



**Los Angeles County
Office of Education**

Serving Students ■ Supporting Communities ■ Leading Educators

STUDY GUIDE

ALL IN: SAFE AND WELCOMING SCHOOLS

Series 7:

Words Forming Connections— Our Stories

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Jail Guitar Doors – Songs & Beats

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VIDEO 2

WORDS FORMING CONNECTIONS—OUR STORIES

STANDARDS

- 1) NEA Creativity Connects <https://www.arts.gov/impact/research/publications/creativityconnects-trends-and-conditions-affecting-us-artists>
- 2) CA Dept of Education: Social & Emotional Learning Competencies & Conditions for Thriving <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/se/tsel.asp>
- 3) The Trauma Informed Toolkit https://trauma-informed.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Traumainformed_Toolkit.pdf

RESEARCH

Interdisciplinary research suggests a strong linkage between the development of the right brain and arts education and practice, which in turn, leads to higher-order thinking skills and greater emotional selfregulation. Further, there is compelling evidence that a well-developed right brain correlates with focused attention, creativity, intellectual flexibility, patience, self-discipline and the ability to work with others (Stevens, 2000; Sautter, 1994; Feder & Feder, 1981). Studies have shown that the arts can encourage a state of readiness to learn by increasing self-esteem and developing basic communication and other essential skills (Hughes, 2005; Anderson and Overy, 2010; Langeild, 2009). There is evidence that this is particularly true for those alienated from the formal education system—perhaps because its non-traditional content and teaching methods.

PRACTICAL & APPLICABLE STRATEGIES

Songs are stories. We often believe we communicate with words, but that's only a partially true. To be more accurate, we use words to tell stories and stories are how humans communicate, connect and share truth. Books, movies and TV shows are stories and songs are stories. When we have a discussion, we tell each other stories and when we sleep at night our brains tell us stories to process all of the stories we heard during the day. That's a lot of stories. We all have a story of our own to tell and we all have a unique perception of how we experience something. We all have the same universal need to share that perception and experience with others to bond and unite. So, we suggest you write and tell your story the way you've experienced it and if you're honest and authentic in your approach, you will connect with the person hearing and listening. This is the reason storytelling and, by extension, songs have such a profound effect on us.

Let's attempt to write the lyrics of a song together as a group...

Group Writing Exercise:

Step One:

- 1) Choose a topic to write on such as love, honesty, freedom, beauty, trust etc.

Step Two:

- 2) Everyone receives a journal and are directed to take 5-10 minutes to write down their thoughts concerning and relating to the chosen topic. This can be a story, freeform association, poetry, song lyrics or just musings and opinions, the style is not the focus, what's important is that everyone is involved and prepared to express their thoughts.

Step Three:

- 3) After the time limit has expired, we will then take turns having everyone read what they have written. This provides an opportunity for all of the participants to get their voice heard and begins the process of connection by hearing and relating to the ideas and stories of their fellow classmates.

Step Four:

- 4) The instructor(s) will then either have the assistant teacher write down or as the stories are being read, alternately, go around the circle asking each student to provide 2-3 of their preferred lines or thoughts from what they have written. We will write the lines down in the order they are received with no attempt at editing. Once they are all collected the instructor will then proceed to read the newly created piece that has been cobbled together from the written exercise. The outcome is extremely positive and illustrates the ease of which a song can be written when everyone applies themselves to the process. The "happy accidents" that occur, when certain literal writing styles coincide with and reinforce other metaphorical ideas. The juxtapositions are often exhilarating to first time songwriters and further strengthen the notion that we all possess similar ideas and feelings concerning universal concepts of human emotion and connection. And that the sum is greater than the parts as we create louder, stronger voices together.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CA Dept of Education: CA Common Core Standards - English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science & Technical Subjects <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/finalelaccsstandards.pdf>

TEACHER REFLECTION GUIDING QUESTIONS

Did any themes emerge in the final group poem?

What was it like to hear everyone's lines together?

How might this activity support community building in your classroom?

TOOLS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Your Support Pack Includes:



- **The Burning River**
Poems of Pandemic & Protest
- **Daily Poetry Journal**
35 fun-to-read poems with activities for each poem.
- **12-Color Box of Pencils**
300 pencils
- **Sketch Paper Pad**
9" x 12"