stored rhymes.”

In time, that love of words would give Jay-Z more No. 1 albums than Elvis and fuel the realization of his boyhood dream: becoming, as he wrote in one of his earliest lyrics, the poet with “rhymes so provocative” that he was the “key in the lock” — “the king of hip-hop.”

Read the entire article with your class, using the questions below.

**Questions** | For discussion and reading comprehension:

- As a young man, how did Jay-Z use his notebook to capture ideas for lyrics?
- How did Jay-Z’s former life as a drug dealer contribute to his development as a writer?
- How did writing help Jay-Z make sense out of his life?
- What are some examples of ways in which Jay-Z uses traditional literary devices to help him express street life?
- What does “postmodern” mean? In what way could Jay-Z’s work be considered postmodern?

**Activity** | Both the main activity detailed below, which guides students in examining song lyrics for literary elements, and the Going Further activity, which discusses how students might use writer’s notebooks to develop their own ideas for writing, revolve around Jay-Z’s writing process. Either could be the focus of your lesson.

To begin an examination of how writers use literary elements, call students’ attention to this paragraph from the article:

In the end, “Decoded” leaves the reader with a keen appreciation of how rap artists have worked myriad variations on a series of familiar themes (hustling, partying and “the most familiar subject in the history of rap — why I’m dope”) by putting a street twist on an arsenal of traditional literary devices (hyperbole, double entendres, puns, alliteration and allusions), and how the author himself magically stacks rhymes upon rhymes, mixing and matching metaphors even as he makes unexpected stream-of-consciousness leaps that rework old clichés and play clever aural jokes on the listener (“ruthless” and “roofless,” “tears” and “tiers,” “sense” and “since”).

Discuss how this applies to the lyrics from “Empire State of Mind” with the following questions:

- What themes does Jay-Z address in this song?
- How does his use of literary elements help bring out these themes?
- Where in the lyrics do you see layers of metaphors?
- What are the effects of his “language tricks” on you as a listener?

To go deeper on lyric analysis, have students examine another favorite song for literary elements. Artists might include [Bob Dylan](#), [Ray Davies](#), [Fall Out Boy](#), [the Beatles](#) and [many other lyricists](#). Some artists lend themselves better than others to this sort of analysis, so you might ask students to get your approval on their selections before moving forward.

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**RELATED RESOURCES** From The Learning Network

- [Lesson: “Songs in the Key of Lit”](#)
- [Lesson: “Boosting Rap’s Rep”](#)
- [Lesson: “Songs in the Key of Life”](#)

**From NYTimes.com**

- [Times Topics: Jay-Z](#)
- [“Taking a Hip-Hop Route to Teaching a Love of Language”](#)
- [“Child’s Garden of Hip-Hop \(for Mom to Love, Too\)”](#)

**Around the Web**

- [The New Yorker: ” Word“](#)
- [Two Writing Teachers Blog: Writer’s Notebooks](#)
- [“Teaching Poetry Through Rap”](#)



Have them print out the lyrics to their chosen song and annotate them by highlighting key words, literary elements and devices, observations they make about the text and ideas about theme. Then, have them find examples of as many [literary elements](#) as possible within the lyrics. Once they have done this, ask them to choose three literary elements to examine more closely. One way they might do this is by creating and filling in a chart with three column headings: “Passage,” “Literary Element” and “Analysis.”

Reconvene as a class for presentations. After students have finished sharing, ask them the following questions:

- What musical genres seemed to make the most use of literary elements? Why do you think this is?
- Why would musical artists use the same old literary devices we study in class?
- How do these artists keep these devices fresh and avoid cliché?
- What would the lyrics be like without these literary elements?
- Which of these lyrics would you call literary?

**Going Further** | Remind students how Jay-Z uses writer’s notebooks and used to jot down ideas for rhymes on the fly. How might he use these notes to develop songs? Tell them to start a writer’s notebook and use it, as Ralph Fletcher, a writer who champions writer’s notebooks, says, “to breathe in the world around,” and to include a variety of writing in their notebooks about things they notice, wonderings, small, intriguing details and seed ideas, as Jay-Z does.

Have students keep a writer’s notebook to capture details, scenes and emotions from their lives, schools and neighborhoods over a period of days or weeks. Encourage them to carry their notebooks with them always and to use them in ways that reflects them, whether that means drawing pictures, making lists, jotting down their thoughts in rhyme or writing fully fledged paragraphs. A writer’s notebook is a place for experimentation, creativity and risk taking. This can be done using a pad of paper or [tech tools like the iPod Touch](#).

Alternatively, students create and keep [commonplace books](#), in which they jot down snippets of lyrics they hear, bits of poetry and other quotations, as well as their ideas about these. Different from writer’s notebooks, in which students consciously write and record their own ideas, commonplace books serve as sort of collecting places for students to react and respond to other people’s words, which of course, can prove valuable fodder for their own writing.

You might give creative and personal writing assignments – including songwriting – designed to encourage students to [mine the raw material in their notebooks and develop more polished pieces](#).

**Standards** | This lesson is correlated to [McREL’s national standards](#) (it can also be aligned to the new [Common Core State Standards](#)):

### **Language Arts**

1. Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process
5. Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process

6. Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies for reading a variety of literary texts
7. Uses general skills and strategies to understand a variety of informational texts
8. Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes

### **Music**

7. Understands the relationship between music and history and culture

### **Arts and Communication**

1. Understands the principles, processes and products associated with arts and communication media
2. Knows and applies appropriate criteria to arts and communication products
3. Uses critical and creative thinking in various arts and communication settings
4. Understands ways in which the human experience is transmitted and reflected in the arts and communication

### **Life Skills: Working With Others**

1. Contributes to the overall effort of a group
4. Displays effective interpersonal communication skills

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## “Empire State of Mind” Literary Elements Hunt

**Directions:** Fill in the blank next to each literary element with an example from Jay-Z's lyrics.

Allusion \_\_\_\_\_

Biblical allusion \_\_\_\_\_

Hyperbole \_\_\_\_\_

Simile \_\_\_\_\_

Metaphor \_\_\_\_\_

Alliteration \_\_\_\_\_

Personification \_\_\_\_\_

Rhyme \_\_\_\_\_

Double entendre \_\_\_\_\_

Pun \_\_\_\_\_

Extra: Find another literary device in the lyrics not listed above:



“Hope is the thing with feathers” (254)  
by Emily Dickinson

Hope is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul,  
And sings the tune without the words,  
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;  
And sore must be the storm  
That could abash the little bird  
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chillest land,  
And on the strangest sea;  
Yet, never, in extremity,  
It asked a crumb of me.

“I, Too, Sing America”  
by Langston Hughes

I, too, sing America

I am the darker brother.  
They send me to eat in the kitchen  
When company comes,  
But I laugh,  
And eat well,  
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,  
I'll be at the table  
When company comes.  
Nobody'll dare  
Say to me,  
"Eat in the kitchen,"  
Then.

Besides,  
They'll see how beautiful I am  
And be ashamed--

I, too, am America.

[Jay-Z]  
Yeah,

Yeah, Imma up at Brooklyn,  
Now I'm down in Tribeca,  
Right next to DeNiro,  
But I'll be hood forever,  
I'm the new Sinatra,  
And since I made it here,  
I can make it anywhere,  
Yeah they love me everywhere,  
I used to cop in Harlem,  
All of my dominicanos  
Right there up on broadway,  
Brought me back to that McDonalds,  
Took it to my stash spot,  
Five Sixty Stage street,  
Catch me in the kitchen like a simmons whipping pastry,  
Cruising down 8th street,  
Off white lexus,  
Driving so slow but BK is from Texas,  
Me I'm up at Bedsty,  
Home of that boy Biggie,  
Now I live on billboard,  
And I brought my boys with me,  
Say wat up to Ty Ty, still sipping Malta  
Sitting courtside Knicks and Nets give me high fives,  
N-gga I be spiked out, I can trip a referee,  
Tell by my attitude that I most definitely from...

[Alicia Keys]  
In New York,  
Concrete jungle where dreams are made of,  
There's nothing you can't do,  
Now you're in New York,  
These streets will make you feel brand new,  
Big lights will inspire you,  
Lets here it for New York, New York, New York

[Jay-Z]  
I made you hot n-gga,  
Catch me at the X with OG at a Yankee game,  
Sh-t I made the yankee hat more famous than a yankee can,  
You should know I bleed Blue, but I aint a crip tho,  
But I got a gang of n-ggas walking with my click though,  
Welcome to the melting pot,  
Corners where we selling rocks,

Afrika bambaataa sh-t,

Home of the hip hop,  
Yellow cap, gypsy cap, dollar cab, holla back,  
For foreigners it aint fitted they forgot how to act,  
8 million stories out there and their naked,  
Cities is a pity half of y'all won't make it,  
Me I gotta plug Special Ed "I got it made,"  
If Jesus payin LeBron, I'm paying Dwayne Wade,  
3 dice cee-lo  
3 card marley,  
Labor day parade, rest in peace Bob Marley,  
Statue of Liberty, long live the World trade,  
Long live the king yo,  
I'm from the empire state that's...

[Chorus]

In New York,  
Concrete jungle where dreams are made of,  
There's nothing you can't do,  
Now you're in New York,  
These streets will make you feel brand new,  
Big lights will inspire you,  
Lets here it for New York, New York, New York  
Welcome to the bright light...

[Jay-Z]

Lights is blinding,  
Girls need blinders  
So they can step out of bounds quick,  
The side lines is blind with casualties,  
Who sipping life casually, then gradually become worse,  
Don't bite the apple Eve,  
Caught up in the in crowd,  
Now your in-style,  
And in the winter gets cold en vogue with your skin out,  
The city of sin is a pity on a whim,  
Good girls gone bad, the cities filled with them,  
Mommy took a bus trip and now she got her bust out,  
Everybody ride her, just like a bus route,  
Hail Mary to the city your a Virgin,  
And Jesus can't save you life starts when the church ends,  
Came here for school, graduated to the high life,  
Ball players, rap stars, addicted to the limelight,  
MDMA got you feeling like a champion,  
The city never sleeps better slip you an Ambien

[Chorus]

In New York,  
Concrete jungle where dreams are made of,  
There's nothing you can't do,  
Now you're in New York,  
These streets will make you feel brand new,  
Big lights will inspire you,  
Let's here it for New York, New York, New York

[Alicia Keys]

One hand in the air for the big city,  
Street lights, big dreams all looking pretty,  
No place in the World that can compare,  
Put your lighters in the air, everybody say yeaahh  
Come on, come,  
Yeah,

[Chorus]

In New York,  
Concrete jungle where dreams are made of,  
There's nothing you can't do,  
Now you're in New York,  
These streets will make you feel brand new,  
Big lights will inspire you,  
Let's here it for New York, New York, New York

[End]