

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Elisa Victoria—"No Surprise" Songwriting Skill — Finding Your Style

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Identify various styles of music
- Evaluate audience, purpose and style
- Select the appropriate style for a song
- Vary tone, lyrical word choice, and song structure in developing a personal style

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION

- Guided Lyrics – Style as Strategy
- Student Activity – Finding a Style

Additional Online Support:

- www.holtmcdougal.hmhco.com
- www.BlueNoseEd.com

Teach

1. **Style** is the way a particular song is written. Factors that affect a song's style include song structure, lyrical content, musical key, and harmonic features such as melody and rhythm. Tell students that just as people choose different styles of clothes for different events—for instance, they would probably wear different clothes to a wedding than to the gym—different songwriting styles are appropriate for different occasions. Like clothing style, a songwriting style serves a purpose and is a key part of a songwriter's self-expression.

- Explain that a song's style depends on the song's purpose and the song's audience.
- Tell students that they might use a formal songwriting style to write a song about a serious topic, such as war, but they would probably use an informal style to write a song about having fun with friends. They might use a soft, gentle style to write a love song, but they would probably use a more raucous style to write a song about something they either like or dislike vehemently.

EXAMPLE: Elisa Victoria's "No Surprise" is a song about the speaker's love of her sister and the natural world. Appropriate to such subject matter, it is written in a soft, peaceful style. By contrast, another song by Elisa Victoria, "Please Baby," describes the problems of a love affair. The music of this song supports the subject matter by being bittersweet and moody.

TEACHING NOTES

2. **Teaching Finding Your Style:** Help students brainstorm examples of songs in a variety of styles. Discuss with them the impact that the purpose and intended audience of the song has upon what style the songwriter uses. Also, have them use their imaginations and talk about how songs would be different if the songwriter had chosen to use a different style.

EXAMPLE: Draw the following chart on the board, and have the class fill in the headings with you. As you fill in the chart, have the students give specific examples that support why a song is in one style and not another. If some key elements of a song were changed, what impact would that have on the style? If a hip hop song were sung in a country style, how would that change the meaning of the song? If a jazz standard were given a punk rock treatment, would the connotations of the song become different?

| Song Title | Purpose | Audience | Style | Lyrics |
|------------|---------|----------|-------|--------|
| 1. | 1. | 1. | 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. | 2. | 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. | 3. | 3. | 3. |
| 4. | 4. | 4. | 4. | 4. |
| 5. | 5. | 5. | 5. | 5. |

Style As Strategy

Point out that some song ideas are better served by certain styles than others. Soaring power ballads are often meant to evoke strong emotions. But if a power ballad were written about the death of a pet gerbil, the effect might make listeners laugh rather than cry. Do the students have any examples of songs that, in their opinion, might have turned out better if they'd been written or performed in a different style? Tell them that a style is a strategy; it is a key way in which to communicate a song's larger message. As such, choosing a style is one of a songwriter's best tools to make his or her song as effective as possible.

EXAMPLE: Draw the following table on the board. Ask students to brainstorm a song idea, and then to brainstorm two useful styles in which to write a song about this idea, and (for fun), one style which, most likely, would not work for this particular idea.

| STYLE BRAINSTORM | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Song Ideas | Song Styles |
| 1. New Fight Song For School | 1. Good Style: Upbeat with Rowdy Chorus 2. Good Style: Old Fashioned Military March 3. Not-So-Good Style: Super-Slow Ballad, Filled With Images of Peaceful Meadows |
| 2. | 1. Good Style: 2. Good Style: 3. Not-So-Good Style: |
| 3. | 1. Good Style: 2. Good Style: 3. Not-So-Good Style: |
| 4. | 1. Good Style: 2. Good Style: 3. Not-So-Good Style: |
| 5. | 1. Good Style: 2. Good Style: 3. Not-So-Good Style: |

3. **Guided Practice:** How to use the Guided Practice Worksheet

Step 1 Hand out a copy of the worksheet to each student.

Step 2 Guide students through the call-out questions. Encourage them to come up with more than one answer to each question.

Step 3 Have students use Elisa Victoria's "No Surprise" as an inspiration to choose a style for their own songs.

QUICK CHECK Ask students to define what "style" means in songwriting, and to give three examples of how a song's style has a specific purpose, and helps direct the song at a specific audience.

GUIDED PRACTICE

Elisa Victoria—“No Surprise” Songwriting Skill — Finding Your Style

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

Style is the way a particular song is written. Style consists of the overall effect of lyrics, music, and performance. Its purpose is to get the song’s main message across more effectively. Style also helps the song appeal to a specific audience.

DIRECTIONS: Read the lyrics to “No Surprise” by the Elisa Victoria. What is the song’s overall style? How do specific aspects of the lyrics contribute to the establishment of this style?

Elisa Victoria

“No Surprise”

(verse 1)

Laying down looking
at the sky
I hear the ocean
it's near by

watch the clouds
change colors and shapes
Getting through it in Different ways

My sister, she is close
she is one
that I love

(Chorus)

Well you know
I am on a cloud
I look at Niki she's flying
Like the butterflies
Look into my eyes
There is no surprise

(verse 2)

300 people
on this beach
I hear the ocean
while it speaks
The sun is in front of me
rays shift
into a key

Sun

What can I do with this key?

Style as Strategy—1st Verse

How would you describe the style established in the first verse? What is the singer’s attitude? Based upon the first verse, what does the song’s message seem to be? How does the song’s style reinforce this message? Who is the song’s audience? Does the song’s style help it appeal to this audience?

Style as Strategy—Chorus

Choruses often use heightened diction to emphasize a key emotion. What is the emotional impact of this chorus? How does it achieve this impact?

Open your heart
and dance freely

(chorus)

(Bridge)
Bright flowers
sing to me
I know you can do it
Alice told me

(verse 3)
I walk past him
He's playing his guitar
I noticed flowers
I'm having a good time

Night is here
he's next to me
Stars floating
all is clear...

Style as Strategy—3rd Verse

What happens to the song's
storyline as the song progresses?
What impact do the details have
upon the song's style? Which
details in particular help reinforce
the song's mood?

