

“Little Weapons:” Youth Access to Firearms

PURPOSE

To explore the issue of firearm access and violence among youth on a local, national, and global level through close and analytical reading of a hip-hop song.

GRADE LEVELS

High School

CONTENT AREAS

English/Language Arts
Social Studies/Social Science
Fine Arts

TIME

45-70 minutes or
One class period

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Students will engage in active reading strategies by forming text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections.
- Students will identify poetic devices and literary terms in a song and analyze the purposes of their use.
- Students will formulate and support opinions on the topic of violence in video games and the media.

PSAE/ACT SKILLS

Word Meanings using Context Clues
Word Meanings: Homonyms and Heteronyms
Author's Tone and Purpose

STANDARDS AND BENCHMARKS

English Language Arts State Goals 1A, 1B, 1C, 2A, 2B, 3B, 3C
Fine Arts State Goals: Music 26B, Drama 26B, Goal 27
Social Sciences State Goals 18A, 18B

LEARNING STYLES

Musical/Rhythmic
Interpersonal

MATERIALS

Student copies of lyrics and/or overhead with lyrics
Teacher copy of lyrics with guiding questions
Recording of Lupe Fiasco's "Little Weapon" from *Cool* album
Music-playing device (CD player, computer, etc.)

VOCABULARY

Point-of-view
Narrator (1st person)
Tone
Author vs. speaker
Personification
Homonyms/Heteronyms

ASSESSMENT

Media Violence Opinion Poem

ACTIVITIES

Anticipatory Set

Ask students to journal in response to one or both of the following prompts for about five minutes.

- Prompt 1: Write about any examples of violence among youth that you can think of.
- Prompt 2: Do you know how to access a gun if you wanted to? Explain.

Lesson:

Hand out Student copies of Lupe Fiasco's "**Little Weapon**" lyrics and ask students to follow along as they listen to the song. Tell students they will listen to the song twice. The first time they should do nothing but read along and listen. The second time, tell them to jot down any notes or comments or highlight anything they feel is important or noteworthy. This will ensure students have something prepared for discussion.

- Have student volunteers read the first three verses of the song one at time. Pause after each verse to ask students to make text to self, world, and text connections using the prompting questions on the **Teacher Guide**.
- Model the Active Reading Strategy of using **Context Clues** and defining Homonyms and Heteronyms through a reading of the rest of the song following the Teacher Copy
- Ask students to summarize the *message* of the song. (Example: The author is criticizing the way youth have access to weapons and opportunities for violence in our society.)
- Tell students that poets (including rappers and other musicians) use various tools or **poetic devices** to get across their messages and that they will be returning to the song one last time to examine these tools and how the author uses them to achieve his purpose. Tell students this will also prepare them to use these devices in their own writing.
- Define the following terms and have students copy them into their notebooks:

Point-of-view: the perspective from which the story is told

Narrator (1st person): the person or "voice" telling the story, 1st person narrators are directly involved in the story and use the word "I"

Tone: the writer's attitude toward the subject he/she writes about (example: critical, angry, playful, formal)

Speaker: Similar to narrator, the "voice" in a poem or song, not always the same as the author

Author: the person who physically writes a poem, song, etc., not the same as the speaker or narrator

Personification: giving human qualities to non-human things for effect (example: the ocean swallowed the woman whole= she drowned)

- Return to the song and use the **Teacher Guide** to guide students through identifying use of the various poetic devices and literary terms.

Debrief/Assessment:

- Using the **Teacher Guide**, focus on the Discussion/Debrief section regarding video game violence and discuss student opinions for a few minutes, allowing them to rebuttal each other's points and asking them to support their claims and positions.
- Ask students to take a position regarding the role the media plays in youth violence and write a poem in which they state and express the reasons for this position. Encourage students to use one or more of the poetic devices or literary terms discussed during the lesson to help get their message across to the reader/listener. **Note:** If students insist they are unable to write poetry, even once you tell them it doesn't have to rhyme, allow them to write a paragraph stating their viewpoint instead. The primary goal here is to have students take a position and support it.
- Allow any volunteers to share their poems and ask the rest of the class to identify their message and the tools and devices they used to support it.
- An optional rubric for assessing the Media Violence Opinion poems/paragraphs appears in the resource section below. You may also wish to access the **print-friendly version** containing multiple rubrics per page to cut and distribute to students for use as they work, to grade themselves or each other, or to attach to their assignment prior to turning it in for grading. Note: This is a fairly informal, short assignment that can be completed in class or as a short homework assignment. You may even wish to have students use the rubric to assess themselves in preparation for a more formal opinion essay and lessons on the elements of persuasion.

RESOURCES:

Rubric: Media Violence Opinion Poem

	A	B	C
5	Position is clearly and directly stated	Supports Position with at least 2 solid reasons	Uses Poetic Device or Literary Term correctly and effectively
3	Position is not stated directly but can be inferred	Supports position with weak or minimal reasons	Attempts to use devices or terms but may not use effectively
1	Position is not stated or suggested; Takes both sides	Offers no support to back up position	No attempt to use device or term used incorrectly

Total Points Possible: 15