

2 Soundtrack of My Life

CORE MUSIC STANDARDS

Responding

- » Select: How do individuals choose music to experience?

Connecting

- » Personal Experiences: How do musicians make meaningful connections to creating, performing, and responding?
- » Varied Contexts: How do the other arts, other disciplines, contexts, and daily life inform creating, performing, and responding to music?

SUMMARY

When done well, this project should take four to five standard class days. Any less, and your students won't be doing their best work. They will be creating a personal soundtrack by selecting music to represent the elements of their lives. In doing so, they will be influenced by their interests, experiences, peers, and the social and cultural context of their adolescence. First, they will organize their thoughts on paper, and then they will make a digital playlist by summarizing their selections in a Google Slides file and inserting a high-quality video file for each song choice (music video, movie clip, live performance, etc.).

I originally designed this project as a culminating activity for the end of the year, but I soon moved it to September. My students *love* this project, which makes for an enthusiastic and engaged start to the school year. And even more importantly, I know my students so much better after reading their projects. “Engrave this upon your heart: there isn't anyone you couldn't love once you heard their story.”—Mary Lou Kownacki

MATERIALS

- » Reproducible “Soundtrack of My Life” (one per student)
- » Example playlist
- » Pencils
- » Computers, tablets, or personal devices
- » Audio system or speaker
- » Headphones

IMPLEMENTATION**Day 1**

Distribute the “Soundtrack of My Life” worksheet, read through the instructions as a class, and show students an example playlist. The example playlist included in this book was made by one of my own seventh grade students, but you don’t have to use it. Consider creating a playlist of your own from scratch!

There will be a LOT of questions, so I advise getting to the end of the instructions page before you open up the room to individual questions. You can also help yourself by only allowing questions to which the “whole class needs to know the answer.” That way, individual questions about specific songs are saved until later.

Once everyone is clear on the expectations, I recommend spending the rest of day 1 in the regular classroom, without computers. That way, your students will be forced to do a brain dump and get every single little idea that’s in their head down on paper without the distraction of the internet. It also allows you to circulate and help everyone get started without the added task of supervising computer usage.

A few pieces of advice from my experience with this project:

- » Don’t let students choose more than two or three songs by the same artist.
- » Not every choice needs to be a song with English lyrics (or even lyrics at all). Classical music, film and TV soundtracks, and video game theme songs are all great choices.
- » Remind students that they don’t have to personally enjoy listening to every song on their list. For instance, if their little sister is currently obsessed with *Sesame Street*, the theme song for that children’s show might be a good choice to represent her in their soundtrack.
- » You will have to come up with a stance on swear words. Personally, I will accept a song with one or two swear words, as long as it meets the guideline about not being crude or derogatory.

Days 2–5

Spend the next several days with computers, tablets, or personal devices. Students will need to listen to lots of music on YouTube and Spotify before they finish their organization charts, and then they will need Google Slides to put their final projects together. You may choose to limit internet browsing to these three sites (YouTube, Spotify, and Google Slides), or open up browsing under your school’s safety guidelines.

As stated before, if your students are writing thorough explanations and creating detailed Google Slides, you will need to give them at least three to four days on the computers (after the first day of set-up and written work). At the end of the project, you will have to decide how they should “hand in” their work. I use Google Classroom, so my students hand in all computer work on that site. You may also choose to have them “share” their projects with you directly from Google Slides, add them to a shared school folder to which you have access, or print them.

This is an intensely personal project for many students, so I don’t require them to present their projects to the class. In fact, I promise that I will be the only person to look at their work, unless I ask their permission to do otherwise. If your students are interested in sharing, you might consider allowing anyone who is interested to select one song from their playlist to explain and play for the class for an extra credit point.

Soundtrack of My Life

A soundtrack is an album of music from a movie, television show, video game, or audiobook. Your task is to create a soundtrack of your own life as a young person living in the United States in the 21st century.

WORK STEPS

- _____ **Step 1:** Choose *at least* ten parts of your life to include in your soundtrack. Circle them in the organization chart on the next page. You may come up with your own categories by filling in the “other” box at the bottom of the chart or crossing out and replacing categories that you aren’t planning on using.
- _____ **Step 2:** In the chart, write down a brief explanation for each of your ten choices. For example, if you choose “Family Vacation,” you might write down: “summer, waterskiing, lazy days.”
- _____ **Step 3:** Choose a song for each part of your life. List them in the chart. *Remember, lyrics that are crude or derogatory toward a race, gender, sexual orientation, or religion are not okay.*
- _____ **Step 4:** Decide on an order for your soundtrack. This could be chronological (from birth to present day), an average day (from waking up to going to sleep), from least to most important, or another order of your choosing! List the order in the last column of your chart.
- _____ **Step 5:** Come up with a *unique* title for your soundtrack. (Hint: It should not be “Soundtrack of My Life.”) List it above your chart.
- _____ **Step 6:** Login to your Google account and start a new Google Slides file.
- _____ **Step 7:** Assemble your playlist by following the example provided. You should include one slide with a video for every song listed in your chart. Use high-quality videos, from a variety of sources (music videos, movie clips, live performances, etc.).
- _____ **Step 8:** Add details to your playlist, including a creative title, short explanations, background colors, pictures, and fonts that fit the overall vibe of your playlist. **DO NOT** just use the colors and fonts in the example playlist.
- _____ **Step 9:** Hand in both the Google Slides file *and* your written work.

EVALUATION

Organization chart is complete and legible	1	2	3	4
Each song choice is clearly explained	1	2	3	4
Soundtrack is a unique and thoughtful reflection of you	1	2	3	4
Creative details have been added to the Google Slides	1	2	3	4
High-quality videos have been used, from a variety of sources	1	2	3	4
Correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation have been used	1	2	3	4

Total

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

ORGANIZATION CHART

PARTS OF MY LIFE	EXPLANATION	SONG	ORDER
Average Day in the Life of Me			
Home			
Getting Ready for School			
Sports			
Plays and Musicals			
Band and/or Chorus			
Dance Class			
Best Friends			
Siblings			
Childhood			
Family Vacation			
Special Event			
Heritage <i>(Irish, Greek, Mexican, etc.)</i>			
Dreams for the Future			
Happy Dance			
Other: _____			

Then and Now: Popular Musicians

Select a pairing of two musicians from the list below. You must choose two that have been paired together (do not mix and match from the two columns). For example: Rockapella and Pentatonix have been paired together. Then, research your two musicians and answer the questions on the following page.

MUSICIAN CHOICES

Rockapella	Pentatonix
Blue Grass Boys	Steep Canyon Rangers
John Denver	Brad Paisley
Barbra Streisand	Idina Menzel
Maria Callas	Renee Fleming
Sherman Brothers	Lin-Manuel Miranda
Frank Sinatra	Michael Bublé
The Chieftains	Dropkick Murphys
The Beach Boys	One Direction
Ella Fitzgerald	Nina Simone
Aretha Franklin	Jennifer Hudson
Michael Jackson	Bruno Mars
Elvis	Justin Timberlake
Tupac	Kendrick Lamar
The Beatles	U2
Queen	Panic! at the Disco
Dolly Parton	Taylor Swift
Madonna	Lady Gaga
Whitney Houston	Beyoncé

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

FACTS ABOUT MUSICIAN A:

Musician(s): _____

Style of Music: _____

Time of Popularity: _____

Reason for Popularity: _____

Something Unusual About Them: _____

Two Famous Songs: _____

FACTS ABOUT MUSICIAN B:

Musician(s): _____

Style of Music: _____

Time of Popularity: _____

Reason for Popularity: _____

Something Unusual About Them: _____

Two Famous Songs: _____

COMPARING AND CONTRASTING MUSICIANS A AND B

Use YouTube or Spotify to listen to several songs by both artists. How is their music similar and different? Consider their musical genre, vocal range, style of singing, lyrics, instruments, target audience, and more.

a. Similarities: _____

b. Differences: _____
