

On and On: Lesson

“On and On” is a song by Garrett Zeile of “Jetstream” that he says was written as they started producing a professional record and some of the people involved were giving advice that the band could change its sound.

Some of the key points that you can "seed" into student discussion:

- **Double meanings**

“On and on” is a phrase that can imply nagging or persistent intrusion or persistence and perseverance. Brainstorm with students about other phrases that can have more than one connotation. Help them understand the difference between connotation and denotation.

- **Self-doubt**

Help students recognize the narrative pattern of the song – the narrator at first is challenged, then he experiences self-doubt, and then he determines to persist along his path, even if it means “sorrow” and “regrets.” Within the boundaries of subjects appropriate for school, help students share their own experiences with self-doubt.

- **Accepting imperfection and risk**

The singer accepts that, “And on my way there will be sorrow / and on my way I’ll feel regret,” yet this in no way undermines his determination to persist on his path. This is a very succinct way of addressing a complex experience. Ask students, again within the boundaries of what’s appropriate, to discuss the kind of mixed feelings that are expressed in this part of the song.

- **Reaching out**

The lyric invites the listener, “I hope you join me on my way,” which, again, can be taken two ways: The singer is asking for help, but also offering help, that is, he is suggesting that the listener find his or her own courage to persist despite criticism and self-doubt, and despite being unable to know exactly what the future might bring.

There are many options for students who want to enter the Song Idea Challenge based on this song; here are just two general directions:

Narrative:

Students may want to write about an experience of self-doubt, of persistence, or of reaching out to ask for or to offer emotional support.

Compare and Contrast:

Students may choose a more analytical way of approaching the duality in these lyrics, comparing and contrasting, for example, confidence versus self-doubt, or simply taking any phrase or concept that has this kind of dual nature and exploring it in writing.

"ON AND ON"

Written By: Garrett Zeile
Performed By: JetStream

These people try to get inside my head
Sometimes I think they'd rather see me dead
Should I get up and walk away?
A failure's not what I set out to be

On and on
On and on
On and on
It's the little things that get me through the day

Is there something wrong if I feel fine?
Seems I should be scared out of my mind
When the useless parts of songs are the parts you like
I guess it's time to hand over the mic

On and on
On and on
On and on
It's the little things that get me through the day

And on my way there will be sorrow
And on my way I'll feel regret
But I won't let go of who and what I love
I hope you join me on my way

On and on
On and on
On and on
On and on
On and on
On and on
It's the little things that get me through the day

- ✚ The words "On and On" can be said two ways: to describe something that keeps bothering you, or to describe the courage to keep going on your own path.
- ✚ Can you find some other phrases that can be said in two or more different ways? - These types of phrases are often useful in writing songs!

- ✚ "Is there something wrong if I feel fine?"
- ✚ Garrett seems to be writing about having doubts. Have there been times you have felt doubts about your own skill or even about your opinions or point of view?
- ✚ Getting through such times helps you grow as a person, and such growth is often a good thing to write about!

- ✚ "And on my way there will be sorrow..."
- ✚ At this point in the song, Garrett has made up his mind to keep going on his own path, even if it means having sadness and regret.
- ✚ Since you can't know the future exactly, any decision you make, even one that should be good, might not turn out well for you. Here, Garrett is writing about how you have to make decisions anyway, accepting the fact that you can't know what the future might bring.
- ✚ You might want to write about a situation (real or made-up) that doesn't turn out the way you expect it to, but you have to honor the decisions you made along the way, just the same.

- ✚ "I hope you join me on my way"
"It's the little things that get me through the day"
- ✚ Garrett reaches out to the listener of the song to get support for his decision to keep going on his own path. He also writes about how little things help, sometimes, when you are facing big decisions and doubts.
- ✚ What are some "little things" that you enjoy? How might a song lyric of yours reach out to the listener?