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**USING MUSIC TO ENHANCE LEARNING
IN A SEVENTH GRADE ENGLISH CLASSROOM**

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ABSTRACT

This research study documents the observed and reported experiences of a seventh grade English teacher and her class of twenty-three students when using music to enhance learning in the English classroom. All participants in the study received English instruction from the author in the regular classroom setting. The study explores introducing grammar, writing and poetry with musical enhancement. It focuses on student motivation, behavior, interest and participation in a subject area that is often the least enjoyed by middle school students. The author used song lyrics to introduce grammar concepts in lieu of a textbook. Students listened to a wide genre of music to trigger emotional responses for writing creatively and discovered the correlation between poetry and song lyrics. The study took what the students know and enjoy, specifically music, and used it to build a connection to grammar, writing and poetry. The teacher researcher found that when using music, there was an increase in student interest, enthusiasm, and participation and also an improvement in classroom behavior and focus; however, there was not a significant increase in test scores.

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RESEARCHER STANCE

I have always had a passion for music from as early as I can remember. I have fond memories of teaching myself to use a “play by color” battery-operated organ and the wonderful feelings of accomplishment and joy. It wasn’t long before piano lessons came, followed by ballet and entrance into the ballet company. As I became a teen, teaching myself to play guitar brought a renewed interest in music and finally, when I entered college, although I was enrolled in the elementary education program, there was no doubt what my minor would be...music, of course!

I joined the college choir and took every possible music course, including conducting, pipe organ, sight singing, and voice, as well as music from the 1700’s and Russian music history. The summer after graduation I was introduced to the Bach Choir of Bethlehem, for which I auditioned and was thrilled to be accepted.

As happens to many of us, I took a career detour when I wasn't able to find a teaching job immediately upon graduation. I ended up in an executive secretarial position, which I found satisfying. During this time, I married, had my two children, and worked from my home so that I could be a "stay-at-home" mom until they reached school age. During this time I prepared myself for getting back into the teaching world by teaching Sunday school and keeping on my toes with the music by providing the music for the Children's Liturgy at my church.

When my children started school, it was time for me to reenter the classroom. When I began substitute teaching, I found that music substitutes were extremely rare, and thus, I was able to teach music at least on a temporary basis, without being a certified music teacher. I even filled in as a band director for almost a whole year at the middle school level. In this position, I taught instrumental lessons, piano lab, general music classes, and began a brand new guitar program.

Later, another middle school administration asked me to fill in for a choral director, who was going out on a maternity leave in the spring, which would involve finishing the preparation for and directing the spring choral concert! It was the challenge of a lifetime for me. As terrified of this job as I was, I knew that this opportunity might never come along again, and I relished the challenge.

Of course there were many regular education positions in between the music assignments, but there were still those opportunities which put me back in the music classroom, sometimes just roving from classroom to classroom at the elementary level with my guitar, singing songs with the students.

I was so happy substituting that I really was not interested in a full-time position because I felt that I had the best of all worlds. I enjoyed the diversity and also the chance to use my music. Of course I knew that I would always be able to use music in the elementary classroom, but substituting opened new doors to me.

It also wasn't long before I realized that the classes in which I taught music were the best behaved. Two of the major reasons for this, I believed, were that I had my own passion for music, which I am sure the class was able to tune into, and also the fact that music touches our emotions and makes us feel better. I suspect that this had a positive effect on my students.

When the time finally came for me to accept a full-time position, I found myself in a seventh grade English classroom. I always enjoyed English and certainly given the opportunity, I would have chosen either English or math at the middle school level, so I was happy about the position. However, I wasn't happy to say goodbye to the music.

I liked teaching my subject; however, I learned very quickly that too many students at the seventh grade level abhor the subject of English. The exercises in the book are meaningless to them, and they have already grown to despise writing. This was much the case every year.

Coming to teaching rather late in life, I was required, just like the younger teachers right out of school, to take an additional twenty-four credits to become permanently certified. It made sense to me to go a bit further and get my master's degree. There was much soul-searching in the graduate work and renewed fires were lit within me. When it came time to think about writing a thesis, my passion for music resurfaced. Why not find a way to use it in my classroom? I was certain

that it had to make a difference to my students. Why couldn't I entice them to learn grammar, to write creatively, and to enjoy poetry by using music?

Each year I struggle with students who dislike everything about English class. These students despise grammar, writing, and poetry and have often been struggling with all three since their early elementary years. They do not retain what they learn about English grammar, and they never learn to enjoy creative writing or poetry. Of course, there are some who enter seventh grade with a good grasp on everything, but they are in the minority.

It seems that the grammar my students learn in previous years is just as quickly forgotten. They seem to come to me with a clean slate every year. Very few remember what any part of speech is, and I know they have been introduced to the parts of speech repeatedly. Even what I teach them in the beginning of the year is often out of their minds at the end when the time comes to review for the final exam. However, I discovered when I taught prepositions, that some of my students had learned a song from previous years. They sang the prepositions to me! From this, I realized that this was one part of speech they remembered from the previous year. It was retained because the prepositions were set to music! I tried this with great success, and found that other teachers were searching out the songs I used because they found, too, that it really made an impression on their students.

I want to stop the cycle of disinterest among my students. I want them to take something with them, something to remember as they move up to the next grade and beyond. I want them to be motivated to learn. I want to be able to reach all my students and touch their emotions.

Every teacher has something special to give to enrich students and open new doors for them and I felt that I could use my passion for music in this regard. I wanted to see my students come to class with enthusiasm, to look forward to an engaging activity, to be motivated to learn in the English classroom, and to be proud of their work.

I believe that students become bored easily with exercises in the textbook, which have no meaning to them because the exercises do not build on anything personal to them. As soon as students are dismissed from school, many of them have their headsets on, and they are listening to music. Why not start with what is important to them? That happens to be music! There needs to be a way to inspire them to really want to write and not view it as a most difficult and useless task. They need to learn what the benefits are and that it can be fun, as well as serve a purpose to them.

Music brings out the emotions in all of us and I believe can set the stage for a whole new way of learning for my students. Why not listen to a beautiful piece of music and do a creative writing piece while listening? So many times students are given a boring writing prompt and have such difficulty from start to

finish. Because of this, many of them think that they are not good at writing and shut down. Sometimes writing is given as a punishment and works against any future creativity.

I would like to take a picture of the expressions on my students' faces and tape record their groans when I next introduce my poetry unit. When they hear the word "poetry" they automatically turn themselves off. They think they hate it before we even start. Do they not realize that song lyrics are poetry? The popular rap songs of today are certainly poetry. That is what is coming out of their headsets as they sit on the curb outside the school. Why not have students listen to rap songs (with words appropriate for the English classroom, of course) as part of the poetry unit? Start with something they know before introducing the works of the distinguished poets from the past. I believe that if I asked my students to write a rap song instead of a "poem," they would tackle the job with much more vigor.

I believe that there are many ways to learn and it is clear to me each year that students obviously do not all learn the same way. As I assign projects which incorporate the arts, I am able to see talents in my students that otherwise would not surface. My goal is to make my students want to learn grammar, writing, and poetry, and I will do this with a focus on music.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching Grammar in Context of Writing

Constance Weaver (1998) says that "teaching selected aspects of grammar in the context of their use promises to be more effective than teaching grammar more thoroughly but in isolation" (p. 18). Weaver's "scope-not-sequence" chart (p. 21-23) provides what she considers to be the relevant concepts that students need to explore sometime between kindergarten and graduate school. She suggests a "minimum of grammar for a maximum of benefits" (p. 21). Weaver believes that grammatical concepts should be taught on an "as-needed" basis and that they should not be presented through isolated exercises drilled into our students. She promotes the use of student work to create minilessons. In this way teachers are able to instruct directly on the areas of need. Following are the five specific areas that Weaver (1998) stresses of importance:

1. Teaching concepts of subject, verb, sentence, clause, phrase, and related concepts for editing.
2. Teaching style through sentence combining and sentence generating.
3. Teaching sentence sense and style through the manipulation of syntactic elements.
4. Teaching the power of dialects and dialects of power.
5. Teaching punctuation and mechanics for convention, clarity, and style. (p. 21-23)

Weaver believes that if students are learning these principles by using them in their own writing, then they are more likely to truly understand and remember the concepts. Each item must be taught only if it appears to be the right time to be introduced to the student via their work. If it is not brought up in context, it will be fruitless. They must be able to apply the concept to something personal or it will be forgotten; therefore it cannot be taught in isolation and remembered.

Grammar and Song

Just as Weaver stresses the importance of relating learning to something students already know, Smith (1998) suggests tapping into the power of music to help students learn naturally what they might otherwise struggle to learn by rote, thus helping students to make sense of something that needs to be learned by relating it to a song they already know. “Humans might be considered to be ‘wired’ for music” (p.37). Smith discovered that we often call to memory tunes faster than words, and remembering a tune will sometimes jog our memory to remember the words. If there are things we really need to remember, then Smith says that making music of the material through rhythm can be the answer. An example would be to sing the linking verbs or prepositions to a familiar song, or to make a rhythmic chant out of pronouns.

Learning and Forgetting

If there is interest and desire to learn, Smith (1998) says, it will be accomplished, explaining that we learn many things from those around us without

even realizing it and never forget. This takes place with no conscious effort on our part. Smith believes that learning should not be work. If it is, it will soon be forgotten. Smith speaks of his "theory of learning and forgetting," in which students are forced to learn and quickly forget. He suggests some of the ways that we set up our students for failure, such as drilling material into students that frustrates them, telling them they are not trying hard enough, not allowing them to work with each other and learn from each other, and putting too much emphasis on test scores. The bottom line is that students have to want to learn and if they are not interested, then they will forget. Smith believes that what is truly learned will not be forgotten. What we learn through hard work will be forgotten because learning should be effortless. He doesn't believe that a test proves that students have learned something or not. They have all learned, but not all the same thing. Learning cannot be dependent upon rewards or effort.

Learning from Environment

Smith (1998) says that children "learn from the company they keep" (p. 21). In other words, we learn from our surroundings. He goes on to explain that by age six children have stored about 10,000 words in their vocabulary, without formal learning. The learning is inconspicuous and yet not forgotten. He believes that keeping this in mind, we should realize just how much students are capable of learning in an informal way.

Childhood Songs as a Teaching Tool

The songs that we learned as children stay with us forever. According to Smith this is because there is no struggle to learn the songs. They are learned naturally. Cooper (1991) believes that the particular knowledge of songs and rhymes that most of us carry with us from our childhood, can be drawn upon for further learning. The text of familiar pieces such as "London Bridge" and "Yankee Doodle Dandy" can be taken apart and studied, thereby incorporating many facets of language arts into a lesson. Songs of this sort, especially with "rollicking choruses and relatively short verses" are particularly useful for this type of lesson (Currie, 1994). After practicing the song several times, words can be omitted, allowing students to use their imaginations to find other words to substitute. Thus, nouns, verbs, or other parts of speech can be changed to make a different song to be sung to the same melody. Mateja (1982) suggests using the musical cloze strategy to help students increase language abilities. This method involves student learning through formats that omit rhyming words, or certain parts of speech. In "Expressive Facts" (Barrett, 2001) music is used as a catalyst, along with picture-painting, to have students discover adjectives and adverbs to describe a story read to them or to describe a work of their own, such as a poem, that they have created. Barrett believes that music should be considered a path to take students to new places in the curriculum and not to be regarded as a detour,

making sure to have a purpose in the integration and not just music playing in the background.

Background Music

Contrary to Barrett, Calogero (2002) saw the value in just playing background music to set the mood for the lesson, with special focus on rhythms and chants. He believes that children of any age enjoy being read to and by accompanying the stories with background music, a whole wealth of new lessons can unfold from the tone that is set.

Writing with Music

Engaging Student Interest in Writing

At the top of the list of questions Atwell (1998) focuses on at the start of each new school year is the following: "How do I help students develop ideas for writing that have meaning and purpose in their lives?" (p. 22). Students are more likely to write if it is something they are truly interested in, something for which they have a passion. They enjoy writing about themselves. Atwell (1998) gets the "juices flowing" with topics such as these:

- What are your earliest memories?
- What have you seen that you can't forget?
- What do you have strong opinions about?
- What problems need solving in your life or the world you live in?
- What would you like to know more about? (p. 129)

Emotional Responses to Music

Kammer (2002) suggests that students often frown on a writing task because they are too young to have confidence in themselves as writers and this confidence must be nurtured. One of the ways to do this is to use what Smelcer (2005) calls “Music as a catalyst for responding to literature” (p. 14). Smelcer believes that listening to music can trigger emotions which help us to create events that can be transferred to paper, especially using such “emotionally-powerful scores” as *Titanic* or *Braveheart*. In this way he believes that students will be motivated to write because they have been touched emotionally by the music. Kite & Smucker (1994) allowed students to listen to a whole piece of music, dissect it, and then take the mood of the music from start to finish and write their own story to accompany the music. Afterward, the composer’s view was revealed and students were able to compare their interpretation to that of the composer’s story. Kite and Smucker suggested thirty musical selections for this type of lesson, including the works of Beethoven, Berlioz, Debussy, Saint-Saens, and Mussorgsky. Montanzo and Richardson (1995) asked eighth grade students to write creatively using the storyline of an opera. They introduced students to parts of the story in book form. Then students listened to excerpts from the opera and wrote about their predictions. Montanzo and Richardson chose *Aida* for this project because of the underlying variety of themes of jealousy, loyalty, invasion,

captivity, punishment, and death. Because of their interest in the story, and the musical contrast of moods, students were motivated to write.

Brainstorming for Tone

Bradley & Bradley (1999) further developed writing with music by incorporating a special focus on literary terms, such as alliteration, personification and onomatopoeia. Students were given a familiar song to use to inspire the creation of their own original verses to the same melody and beat of the song. They stressed a special focus on the importance of tone and creating mood through music. "The tone shows the author's attitude toward the subject as well as toward the audience...Imagery affects tone" (p. 7). In order to develop tone, Bradley & Bradley suggest brainstorming, while playing music in the background and displaying a picture. They suggest taking the brainstormed list and brainstorming another list of feeling words, such as "curious, fear/anxiety, or relief" (p. 8). These ideas then set the stage for the writer to begin his task.

Writing Projects Inspired by Music

Tupper (1995) came up with an idea in which eighth grade students could use music of their own era by creating segments of radio programs. Tupper invited two local disc jockeys to speak to the students about the happenings at a typical radio station. The students prepared questions in advance, such as how the sound effects were done or how the songs were chosen. When the presenters answered the students' authentic questions, students embarked on a project in

which they created ten-minute radio segments. The programs included song introductions, commercials, news, sports, weather, etc. Built around music, this idea incorporated everything in the language arts area: writing, poetry, and speech communication. The students prepared their own scripts and performed their programs live for their classmates or narrated pre-recorded presentations.

Music and Multi-cultural Connection

Fay (2001) believed that using music in teaching language arts helps to connect students from many different backgrounds and many parts of the world. Focus on this newfound kinship, nurtured with music, helped to “bring the written word alive in the classroom” (p. 372). Fay used pop lyrics, rap verses, and some text from spirituals for discussion on figures of speech and metaphors, as well as the exploration of song titles. He offered suggested strategies and assignments, which invoke the thought processes of students, such as having them explore the comparison and contrast of characters within a musical piece, or composers of different origins. He explained that music is a “universal language...Music offers a shared experience in the midst of a world characterized by competing interests, personal isolation, and the sometimes dehumanizing effects of technology. Taken together, literature and music help us to identify and to preserve our common humanity” (p. 377). Morin & Begaroy also focused on the diversity of students and the fact that not every student learns the same way. They conducted a teacher-education project, which took place during the summer session at the University

of Manitoba. Their study not only included music and language arts, but also movement, visual arts, and drama. They explored song writing and dance choreography. The participants were teacher-learners who were preservice or inservice teachers working towards a multitude of degrees, and listened to songs that offered opportunities for better cultural understanding and interpretation. Journals became a useful tool for teachers, and students also kept learning logs, which helped to track progress and ensure that reflection was taking place. Some of the shared comments of respondents were that students found a “higher level of comfort in language arts” and lessons were found “enjoyable, fun, and motivating.” More confidence among students was also a noticeable outcome of this work.

Poetry and Song

According to McParland (2002), the "auditory realm" (p. 27) is often overlooked by teachers. He believes that popular music is a wonderful tool for engaging student interest because it permeates our culture. Students are happiest when they can write about themselves and popular artists often sing about topics that relate to kids' lives. McParland (2002) discovered a parallel between poetry and song, which he used to channel student interest in popular music to an appreciation of poetry. He focused on the fact that both poetry and song share qualities of rhythm, meter, imagery and use of metaphors. He suggests the study of a connection between ballads and folksingers of the 1970s such as Don

McLean and Harry Chapin because of their poetic and storytelling qualities.

Students wrote about how a song made them feel and looked for images that the poem portrayed. A song can be dissected just as a literary work, making comparisons by listing theme, setting, characters, plot, text and style of language.

Setting Poetry to Music

Cavner and Gould (2003) had students set their own poetry to music. They believed that in order for learning to take place, students needed to be able to pursue their own interests. This was made possible by using their own music.

McParland (2002) also focused on encouraging students to make connections to their own lives wherever possible. Kammer (2002) paired poems with music.

“The effect of using music as a way into poetry was to provide a familiar hook, an entry point for students to begin to understand how poetry, or at least certain poems and poets, directly connected to their lives” (p. 66). Some of the poets and songs he connected were: Marvin Gaye’s “Let’s Get It On” to go with “To His Coy Mistress”; the Beatles’ “Nowhere Man” and Bob Seger’s “Feel Like a Number” to go with Auden’s “Unknown Citizen” and Gil Scott Heron and The Last Poets’ “The Revolution Will Not be Televised.” Students were encouraged to perform poems live for the class with background music. Womack (1975) also used Beatles’ music, such as “Yesterday” to explore metaphors and writing about childhood memories, which segued into poetry, including haiku. Womack enhanced this project by having a guitarist improvise solos to accompany

completed student poems for a final presentation, which included a photograph of the student and an appropriate illustration to go along with the poem.

Motivating Students to Write Poetry

Sanjem (2002) used music to increase student appreciation of poetry. Poetry had always been a most challenging task in his classroom. When he came to the realization that his students' favorite songs were actually poetry combined with music, he began to investigate whether examination of these lyrics could lead to a greater appreciation of poetry among his students. Sanjem introduced techniques of poetry, such as alliteration, metaphor, onomatopoeia, personification, simile, symbolism, etc., along with a poem, which utilized each technique. As students studied each poetic technique, he played a song that contained lyrics that represented that particular technique. This was the basis of a group project (four or five per group), which involved exploring a specific technique and finding a poem using that technique to share. The culminating project asked to select a poem from an anthology, analyze the poem and finally, select a song that shared the same theme. It could be any style of music, but the lyrics had to be suitable for the English classroom. The students had to identify three techniques in the poem (excluding rhyme and rhythm). The students then played their song and gave examples of three different techniques of poetry in the song. Finally, they presented a common theme to the class that represented both the song and poem. Sanjem found that the attitudes of his students towards poetry

were changed and mixing traditional and non-traditional teaching methods enabled his students to explore part of their learning through their own resources, which gave them more freedom in the classroom.

Music as Therapy

Tyson (2002) studied “at-risk” and “delinquent” youth to explore the therapeutic potential of a rap music intervention for youth up to age eighteen. He realized that our youth spend more time listening to music than studying or reading books. In this study, students listened and discussed rap songs with peers, ultimately writing their own songs and sharing them. The rap songs chosen for this study all had positive themes regarding improving self-identity, unity, peace, and the importance of cooperation. Throughout this process, students shared thoughts and feelings brought about by the songs. Tyson found that this study brought out creativity and increased motivation among students who had no previous desire to learn.

Making Poetry Come Alive

“The effect of using music as a way into poetry was to provide a familiar hook, an entry point for students to begin to understand how poetry, or at least certain poems and poets, directly connected to their lives” (Kammer, p. 66). Kammer found that students could actually get past the illusion that poetry is boring by making it come alive to them through performance of the works of famous poets and student creations.

Grammar, Writing, and Poetry with Song

As Tupper (1995) discovered, grammar, writing, and poetry could be combined in engaging projects in which students can work together, helping each other explore the many avenues of our language. This was also an area of importance to Smith (1998). In his theory of learning and forgetting, Smith says that one of the many reasons students don't learn is because too often in the traditional classroom, students are not offered the opportunity to learn from each other. Non-traditional teachers are more comfortable with the healthy noise of student chatter while at work with each other. In this way, students are learning from one another. Exploring writing techniques in poetry and finding songs that share the same theme was yet another way to bring students together to learn from each other through song (Sanjem, 2002).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

I teach seventh grade English in a public school in a suburban area of northeast Pennsylvania. There is a significant cultural diversity in my school and the majority of students come from low to middle-income families. The class I chose for my research is what my district calls an on-level, or average performing, English classroom of twenty-three students, twenty of whom were participants in my study. There are eight boys and twelve girls. Seven of the students are African-American, nine are Caucasian, and four are of Spanish descent.

The Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB) of Moravian College approved my study pending a few changes regarding confidentiality of my research participants. When the changes were made and accepted (see Appendix A), and my building principal signed his consent form (Appendix B), I began my study at the start of a new school year. I had already selected my third period class because of the preparation period, which followed. This would enable me to write freely immediately after each class. My students were each given a consent letter to take home asking parental permission for participation in my action research study (Appendix C).

Field Notes

I kept a research log, which explained each lesson, and following each class, I would write about my observations, making particular note of student comments and reactions. Most of the time I was actively involved with my

students, rather than giving them assignments and observing. I would take any opportunity I could to jot down notes and later write up reflections to help me gather the data I needed on the involvement and progress of each of my students. Feedback from my students was crucial to this study. I was taking them in a new direction and I wanted to make sure that they were not only following me, but taking the journey with enthusiasm. I was careful to note in brackets my thoughts and feelings regarding the information I was faithfully logging into my journal, so that what actually happened was clearly distinguished between what I personally thought or felt about it (Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Anzul, 1997).

Behavior Chart

I also kept a chart (Atwell, 1998), which I called a “Behavior Chart” (see Appendix D). In this way I kept a log of any sort of class disruption, from frequent trips to the bathroom or nurse’s office to blatant disrespect or disinterest. I believe that many classroom disruptions are due to disinterest among students and this chart kept me closely watching for those who might be considered offenders in a traditional English classroom. Monitoring this area helped me to single out those whom I might be losing so that I could investigate and alter something in my plan to engage them in our classroom activities.

Reflection Sheets

All of my students had a folder, which not only contained their work, but a daily reflection sheet (Atwell, 1998). After each lesson, I asked them to write the

date, the lesson title and a comment on their personal reflection sheet (Appendix E). In this way I was able to keep track of interest or lack thereof on a daily basis. This was also a quick way to enable me to keep a check on interest, enthusiasm, and whether or not they were grasping the material.

Journal Entries

At the end of each week, I asked students for more detailed comments on work that had been performed throughout the week. The journals gave me more detailed feedback than the reflection sheets. In this way I was able to be certain that my students were learning and understanding. This was their chance to have a voice in what we were doing, without having to speak to me personally.

Student Interviews

I interviewed all my students at some point during the study. All were most eager for the interviewing to take place. The interviews occurred during class time, as the students were working in groups on a project. I conducted approximately six interviews per class period, asking each student nine questions (Appendix F). They were extremely pleased to be heard in this way and willingly offered both positive and negative feedback. As needed, I asked additional questions to help my students to further clarify their answers, as suggested in Hubbard & Power (p. 63). My students clearly understood how important their comments were to the study and that I didn't want to hear only the good, but also

any trouble spots for them. The results of the interview would help me to better serve them.

Written Student Surveys

I administered two surveys, as suggested in Hubbard & Power (p. 69-70), one at the onset of the study, and another at the conclusion of the study (Appendix G and H). The results of the first survey enabled me to realize the starting point for my research. It told me how my students felt about grammar, writing, and poetry coming into the study. The second survey told me how students' feelings had changed by the end of the study within each area (grammar, writing, and poetry).

Student Work

I gathered student work and perused their folders and reflection sheets periodically. This enabled me to keep a close watch on whether or not students were grasping new concepts and readily catch any trouble spots in learning and enthusiasm for learning. The folders contained all student in-class work, which included song lyric worksheets in which students labeled parts of speech, changed parts of speech, or wrote their own song lyrics, creative writing pieces, and poetry.

Trustworthiness

Before beginning my study, I discussed the details of the story with my students, which generated excitement among them. The general consensus was

that they wanted to start immediately. They were eager to be a part of this venture and couldn't wait to be interviewed. I made it clear that it was their decision to participate, along with their parents and guardians. I was careful to convey to them that all students in my class would be doing the same assignments, and the only difference between those with and without research consent was that I would not use the work or any of the comments of those without such consent in my study. I also made it clear that participation in the study had nothing to do with their final grade in the class. I also explained the importance of confidentiality by assuring the students that any work I decided to use in my study would not contain their names, but pseudonyms, and I would be the only person who would know the identity of any particular student. During this time, students were free to ask questions and many expressed excitement about having aliases.

I explained that my students or their parents have the option to withdraw them from the study at any time by not giving consent for me to use their work. They were told that everyone would participate in every other aspect. It was not to be mistaken for a "way out." I also told them that it was okay to change their minds and decide later not to share their work.

I sent the consent letter home during the first few days of school (Appendix C), and most of the students brought it back signed the next day. I was lucky to have the opportunity to discuss my research with the parents and guardians during open house. Most of them were open to any innovation that

could help to interest and motivate their children. Each parent understood that all the students shared a common interest in music and agreed that it was a worthwhile venture for me to take something that they love and turn it into a teaching tool to help them learn.

The data I collected covered a wide area so that I could get a multi-faceted picture of the students in my classroom. I knew that triangulation of many sources of data was important for my study to be credible and trustworthy (Arhar, Holly, & Kasten, 2001). I altered my lesson plans as I went along to better accommodate my students, always keeping in mind Gardner's multiple intelligences including Visual/Spatial, Logical/Mathematical, Verbal/Linguistic, Musical/Rhythmic, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Interpersonal/Social, Intrapersonal/Introspective, and Naturalist (Burke, 1999). Although my primary focus was enhancing my classroom with music activities, I approached my research with an open mind. I knew that other intelligences may provide a better match for some students. Because of this, I did incorporate some activities to allow these students to shine in other areas besides music. I realized that the reader may approach my study with a completely different position than mine (Ely, M. et al. p. 40), and that although my stance would be clear throughout the study, I would be open to anything new or unexpected that I found in my study and considered all my findings of utmost importance to the study.

I reflected on the happenings in my classroom frequently. I kept the line of communication open to my students. I made them a part of the study by constantly asking for their input. No question was too small or too large. They were free to contribute both positive and negative comments and I explained that these comments helped me to better understand what they needed. I was also constantly careful to accommodate those students with special needs.

Integral to my study was the support gained from my colleagues during our weekly research group meetings. This was the time to discuss any problems in our research and also to share successes, as well as frustrations. The input from this group was a valuable asset throughout my study. MacLean and Mohr (1999) suggest that these meetings are crucial and outlined a plan to follow at these meetings, which we put into motion in my teacher-research group.

MY STORY

The Journey Begins

It was finally time to begin my research. The preparation had seemed endless and now the beginning was right around the corner. I was set to begin my study immediately and I didn't want to waste any time. There were a few small changes I needed to make for the Human Subjects Internal Review Board of Moravian College, but upon receipt of their "go ahead" and the signed consent of my principal, off I went! I was particularly pleased with my schedule this year: I taught three classes in a row, with a preparation period following the third class, followed by a study hall and lunch period. It was truly a teacher researcher's dream to have so much time to compose observation entries and add them to my field log. Because of this schedule, I chose my third period class for my study. I could write all my observations immediately following the class when everything would still be fresh in my mind. There was only one disadvantage to this; I had no idea at this point who would be in the class. I must admit that when I discovered the identity of the students in this class, I considered changing my mind. One of the students was repeating seventh grade and I remembered his name appearing frequently last year on the official rosters for both in-school and out-of-school suspensions. Part of me hesitated with this new knowledge. Did I really want this challenge before I even began my research? What if he made it impossible for me? I still had some time to ponder this, and so I took advantage of it. After

discussing my choice with family, I decided, "Why not?" After all, this could be the best choice for just that reason, a student with a second chance. He would be learning English in a totally different way. Maybe this new approach would reach him, when other efforts had failed. I needed to give him a chance. I didn't want to judge him on the past, but rather to give him a fresh start. I had no idea what he looked like, no idea what kind of person he was, but it didn't matter. Ultimately, I became excited about my choice, and I was eager to make a difference in his life, as well as the lives of the rest of the students, whom I suspected would also provide many challenges. Since my study was designed to help students want to learn and create enthusiasm and interest, I knew this class would be the perfect group for this study.

I broke the news to my students almost immediately, and there was instant enthusiasm, which was quite encouraging to me. The most enthusiastic of the group was George, my initial concern, because of his history and the fact that he was repeating seventh grade. When I discussed the consent forms, he called out immediately, "My mom will sign right away!" He couldn't wait to get started. I explained to my students that no one would be forced to participate in the study; however, everyone in the class would be experiencing the same curriculum. The only difference for those without consent to participate was that I would not use their work in my teacher research study. I also made it clear that they would

remain anonymous and that each would have a pseudonym. There was much excitement about this since they liked the notion of having an alias.

It wasn't long before I realized that this class *would* be a true challenge. There was a definite disinterest in English and more enthusiasm for the social part of school. They were talkative from the start and it seemed to me that no one knew how to whisper. However, they were eager for the study to take place.

I explained the importance of research to my students. I told them that I was a student, too. Their eyes opened wide, and one of them yelled out, "Hey, how could you be a student when you're a teacher?" That was my opportunity to explain that teachers are always learning, too. I wanted them to know that I understand what it is like to have assignments and due dates, and in this way, we were peers. I made it clear how important they were to my research study. I told them that how they responded guided my whole study. I explained that I would be asking for their feedback constantly and that I wanted them to be honest in their answers. I said that they never would be graded on giving their opinion and that their negative opinions were just as important as the positive ones. I wanted to know when a particular lesson made sense to them, while another was not so successful. In this way, I could adjust my plans to better accommodate them. I explained that this was like a journey we were all embarking on and it was important to me that we all had a smooth ride and if there were any bumps, I wanted to fix them right away.

I have found that if my students are going to return anything to me, it comes in the next day. If it does not, I may never get it, or I will have to fight for its return. George ran into the classroom the very next day crying, "Miss, Miss, here's my letter, here's my letter, my mom signed!" He could not wait to hand over his consent form and get started. I was lucky to receive the majority of my consent forms signed and returned the very next day. Looking back on George, it's funny that homework was such a problem for him, but that consent letter came back immediately and with enthusiasm. He really liked the idea of using music in our class and he was eager to get started.

I was pleased to receive eighteen signed consent forms from my twenty-one students. Two students arrived further into the study and returned their signed consent forms in a timely fashion. Two more students arrived when the study was almost complete, so although they joined my classroom, they did not serve as research participants. Therefore, my study included twenty participants out of a total of twenty-five students (twenty-three students for most of the study).

On the first day of my research, I had an upbeat rap song playing as the students entered the room. There were many smiles and looks of anticipation. Unfortunately, George was late to class as a result of helping another student who was on crutches. I talked to him about this and suggested that his injured friend get a student to help that was nearer to his classroom than George, so that George

would not continue to be late to English class. He understood and this did not turn out to be a problem.

I passed out a pre-intervention survey asking my students to check on a scale of one to five whether or not they agreed with the statements about English class. We discussed the definition of "anonymous" and I explained that I did not want any names on the surveys. I also reminded them that their feelings and reactions were important to my research and that their answers needed to be true and not what they thought I wanted to hear.

As they were working on the survey, one student raised her hand and asked, "What does "grammar" mean?" Four or five more voices chimed in, "Yes, what is that?" What a shock that was to me! I explained that grammar was simply working with all the parts of speech such as nouns, verbs, etc. and using them in standard ways when we speak and write. As happens every year, many of my seventh graders don't remember what a noun or verb or any other part of speech is when they come to me, but I know that they have been introduced to the parts of speech every year. Why is it that they don't remember? Better yet, what can I do to help them use the parts of speech so that they do remember when they go on to eighth grade?

At first glance, there seemed to be quite a bit of diversity on the surveys. I was eager to see what they would tell me about my new students. I decided to

divide my study into three units: grammar, writing, and poetry. At the end of the study, I would combine all three into a culminating project.

The surveys told me what I expected as I undertook this project: that this was a typical seventh grade on-level English classroom, which consisted of students who basically did not enjoy grammar, writing or poetry.

Figure 1. *Pre-intervention survey results*

Survey (before study)

	Strongly Agree	Agree Most of the time	Agree some of the time	Agree little of the time	Strongly Disagree
I like the subject of grammar.		2	8	8	4
Grammar is difficult for me.	2	4	11	4	1
I enjoy creative writing in class.	6	6	8	1	
I like to write at home.	3	4	3	5	6
I consider myself a good writer.	2	5	8	3	3
I enjoy reading poetry in class.	5	3	6	6	2
I enjoy writing poetry in class.	2	1	6	2	9
I like writing poetry at home.	3	3		3	13

There was really no place lower to begin this study. The only direction to move was upward.

Meet the Class

My classroom proved to be quite diverse, including African American, Caucasian and Hispanic students. Most were not high achievers and I suspected that many did not have much confidence in themselves. Each had something unique to catch my attention.

Mark would become the "bathroom king" of my third period class. I guess that is simply his time to go. It wasn't long before I discovered that in addition to bathroom breaks, he also tends to have at least three nose blowing sessions each class period, which involve waltzing across the room, grabbing a few tissues, blowing his nose in front of the room, throwing the tissues away and waltzing back to his seat. As far as grades, he tends to score either an "A" or an "F," giving me a lot to figure out about him.

Allie's mom e-mailed me at the start of the year with concerns about her daughter. Her academic track record was not good and her mother wanted to be right on top of things so that her daughter got a decent start this year. Some of her other teachers mentioned what they describe as a major attitude problem, but I have not seen that in my classroom.

Yasmine is always enthusiastic about everything we do, but often too chatty, as she converses with her friend, Flora. I speak to them often about containing themselves, because of their "socialness."

Henrietta is the lowest performing student in the class. She struggles and really needs to find a way to understand. She seems to be near the top of the list of those who really need something different to find her way.

Gary has the brains, but is often lazy when it comes to putting his thoughts on paper. He constantly needs a push to get going. He will sometimes daydream. He says he loves to write. There is a bit of a language barrier with Gary, but I think he is much more capable than he is revealing to his teachers.

Andrew is quiet and can be a daydreamer. He is smart, but does not always give what he has in him to give. He forgets assignments, doesn't study and never seems consistent with his responses. He also requests trips to the bathroom and nurse's office often enough to make me think he likes to wander and has a focus problem.

I think Lucy may have been misplaced. She is a model student, a high-achiever, always on task, polite, and conscientious. Lucy never questions anything and does what she is told. I think that because she is on the quiet side, she is intimidated by the loudness of the group in general. While the others don't seem to know how to whisper, Lucy does.

Tevon and Louis are high-achievers, as are Molly and Felicia. Julie, Frances and Natalie are typically placed in an on-level, or average, classroom. Jeremy and Chanelle came to the group later, having moved from another district.

MaryAnn started as a model student, but going into the second quarter changed her tune, as she became more comfortable. She is easily distracted by those around her, and must be reminded frequently to stay on task.

Writing about Emotions

On the second day of class I started with a discussion about how music makes us feel. The responses were varied: happy, sad, sleepy, and scary, just to name a few. I explained that I would be playing little bits of many pieces and I wanted them to write how they felt as they listened to each piece. They were giddy with excitement. Because this was the first day of our journey, I was not surprised, nor bothered much by it. I wanted them to be excited, but I also knew that there was work to be done and they would have to know that.

My musical choices for this exercise included a variety of instrumental and vocal pieces. Some were melodious, and some were dark and dreary. There were classical musical selections from composers such as Bach, Mozart, Tchaikovsky and Bizet, as well as selections from Enya, Caribbean rap, the Beatles, Will Smith, Alex Fox, Josh Groban, Kan Ye West, Tim McGraw and portions of the soundtrack from Steven Spielberg's film, *Empire of the Sun*. Some of these pieces exuded drama, anticipation, beauty or wonder.

I explained that they should not worry about writing complete sentences when they responded to each piece of music. I just wanted them to write exactly how they felt in whatever way they wanted. I didn't want them to feel inhibited in

any way. Nothing was to be graded. They were a bit too chatty at first. They couldn't wait to blurt out how the music made them feel. This actually excited me because I knew then that they were excited, too. After the first few excerpts, I told them that it was important that they didn't discuss what they were writing because I wanted each individual response to be unique and not influenced by a peer. I explained that we would have a chance to share later, and then we could determine if any of them were thinking alike in their responses. This seemed to satisfy them.

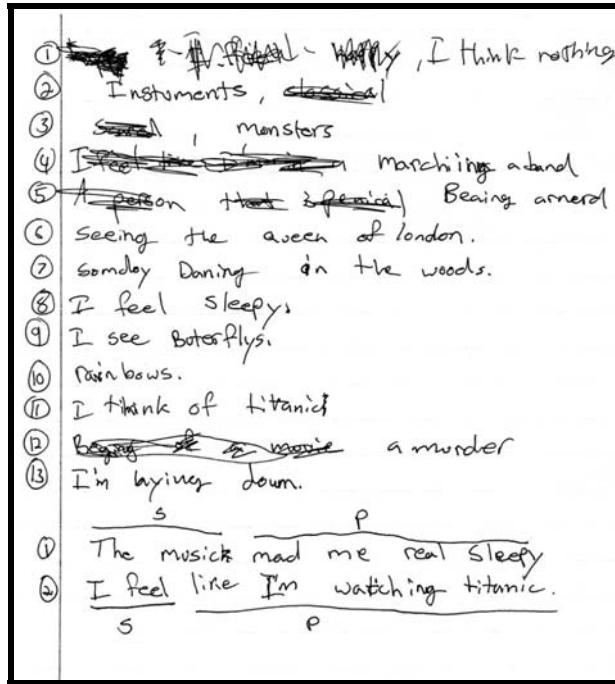
There was enough variety to trigger multiple emotions among my students. After playing the final excerpt, I asked for volunteers to share what they had written. Students were a little shy at first, but midway through the sharing, there were many hands up, as I made it clear to them that the responses were neither right nor wrong, but only a personal matter. The responses were many and diverse. One piece triggered responses like: relaxing, like rain, or church. Another group of responses triggered scary thoughts, someone chasing them, or monsters. Another piece got responses of marching knights, kings and queens, castles, and a wedding. At times a lively discussion would ensue after a disagreement about the nature of the song, only to discover that their interpretations were personal and unique and no one could be criticized or accused of answering incorrectly. This was strictly an exercise to get them to recognize their feelings and emotions and transfer them onto paper. This was also an opportunity for them to see how

different responses can be and there was some laughter as they discovered how one student heard something totally different in his interpretation.

Figure 2. *Molly and Henrietta's emotional responses to musical excerpts*

1. like a couple song	2. It makes me feel like weird.
2. a classical dance	2. It reminds me of Harry potter.
3. a scary moment	3. It sounds like someone is after me.
4. a band <u>I feel like there was a band there.</u>	4. It makes me happy.
5. a King or queen is coming out	5. I feel like I did a good deed.
6. I feel very good	6. It reminds me of a King + Queen.
7. a girl is dancing <u>I saw a girl dancing.</u>	7. It sounds like a dumb ELF movie.
8. somebody is sad	8. It reminds me of a love story.
9. somebody is happy	9. like bambi.
10. I feel calm	10. like rain
11. it is like #10	11. realxing music.
12. Somebody is being murdered.	

Figure 3. Gary's emotional responses to music.



Gary normally needs a nudge to work, but this exercise kept him focused.

He was worried about neatness, but I assured him that I was pleased with anything he wrote and it did not matter if the work was sloppy. Of course, I didn't want him to think that "sloppy" was always acceptable, but assured him that in this case, "sloppy" showed me that he was making an attempt at the work.

Grammar and Song

After all students who wanted to share had done so, I asked them to look over their thirteen musical excerpt responses and choose two of them to work with for the rest of the lesson. The assignment was to make two complete sentences from the two excerpts. They were then to dissect the two sentences they

had created by labeling the simple and complete subjects and predicates. Before they set out to do this, we reviewed the definitions and did a few examples on the board. I gave them a few minutes to work on this and we shared a few examples. The concept of subject/predicate is often difficult for students to comprehend at this level. We were only in the initial stages of my study and I didn't quite know what to expect at this first attempt to reach them through music. They were thrilled to be told that their thirteen responses need not be in complete sentences, but when I asked them to turn two of the responses into complete sentences at the end, I must admit there were a few groans. I think this may have been because some, even in the seventh grade, are not quite sure what a complete sentence is. I made certain that we did enough examples together on the board so that the chance of a correct response on each paper was better; however, there were still some who drew a line under both the subject and predicate as one. I knew now where I needed to begin. However, I was pleased with Gary's response (see Figure 3) in which he responded correctly on the first attempt at finding the complete subject and predicate. He needed assistance on his second response, which became part of a future lesson in which I used student samples in minilessons to make these corrections.

It was also during this lesson that I introduced students to the Reflection Sheet on which they would comment at the end of each class. I stressed that I wanted to hear about what they liked and disliked and what they understood and

didn't understand. I made it clear that I didn't expect everyone to like every single thing. They dated and titled the entry, and gave a brief comment. All work, including the reflection sheet, was kept in an individual folder for each student. I collected the folders at the end of each class period. At the end of each day I perused all the reflection sheets to obtain clues to the reactions of my students to each lesson. Sometimes the comments were simply a "yes" or "no" stating whether or not they liked the lesson. Other comments were about not understanding the concept I was trying to teach them, or having a question about it. At other times, it might have been complaints about the music, or a remark about the appreciation of what I had chosen for the day's musical selection. My lesson for the next day would be based on the comments found on the reflection sheets. I didn't want to lose any students in the learning process along the way. For instance, if I saw a cry for help that said, "I didn't understand anything we did today!" or "I'm sorry, but I got lost and couldn't get it," then I would realize that I needed to change something the next day and find out what it was that kept those particular students from understanding. Since I was using music for all my classes, I also wanted to make sure that they would continue to be open with my choices of music. I didn't want a particular choice of music to spoil the learning of any student simply because it wasn't appreciated.

From this exercise of inspiring students to write about what they were feeling, I learned that I am able to get much more product from my students when

there is a specific focus and also a personal one. Many of their interpretations could have been the basis of a whole creative writing story, rather than a one-sentence response. Many of my students really didn't know what great storytellers they could be until given the permission to say what they feel. Some were even a bit reluctant at first because they thought it just couldn't be proper for them to express a feeling on paper. It didn't seem that it was important enough, which brought on a whole new discussion of how important each one of them was to me and to the class. Their self-esteem as a class really needed a boost and this exercise got them to open up.

When it came time to take a look at their sentences, most were proud of what they had done. The simple and complete subjects and predicates that they found in their sentences proved to them that they actually use such complicated concepts in their own language without even realizing it. Now it was not foreign to them, as textbook exercise sentences often have been for my students. They were taking apart something they had created themselves. These responses were later used again as the base for a creative writing story. Each excerpt opened a different door to a writing possibility for them, so they explored each of their own responses and chose what they felt could turn into a good story.

Following the mandated seventh grade English language arts curriculum, next on our agenda were compound sentences, along with compound subjects and predicates. It was time now to listen to some vocal music and explore these new

concepts through song. I passed out lyrics to the Beatles song "We Can Work It Out" and the students followed along, as the song played, looking for compound sentences, subjects and predicates. There was absolute quiet from the students. All were focused on following along with the song. George was engrossed in the task at hand and had even arrived on time to class. However, when he left my class, he got in trouble in the hallway, resulting in an in-school suspension. This was a disappointment to me. I had hoped that he would not miss any of my classes, especially during the research study. I circulated the room, helping those who needed help. Learning to look for conjunctions during this exercise was crucial. They could skim easily to find connecting words, and then discover just what those words connected. Telling them to find a compound sentence without walking them through the steps on how to do so was pointless. My class was often easily discouraged, and many needed constant reassurance. When finished, students shared their answers and the class sang the song together. I could honestly look back after the lesson and visualize every single student working. There was not one single interruption, not even a bathroom or nurse request.

Next I used Tim McGraw's song, "You Get Used to Somebody." The music played as students entered the room. It seemed that my students would be open to any type of music by the looks on their faces. I was so pleased that they could appreciate whatever we did. We discussed what the song was about and I allowed them to comment on it. They talked about what independence meant to

them. We discussed the difficulties of growing up and letting go of family and other relationships and the price to pay for independence. My plan was to reinforce what they had been working on the last few days, specifically, simple and complete subjects and predicates. I noticed that there were more hands up today. This meant that they were getting the message and weren't afraid to ask for help. They once again explored lyrics as they worked on the lesson. As the song became more familiar, they began to sing.

I decided to tie up the unit on compound and complete subjects, predicates and sentences with a Will Smith rap song entitled, "Just the Two of Us." I am not a particular fan of rap music, but I must admit that I am learning to be. Last year my students, as well as my own teenager, told me that I don't understand rap and this is the reason I don't appreciate it. Thus, I decided to give it a chance.

Unfortunately, my first lesson using rap music wasn't as successful as I would have liked. My plan was to use the lyrics as a base from which to work to create the concepts that my students had already learned; specifically, compound sentences, subjects and predicates. I wanted my students to work in a different direction on this particular song. Working in pairs, I instructed them to take the text of the song lyrics and change it, by creating compound subjects and predicates. I wanted them to pick out specific sentences to work with. I had a difficult time getting students to understand what I wanted them to do. There were so many hands up as I circulated, trying to help each pair of students, that it was

impossible for me to get to them all in one class period. Finally, I realized that the basic problem wasn't actually grammatical or anything to do with what I was trying to teach them. The problem was that they were afraid of changing the song lyrics because then the meaning of the song changed. For them, making the changes that I was demanding was ruining the song. When I gave specific examples, like adding another subject to create a compound subject, one of my students said, "But that doesn't make sense in the song!" Of course, they were right and I needed to explain to them that I wasn't worried about ruining the text of the song. It seemed not to matter, because they *were* worried about changing the song. I realized later that my students needed more modeling for a lesson of this magnitude and a context in which making changes would enhance meaning, not detract from it. I expected them to change the lyrics of the song to model the concepts that we were working on, but they were reluctant to do this because it changed the meaning of the song and it was a song that they really liked. As I look back, it wasn't that they didn't understand this particular grammar lesson; it was that they took the lesson much more seriously than I had expected. The fact that it was a rap song didn't make any difference. The same thing would have happened with any type of song that they enjoyed. They simply didn't want to destroy the meaning of the song.

From this point, I went on to something more structured so that students could see their progress more quickly this time. I had them work on a puzzle as a

review for the test, as we had now completed all the material I needed to teach them about sentences, subjects and predicates. If they found the correct subjects and predicates, they were able to solve the puzzle. The answer to the puzzle was the name of two famous musicals. In the background, as students worked on the puzzle, I had music playing from one of these productions (*Les Misérables*). Students worked in pairs to complete the puzzle. Although the puzzle was a challenge, it did not discourage them. The progress was fast enough to keep them engaged. Once again, there were no requests to leave the room, which told me that they were truly engrossed in the task at hand. Some of them realized that their puzzles were not coming out correctly because some of their answers were incorrect. This time it was clear that all students knew what was expected of them and there was no frustration. I did not give them any answers, but I would stop and glance at their papers and tell them what sentences had an incorrect response, and a clue as to which part was incorrect, the subject or predicate. There was a bit of competition involved in this lesson, as everyone wanted to be the first to solve the puzzle. When the puzzle was finally solved, I told them about the music they had been listening to and the significance in the puzzle's solution.

Introducing the Parts of Speech

Contrary to the advice of Constance Weaver (1998), during my research study, I stayed within the confines of our curriculum map so that my students would be learning the same material that the other seventh grade students were

learning. The only difference was that I was planning different lessons for my research group by enhancing their learning through music. Constance Weaver believes that it is more productive to teach grammar on an as-needed basis, as it comes up in student writing. Although I tend to agree with Weaver, the next step on the curriculum map was the study of nouns, and that is the direction I took.

As students entered the room, classical music played in the background, and I instructed them to copy some notes that I had prewritten on the board. All were focused on copying the notes as the music played, except George. I asked him why he was not working with the rest of the class and he said he didn't have any paper. I offered him paper and asked why he had come unprepared to class. He simply said he didn't think we needed anything, since we were using music. He was under the assumption that we were using music in place of all else! Oh dear, I had to set him straight. I explained that he was mistaken and gave him some paper to copy down the notes and he was fine.

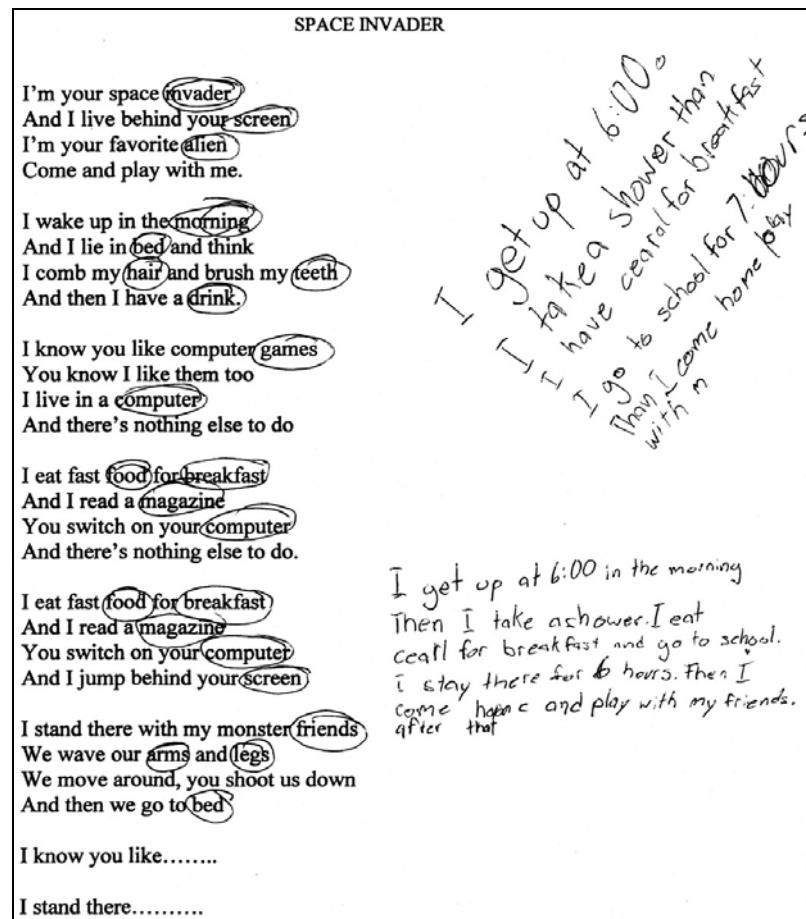
I began the lesson by reading Ruth Heller's picture book on nouns to the class. The pictures are so vibrant and I have found that students at this age still appreciate being read to. They were extremely quiet. We discussed how quickly they forget the parts of speech and I explained to them that my goal was that next year they were going to remember. I chose the "Noun Song" from the CD called "Grammar Grooves." I passed out the lyrics and had the students listen first and sing the second time. I noticed faces as students listened to the song. At first I

think they thought it was silly and just not their type of song, but it seemed as though they were giving it a chance as it became more familiar. It was something different. Most were focused and smiling. A few were looking at others. I don't think anyone wanted to be caught singing if his neighbor wasn't singing. The chorus was catchy and by the end of class, they were singing the song as they went out the door. George, on the other hand, was making a popping noise with his thumb and cheek. Despite the need for an occasional reminder, George seemed to be enjoying my class; however, he was already making a name for himself during his second year in seventh grade. I knew that he had been kicked off the football team, but I didn't know why. When I filled out the form for student referral that came my way, I really didn't have much to say about him yet, and I may have been the only teacher who actually had some good things to put on the list. He never once complained about any of our class activities, and he was open to everything new that I tried.

Using a song about pizza as a model, I was able to get my students to write their own song about a pizza creation, identifying their favorite toppings as nouns in the song. I used this same principle and a song called "Space Invaders." As done previously with the other songs, the first time I played it, the students followed along by reading the song lyrics. The second time they sang the song. Afterward, I asked them to circle all the nouns. The song (see Figure 4) was about a space creature who lives inside a computer screen, who could be part of a

computer game students play. It gave the daily activities of this creature and I used these to ask them to create some of their own daily activities in complete sentences.

Figure 4. *Finding nouns in a song*



You will see in Figure 4 that Molly grasped the concept of nouns very well. You will see in the sentences that a common error appears mistaking "than" for "then."

I gathered these frequently-made mistakes and used them later for minilessons or daily warm-ups.

When the time came to try their hand at verbs, they were already pros. I used "The Verb Song" from the Grammar Grooves CD. The song was upbeat and fun. My students caught on fast and were singing in no time. When I used a particular song introducing a part of speech, I played it each day as the students entered the room to keep it familiar to them. This was a song they learned well enough to try the karaoke version. Students often have a difficult time remembering what linking and helping verbs are. By remembering the lyrics to this song, my students were able to distinguish between the two.

I used a song called "What a Crazy Day," from *Singing Grammar*, which mixed up all the nouns and verbs, such as "I drank a slice of bread" or "I ate a cup of tea," and became a great segue for students to find direct objects in a fun way, since this was next on the curriculum map, along with transitive and intransitive verbs. Flora yelled out, "I finally get it!" Yasmine seconded the motion. They were now finding direct objects and transitive and intransitive verbs on their own. They were so excited at being able to find direct objects that they were rattling off the subjects, verbs and direct objects one after another. I usually require them to raise their hands, but the response was so enthusiastic that I didn't want to spoil the moment. I have never experienced this excitement doing exercises in the

textbook. I can only assume that there was such interest because it was something that was fun and more easily understood than a textbook exercise.

Figure 5. *Finding direct objects and transitive and intransitive verbs in a song*

WHAT A CRAZY DAY

S I
I woke up this morning
And I got into bed
Then I ate a cup of tea
And drank a slice of bread
Oh, what a crazy day!
Oh, what a crazy day!

S V I
I went to the bus stop
And caught the train to school
Then I rode my bicycle
In the swimming pool
Oh, what a crazy day!
Oh, what a crazy day!

Someone broke the telephone
So then I rang my friend
We went to the football field
And swam from end to end
Oh, what a crazy day!
Oh, what a crazy day!

S
I came home this evening
And watched the radio
I lay down on the ceiling
And read a video
Oh, what a crazy day
Oh, what a crazy day!

Learning verbs was the most complicated venture for my students.

Linking verbs were difficult for them to understand. They learned about action, helping and linking verbs in the song, but I discovered that something additional was needed to reinforce the linking verbs. This was also done in the form of song,

but not from a CD. This time I wrote the linking verbs on the board and had my students sing them to the tune of "London Bridge is Falling Down." It was a familiar tune to all of them and easily learned. Students volunteered to go up to the board and point to each linking verb as we sang the song. We repeated the song several times, and each time a different student would point out the linking verbs as we sang them. It soon became familiar and later, when a student would slip and ask me, "What is a linking verb?", I would immediately start singing the song and see the light of recognition in his or her eyes.

Interview Day

I was now eager to get some one-on-one time with my students. I was well into my study and it was important to me to find out how they truly felt about our classroom activities. I needed to be reassured that I was on the right track. I decided to do this during class, but I would only be able to do a few in a class period because the rest of the class had to be busy working on an assignment, which didn't require my constant monitoring.

Of course, George's hand was up immediately, begging to be picked first to sit in the "interview chair." It was amazing to me to see what a big deal they thought this was. During the first "Interview" class, I was only able to get six interviews completed, but I assured the remainder that they would all get their turn to be interviewed. They were all "kind" to me with their constructive criticism. Actually, most were happy with just about anything that we did that was

different and out of the textbook. They all said that their interest in English improved since we started using music. Many said that the music relaxed them and that they were now excited to come to English class. Some said that they were able to better understand the parts of speech when using song lyrics to find them, rather than the textbook exercises. It had more meaning to them. Only one student was still having trouble understanding some of the grammatical concepts, and it was good for me to know this while there was still time to get her help. Another said that she never really understood English and has now come to understand it in a new way because of using music. George stated that the book is boring and that he enjoyed almost all the music that we had used. He said it calms him. He liked the rap music most, which I suspected, but I knew from observing that he liked everything I'd played, because I saw him singing and examining the songs and his hand was always up to participate. He said that he particularly liked when the songs were supplemented with a game, which I have done using the *Singing Grammar* book. I knew that. One of the games required using dice and I bought multicolor dice to pass around to the game partners. Such a simple thing really motivated him. He said that he still had trouble with tests, which of course, I did notice. I needed to find out why he did so well in his oral responses during class and scored so poorly on tests. The following layered story gives an insight to George. It shows my constant pursuit to help him, how the other students viewed

him, and how he needed constant reassurance that he was passing, even though he was aware that he wasn't always doing the work he needed to do to pass.

Figure 6. *Layered Story - Voices of George, Teacher and Students*

<p><i>George:</i></p> <p><i>What's my grade, Miss? I know I'm smart. I just don't like book work. I hate homework. When we take a test, I'm embarrassed when I fail. When I get a good grade, I like the whole world to know. When I fail, it's not my fault. I didn't know there was going to be a test. I would have studied. I didn't have time. I forgot my notes. I misunderstood the directions. I was absent. I was sick. I was late to class and missed something. I was in the bathroom. It's never my fault. I need to take a retest. What's my grade, Miss?</i></p>	<p><i>Teacher:</i></p> <p>Why don't you do your homework, George? You are such a smart young man. Every time you answer orally in class, you are right "on the money." What happens when you take a test? I don't think you even read the questions. It looks to me like you just guess. How else could you fail so badly? Why do you have so many excuses? Why can't you just do what you are told? You don't even try. Why do you make those noises? Do you need more attention than I am giving you? You are a good class participant and that's certainly important, but why can't you take a test like your classmates?</p>	<p>Other students:</p> <p>George, shut up. You talk too much. Maybe we could get more done if you would concentrate. Can't you concentrate? The teacher works hard to get you interested. She calls on you all the time and you love to answer. Why can't you take advantage of that and do some work? Do you just want attention? Why do you make those sounds under your breath and then deny that it's you? We all know that it's you. You're not fooling us.</p>
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Writing with Music

Most of my students tell me that they hate writing. I suspect that there are many reasons for students' initial dislike of writing when they enter my classroom. For example, some may have been frightened somewhere along the way with the red pencil markings, which became too numerous to bear. Others have likely never been encouraged to write about topics of their own choice. Some just think they cannot write well and refuse to try. Some haven't had enough practice. In some cases writing has been used too often as a punishment, and others simply have not been inspired to write.

For all of these reasons and many more, writing is not a favorite among many students when they enter seventh grade. Of most interest to me is that some students have not been inspired to write. When a teacher gives a writing prompt and says, "Now write," to the students, they sit there with blank faces. They may not understand the prompt, they may not be interested in the prompt, or they may not know how to begin, and because of all this, they become frustrated.

This is where I hoped my use of music throughout our English language arts curriculum would help students to want to write. When we hear music, we are all affected in different ways, but most of us feel at least some emotion when we hear music. Sometimes we may want to dance, tap our feet or fingers, sing, or even cry. If we hand our students a pencil and paper in a quiet room and tell them

to write, they often won't do it. On the first day of using writing with music, I started with Peter Elbow's idea (1998) of a free-write exercise by playing music and telling my students to write whatever came into their head. I instructed them not to lift the pencil from the paper, but rather to keep writing until I told them to stop, which would be about ten minutes of uninterrupted writing. One student asked, "What if we print? The pencil has to come off the paper." I had forgotten that cursive is dying and most of my students don't use it anymore. I made it clear that they must just keep writing and it didn't matter what they were saying as long as the pencil was moving. Someone else asked, "What if we have nothing to say?" That was my opportunity to tease them and pointing to my head, saying, "Does that mean that there is nothing up there in your head?" and they laughed. Seventeen of my students did what they were supposed to. I watched them write and write and write. Some even needed more paper. George loves to write and his writing is actually quite sophisticated. I hoped that this would be a place where he could excel! Tevon surprised me as he sat with only a few bulleted items on his paper. He said that he didn't know what to say. Tevon is one of my better grammar students. Gary told me he likes to write and here was his opportunity, but his pencil was not moving. Three other students just listed topics that came to mind and two wrote a single paragraph and stopped.

This exercise was done anonymously. I wanted my students to write freely and was afraid that if they put their name to the paper, the product might be

different. As I looked at them later, one of the students, who may have been George, mentioned a fear of ending up in a juvenile detention center or some other place for those who have behavior problems. He wrote that he was curious about whether he would ever do enough to get him to the eighth grade. Someone else wrote about what they were having for dinner, something about a boyfriend or girlfriend, anticipating a family trip, questions about school, fears and successes.

Now that my students were warmed up with writing, I decided to have them listen to a piece of program music and write their own story, as they listened. It was Halloween time, so I thought it was fitting to choose "Dans Macabre" by St. Saens. I was looking with interest at Gary during this lesson because he told me that he loves to write, especially about scary things. Gary had a language barrier, so grammar was a particularly challenging area for him and he had been especially unmotivated the previous day. I explained to the class that I wanted them to let their imaginations run wild and write down everything that came to mind as they listened to the music. What they wrote would then turn into a story of their own creation. I was disappointed to see that Gary was not writing. I played the piece twice, and finally, the second time round, he got the idea.

George's friend, Mark, moved next to him. Because this was not "group time," I had to tell them to separate. I explained that I didn't want them in pairs yet because I didn't want them to share ideas until the very end. I didn't want them to

be influenced by each other. George became annoyed because he couldn't have his way and chose not to write. I had a feeling that this little display of temper would dissipate if I ignored it. George was getting back at me by not writing. I know that he loves to write, and sure enough, while I watched all the other students doing some serious writing, it wasn't long before George picked up his pencil and was writing right along with them. I was so happy to see this. I certainly didn't want him to miss out on the opportunity to do something he likes.

As I circulated among the students, I noticed that Tevon had an empty paper. Something always seemed to keep him from getting his thoughts onto paper. He is a student who tests well, but when it comes to writing, I believe that he is too hard on himself and wants everything to come out perfectly. Because he is a perfectionist, he hesitates when it comes to any kind of a rough draft. He wants everything that he does to be perfect from the start.

Andrew was the only one who asked to go to the bathroom during this exercise. I have noticed that he does not like to write and his bathroom requests had become more frequent since our in-class writing assignments began.

At the end of class, I collected the papers. I offered students the opportunity to share their stories orally. Many were willing to have me read them, but they didn't want to read them themselves. Gary came through and even titled his short story, "Frozen Flame." He allowed me to read it for him. It wasn't very long (only one paragraph), but I was pleased with the fact that he had made the

attempt. It was a beginning. I didn't want his language barrier to cause him to hold back. There were many spelling and grammar errors in Gary's work, but I felt that getting anything at all from him was certainly a start. Making my students want to write in the first place would then lead to instruction on becoming better writers.

While Gary thought of fire as he was inspired to write by listening to "Dans Macabre," Louis wrote a story about a cat attacking him. Louis tended to perform well in the class, and his short story was complete with a crude introduction, body, and conclusion. Grammatically, it needed some touching up, but he was on the right track. He showed a certain amount of sophistication in his writing, although spelling and grammar needed quite a bit of attention. My intention was to use their work to create minilessons, as suggested by Weaver. I would use errors in student work (anonymously) and we would discuss how best to fix the errors as a class. The ultimate goal was to create a five paragraph story. This seemed like an overwhelming task to my students, so I wanted to start on a small scale and build on it later. Getting them interested enough to begin was the hardest part.

During this time, Andrew did not ask to leave the room at all. This told me that he was ready to focus and give his best attempt at writing. Neither the bathroom, nor the nurse were calling for him this time. I was pleased at his creativity and also his neatness. After all, if no one could read his story, then it could not be shared. By this time, students were eager to read what they had

written or have me read for them. Flora's story was filled with drama and lots of exclamation. She was letting the music bring out her creativity and letting her mind run wild with her ideas. This was definitely a good start for story writing.

See the following student writing samples:

Figure 7. *Gary's story*

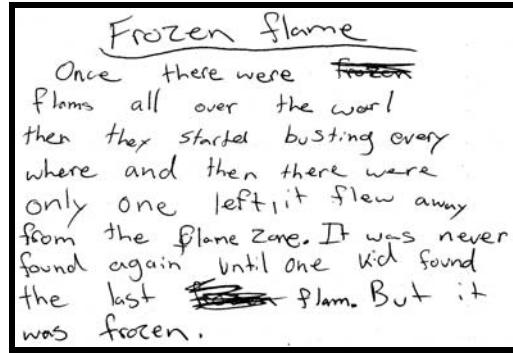


Figure 8. *Louis's story*

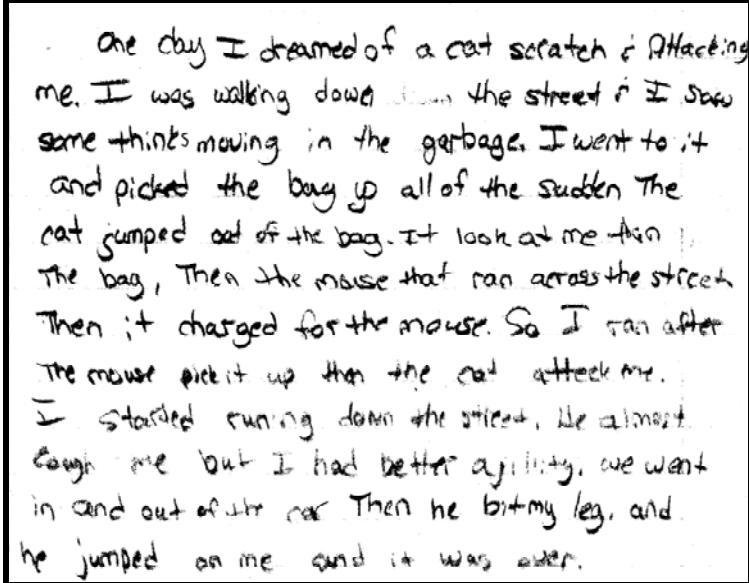


Figure 9 - Andrew's story

One day a couple of knights set out on a voyage and went to find treasure. After a couple days of searching they found something. It was a treasure box. It was locked. So they brought it back to their kingdom when they opened it there was no gold only snakes. The snakes were poisonous. They killed the knights and the king. There was great sorrow in the kingdom no one was happy. And there was a great Prince he killed the snakes and became the king.

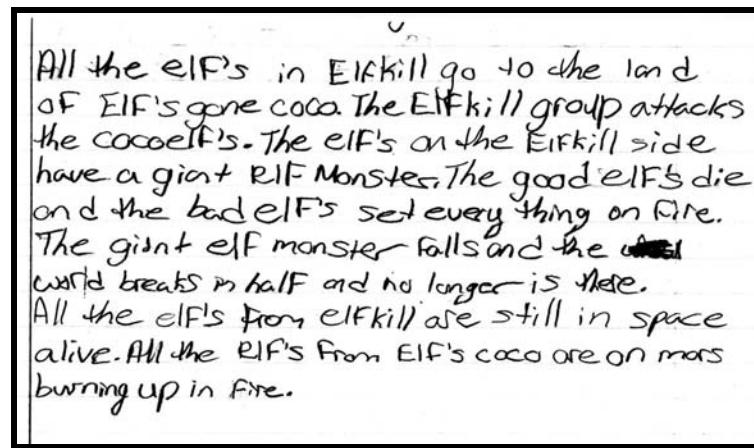
Figure 10. Flora's story

As she walked up the stairs
the walls creeted + doors
slamed. She just wanted
to find out wat was
in the attic. SLAP! she oped
the door + found tons +
tons of mice. AHHHH. She
runns + runns down the
stairs she goes. It's the
fastest she has ever run.
the mice flop down! Ohh
They r chasing me!!
Ahh. Why Why? Bang. Bang.
Doors slam Doors Bang they
follow her. Whoa that was
a close one. she got away.
She cries + cries wat
is she doin. They're harmless
she says to herself.

Chanelle wrote about a girlfriend/boyfriend issue and allowed a friend to read it for her. Eventually, there were so many wanting to share their stories orally that we ran out of time! This was a first. Ordinarily, they are too embarrassed to read what they have written to the rest of the class! I believe this was because they were no longer threatened and were finally proud of what they had done and realized that their work was worth sharing.

Even Henrietta, who struggles more than the other students in the class, gave this assignment her best effort. The music inspired her to write about elves at war in a short, but creative piece.

Figure 11: *Henrietta's story*



I was initially looking only for content and focus in the early drafts, so the stories you see in my study are in the roughest form. My plan was to use music to get my students excited about writing. I wanted to see the pencils moving of those who would normally be still because they were not motivated. I wanted to take

away the fear of writing and allow my students to write creatively about things they really wanted to share. I didn't want them to be encumbered with rules and red pencil markings in the early stages of their writing. There would be plenty of time later to fix their final drafts. Getting something on paper is the most difficult part at this age. Using music relaxed them and gave them ideas. They truly enjoyed later sharing how each interpreted the music and we explored the diversity. They understood that no one was correct or incorrect in their response. Each writing was an individual interpretation and all were valuable to us as a class and to my study.

Journals

I kept in touch with my students' needs through journal entries. This was a good opportunity for a private dialogue with students who may be uneasy with speaking their mind face to face with the teacher. If they had a problem or a burning question, this was their chance to voice it on paper and await an answer from me. I had hoped to do this each week, but as we got involved in projects, time became of the essence, and journals were used less frequently than planned. However, when the opportunity was offered, students eagerly expressed their opinions and no one appeared afraid of saying the wrong thing. By this time, they were beginning to realize that what they had to say was important and every response was worthwhile to me. One of George's early journal responses follows:

Figure 12: George's journal entry

I like the music because it makes lessons more easier and I like to listen to music.

One reason I like it is because It calms me down and makes me feel good that's one reason I like music.

Second reason I like music is because without it I would be doing poorly because I rather pick subjects, verbs, and predicates on music sheets than in the book that's 2 reasons I like music.

Third reason I like music is because It makes Mrs. Reini happy gives her a chance to relax and not teach for a moment and get into the mix of the music long as the teacher is happy + pleased so am I that's the 3rd reason I like it.

One thing George enjoyed was writing. In the above journal entry, you can see how he organized his entry as he would a formal essay, giving enough examples to prove his point. George clearly enjoyed using music in class, admitting that it calmed him down. It seemed that perhaps this was one of the reasons I was not having any behavior problems with George. He would come to class each day with the question, "What are we listening to today, Miss?" It was what I wanted...enthusiasm, anticipation and motivation.

Poetry with Music

Haiku

I chose Haiku to open our poetry unit. Since the poems are very short, I thought this would be a good place to start. I brought in multi-colored silk leaves and passed out two or three leaves to each student. I explained the origin of haiku, how the poems are nature related and how they are created. My students were interested to know that the poetry didn't have to rhyme and that the poems were only three lines. The class grasped the concept of syllables quickly. We went over several examples of counting syllables and then put together a class Haiku while examining the leaves. Unfortunately, George was late to class and missed the whole instruction, so I had to spend some time with him individually later in the class.

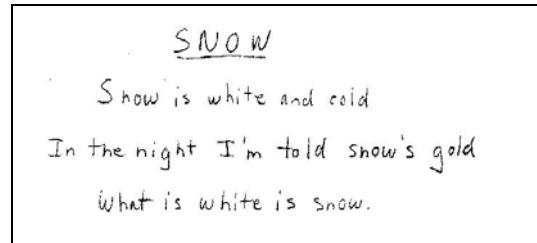
When I felt that they understood the concept enough to work on their own, I asked them each to finish some already-started haiku poems. I played several selections of Japanese music to keep the mood as my students worked on the poems. The music was foreign to them and they listened with curiosity. We discussed some of the differences when comparing it to music of our own country. I introduced them to the more familiar Japanese melody of "Sakura." By the end of the class period, some were humming the tune, as they worked. I circulated the room, helping those who needed assistance. All were counting the syllables on their fingers. Ultimately, they were to create their own haiku using

the leaves they examined in front of them and then another haiku totally of their own creation. A few needed extra help. Gary had difficulty, but because he is a resource student, I wasn't surprised. He had the added difficulty of English not being his first language. After I briefly filled George in on what we were doing, I asked another student who had finished her work, to help him. Mark was dizzy and asked to go to the nurse. He is one who is not enthused about writing, so I wondered if the lesson had anything to do with him wanting to leave class. The nurse sent him back to class eventually, so I assumed there was nothing seriously wrong with him. I continued to keep track of his requests to leave the room, and eventually discovered that when writing was involved, he looked for excuses to leave the room.

I was pleased with the haiku poetry. George wrote one about snow and Jessie about winter. George caught on quickly and set to the task immediately, frequently asking for my reassurance, "Is this right, Miss?" He had a little trouble getting the exact number of syllables, but it wasn't long before he had it figured out and wanted to do more. In his final product, he had the correct number of syllables, but rhymed two of the lines. I suggested that for homework he think of a way to change the poem so that it did not rhyme. During this lesson I didn't want anyone to be embarrassed by counting on their fingers, so I explained to them that in this case, I wanted them to count the syllables on their fingers. I was afraid that some might have been ridiculed for counting on their fingers in math

class and this was something entirely different. When I modeled for them and helped them, I showed that I was counting on my fingers, too. This made it clear that we were using the correct number of syllables. No one seemed bothered by this and I saw all students at work. Below are some student haiku poems.

Figure 13: *George's poem*



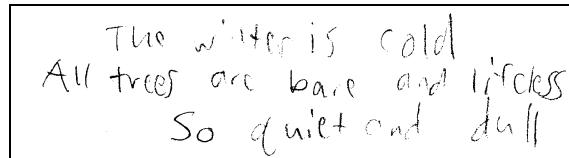
When George revised his poem about snow, he changed the first line to "Snow is like white ice." I was so pleased that he was interested in this lesson, as in all the others thus far. I also hoped that his poem would be one of those chosen as contest winners. It would give him such a feeling of accomplishment.

George was not one of those who turned in homework every day, but when he did have it, he wanted the world to know. When he did something good, he wanted it to be announced. This told me that he knew what he was supposed to do. He knew what it took to be a good student, but the trouble was that he didn't think about it every day. When I encouraged him, he beamed with pride. When he scored high on a test, which was something rare, he wanted me to announce it to

the class. It was embarrassing to him not to test well, and when he did, I believe he wanted to prove to his peers that he really could do it.

Jessie is one of those model students who always do exactly what they are told. He worked very hard and chose the following as his best haiku and wanted to submit it in the contest.

Figure 14: Jessie's poem



(The winter is cold
All trees are bare and lifeless
So quiet and dull)

Limericks

I chose limericks for the next poetry lesson because I knew my students would have fun with them. They attacked the haiku poetry with vigor, counting out syllables. I was eager now for them to count the beats of a limerick this time and be able to rhyme. Since the limerick comes from Ireland, it was Irish music that played as students entered the room. We discussed the history of the limerick and my students were delighted that it was now okay to be silly. I reviewed the pattern of forming a haiku and then I explained the pattern of the limerick. This time rhythm and rhyme were both important, so it was a totally new experience for them. We created a few as a class in order to get used to the *aabba* pattern. I

had them clap the rhythms and count beats so that the beat pattern was clear before we tried to do any rhyming. Once again, George was detained in the office and missed the instructional part of class, but fortunately, he was quick to catch on. There always seemed to be something that detained him, but he usually came in with a note from someone excusing him.

As in the haiku poetry, I had students work on some limericks that were unfinished. Because limericks are often about people, I had to be careful this time about appropriateness and instruct students not to use the names of anyone in the class, so that no one would be insulted. I continued to play Irish music as the students worked, clapping beats as they composed their own creations. There were a few that were borderline inappropriate, with topics such as an outhouse, but nothing that crossed the line. The response was quite good. Andrew, who doesn't enjoy writing, loved creating limericks. His writing is generally sloppy, but when it came time to write poetry, it was hard to believe that he was the same person. The words were clear and I did not have to struggle to read any of his poetry. Jeremy wrote a limerick about a man named "Fred" sentenced to be dead . Jeremy was one of the students who joined the class after the research had started. He came to me, appearing to have a good grasp of grammar, but not particularly any love of writing. He, too, enjoyed writing limericks. There was noisy, but healthy, chatter, as students shared and laughed at each other's limericks. Almost

everyone was eager to share what they had written. Below are some samples of student limericks.

Figure 15: *Felicia's limerick*

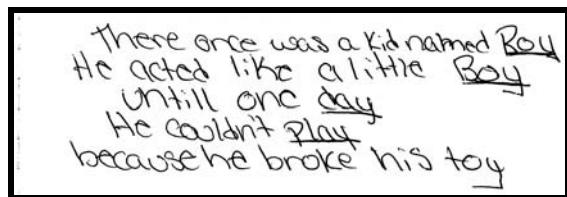
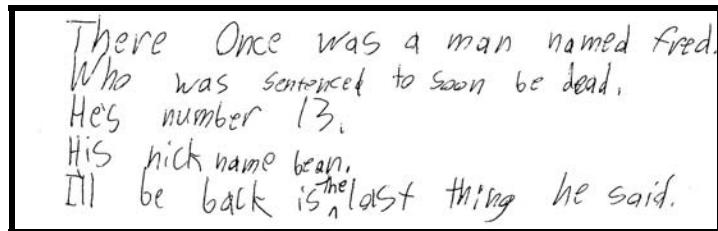


Figure 16: *Jeremy's limerick*



Cinquain

When it was time for cinquain poetry, my students were ready for something different. I approached it the same way. This time there was no rhyming, but counting of words and relating each line to the main idea. I had my students pick a piece of music or write a melody to accompany the theme of their cinquain. Lucy titled her cinquain poem "Sleep" and found a quiet, dreamy, excerpt from a classical piece to portray her poem. Henrietta titled her cinquain "Mountains" and chose music that made us think of wind rustling through the trees. Gary pleased me immensely when he came forward with a wonderful cinquain about football. He was proud of himself and I made a huge deal of his

wonderful progress. His words were carefully constructed, there were no spelling errors, and he understood the concept beautifully. His progress was very important to me. I knew he needed that extra push. I noticed that on Gary's good days, he went out of his way to speak to me in the hallway about homework or whether or not I had graded something of his. If it was a day when he was not motivated, he would ignore me in the halls, but otherwise, he sought me out. I loved the days when he came running!

Below are the cinquain poems that Henrietta, Lucy and Gary wrote in the roughest form. They were later edited, typed, and entered into a poetry contest.

Figure 17: *Henrietta's cinquain poem*

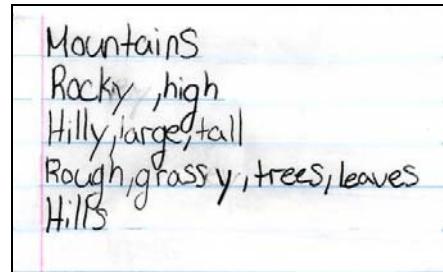


Figure 18: *Lucy's cinquain poem*

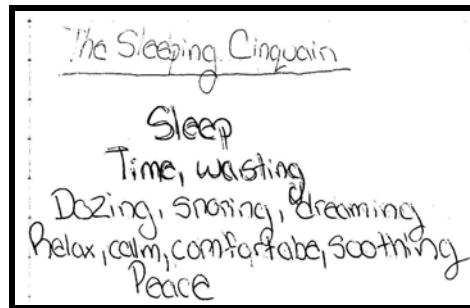
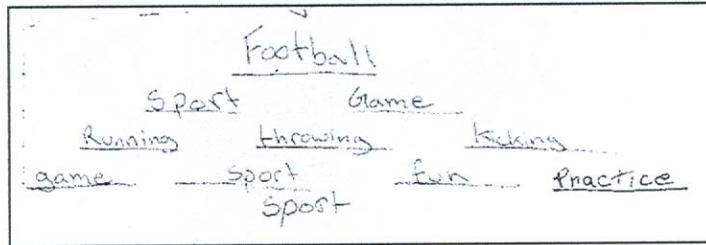


Figure 19 - *Gary's cinquain poem*



Henrietta was so proud of her work. She really struggles at some of the simplest tasks. Her first attempt at a cinquain of her own creation was finally, in her eyes, something she was good at. It was not perfect, and needed some fixing, but it was a really good start. The third line is supposed to show action, so for homework I asked her to come up with three action words. The next day she came in with "touching the heavens." It was a beautiful replacement for the third line of her poem. It now reads:

Mountains
Rocky, high
Touching the heavens
Rough, grassy, trees, leaves
Hills

Lucy is a perfectionist. She works quietly, neatly and is always focused. She was too shy to share her poem, so I read it to the class. It was amazing to see how interested my students were in each other's work.

There was only one thing to fix on Gary's poem and that was the repetition of the word "sport." I asked him for homework to come up with a substitute, so that he would not have to repeat the word "sport" in his poem. The next day he came in with a new word for the last line, "Fall." Of course, this was a wonderful idea, because that is the time football is played, and it finished his poem beautifully.

Behavior

Behavior during the poetry unit was very good. It seems that when there is challenge that they enjoy, my students are more focused. I also asked them to pick a favorite poem to enter into the poetry contest. When they chose the poem they wanted to submit, they were instructed to check with partners that the poem was formed correctly before writing a good copy. This took another class period, as students analyzed each other's poems and offered suggestions. I would step in when they reached a stumbling block and we would discuss, as a class, what needed to be done. I passed around the poetry anthology from last year's contest winners and I assured all of them that they had just as good a chance of winning. This created quite a bit of excitement. I knew that if I left it to them to enter on their own, they never would, but by making it a class assignment, each student could have the opportunity to win and have their ego boosted.

Finally, when students had chosen an excerpt of music to accompany their poetry, it was time to present the poems. I did not have to do as much prodding as

I expected. I believe the music gave them a sort of "crutch" to hold onto, which gave them the courage to stand in front of the class and read their short poem. There was also respect among class members who were normally chatty. They really listened to each other. Each student was given the floor for their special moment.

Radio Segments

For the culminating project I adapted Tupper's (1995) idea of ten-minute radio segments. I tied the whole research study into one project. It would be a opportunity for students to synthesize what they had learned in our creative writing, grammar, and poetry units. For this project, I asked them to create their own radio programs. This would be something they would present to the whole class. I divided them into six groups. I wrote all the names on the board and made a few minor adjustments, as there were some students absent, who would fill in empty spots when they returned. I tried to put students together who would complement each other. There were no personality problems, which I wanted to avoid. I made certain that George was in a group with his one friend. I did not choose a group leader, but allowed each group to make their own decision. I was pleased that each group had a willing leader from the onset of the project. Their job was to incorporate music, news, advertisements, weather, sports, etc. into a ten-minute radio segment. This project would involve creative writing, grammar and poetry all in one, tied together with the music in their program. It was a

venture they were quite excited about. When I gave them class time to work on this, it was loud, but students worked productively. Some wanted to add some artwork to the project, so I allowed them to do a poster, as well, to advertise their radio show, keeping the multiple intelligences in mind. This allowed those who were artistically talented to shine. They were graded as a group, but each was assigned a job. I allowed them to choose a group leader who designated a person in charge of each facet of the project. One would serve as the weather forecaster, the sportscaster, the news person, etc. For an advertisement, they were to create a poem. I allowed them to use their creativity to determine which music they would play and how they would incorporate it into the radio segment.

My students were extremely excited about the radio projects. They took their work very seriously and were quite creative with the final product. Some used humor and some used more drama than others. All were honest attempts and they had worked hard. I believe that using music gave them all the confidence to get up in the front of the room in the first place. I anticipated that some would refuse to participate when it came time to present, because they would get "stage fright." This did not happen. Each went right to his or her task and they were too busy to worry about being watched. Tupper (1995) allowed her students the option to prerecord their segments and eliminate the "live" factor. The radio segments were built around music. I think it made them more comfortable and took some of the stress of performing away. They all had something to share and

did it willingly. I didn't have to "push" anyone to do the job assigned by the group. It really was quite thrilling to see them handle group work so well. This project was important to them because they could use what they loved, *music*, and incorporate what they had learned. Projects like this are often frightening for the less-outgoing students, but music took some of this fear away. They truly enjoyed working on this project. I gave them each a section of the room in which to work, and kept all their materials in the classroom. I didn't give them the opportunity to work together on their own because things often get lost when they leave the classroom. This way everything they needed was at their fingertips.

I collected the written pieces such as the weather reports and news articles they shared with the class, and also the advertisements, which used some form of poetry in them. The effort was remarkable on this project and each student was deserving of a grade that reflected this effort. I believe that a work of this sort can sometimes tell much more than a test grade what the student is capable of. When I evaluated their presentations, I looked for news and weather reports that contained proper grammatical concepts that students had learned, such as whether or not the sentences were complete, and proper use of the parts of speech they had learned thus far. I also looked at their choice of music and how they used it in the presentation, as well as the poem they wrote for their advertisement and any accompanying artwork. Louis, Gary, Andrew, and Jeremy created a poster with all their information on it. Andrew was responsible for music and props. He

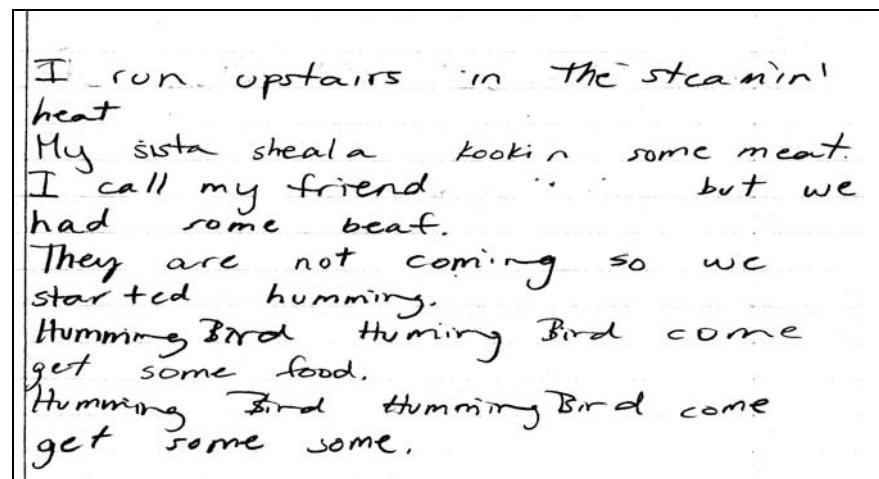
played music excerpts (mostly rap) in between each of the reporters. Gary was the deejay who opened the segment. He also did the artwork on the poster, which was quite good. Louis reported the traffic and Jeremy covered the weather. They incorporated humor in their reports and made them quite believable, adlibbing a bit as they saw they had their audience's attention.

Natalie, MaryAnn, and Henrietta's group used the music of Green Day, Chris Brown, O-Solo, Bow Wow and Rihanna. Mary Ann gave the weather report and Natalie did a news report about a 114-year-old woman who was robbed, shot and killed. Ebonics came into play with some of these pieces. Not wanting to discourage any writing, I was careful not to criticize in a way that told them they were wrong, but better to say that some language we use with family and friends and other language we use in a school situation. This seemed to satisfy my students. Henrietta was the deejay. She played the music between each report and announced the station periodically. I didn't expect her to read one of the reports because of her difficulties in grasping concepts, but Henrietta used her artistic talent in helping to create the poster. Even though each student had a specific job, they all helped each other with each piece, so they were graded according to the effort put in by the group as a whole.

Felicia, Yasmine, Molly and Flora used a musical piece called "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend." They were the most artistic of the group, designing a

poster that advertised their radio station "Dead-M-103.0." Below is a rap song created by Flora.

Figure 20 - Flora's rap song



Final Survey

The time had gone so quickly. I knew that my students had made huge progress in this endeavor. I was eager to see what differences might show on the final survey. As I passed out the survey, someone asked the question, "Does this mean we won't use music anymore because the research study is over?" They all looked at me wide-eyed. I responded, "Of course not, but I am anxious to see what you have to say about how it changed or didn't change your attitude in English class. Once again, please be honest with your answers. These surveys will be anonymous and no one is grading you on your answers."

Figure 21 - Survey after study

	Strongly Agree	Agree most of the time	Agree some of the time	Agree little of the time	Strongly Disagree
I like the subject of grammar.		4	10	7	2
Grammar is difficult for me.	4	3	12	2	2
I enjoy creative writing in class.	7	8	2	2	3
I like to write at home.	3	6	4	3	7
I consider myself a good writer.	6	2	9	6	
I enjoy reading poetry in class.	5	2	5	4	7
I enjoy writing poetry in class.	4	5	2	6	6
I like writing poetry at home.	4	1	3	5	10
I enjoy English class more when we use music.	10	8	3	1	1
I enjoy writing more when we use music.	7	11	3	1	
I like poetry more when we use music.	4	4	6	3	6
Using music to help me learn grammar, writing and poetry has not made any difference at all.	2	5	5	3	8

The final survey showed me that my students did, in fact, enjoy using music in our grammar, writing, and poetry lessons. However, there was no one who admitted to strongly agreeing that they enjoy grammar. The spot was still empty on the final survey.

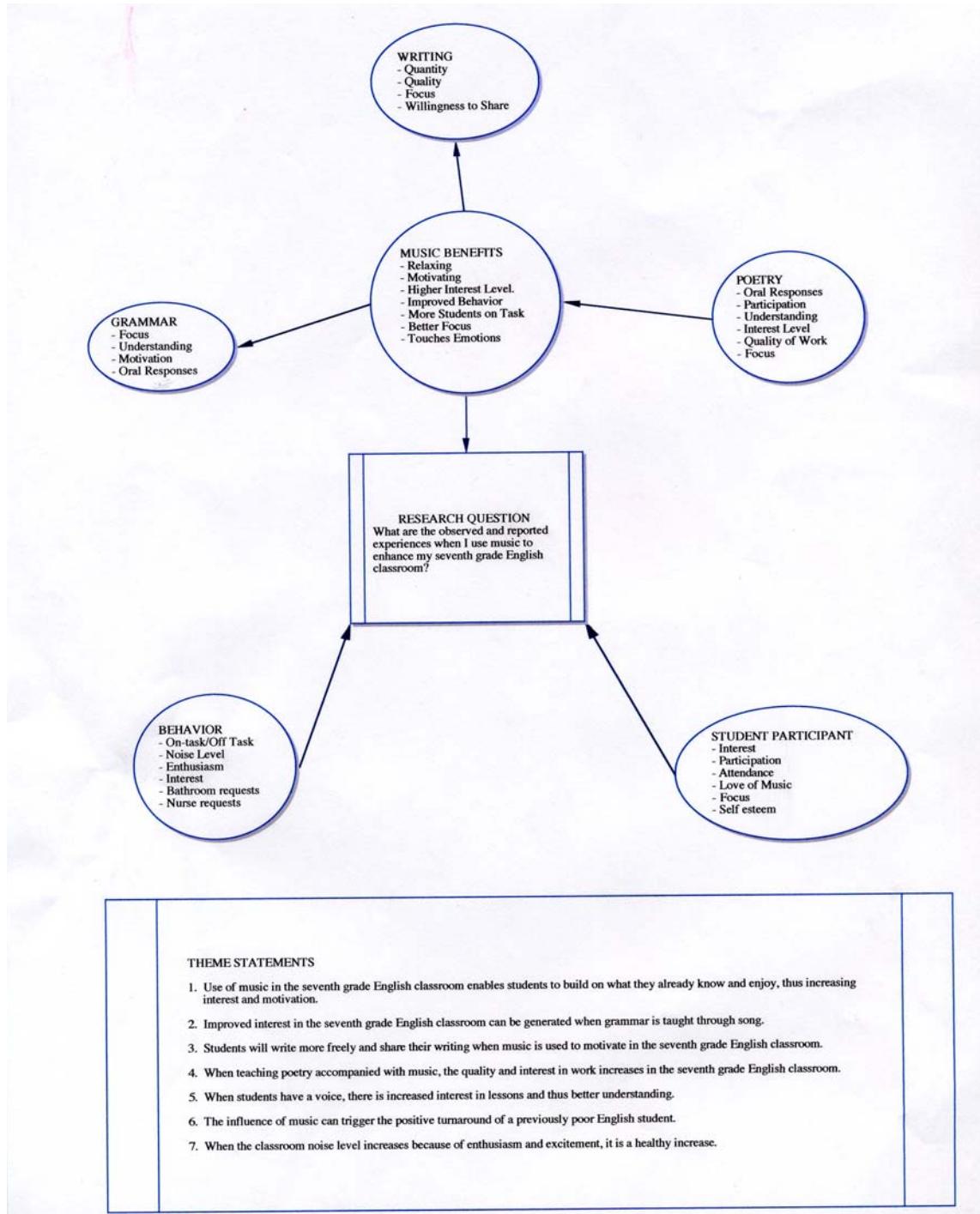
EXPLANATION OF DATA ANALYSIS

During each lesson I kept a field log in which I jotted down notes of my observations during the class and then wrote a more detailed filed log entry following each class. I read and reread my notes, looking for patterns, and adding observer comments as Ely, et al. (1997) advise. They remind us that "Qualitative analysis requires that the researcher go back again and again over the accumulated log material in a process that for many has a cyclical feel" (p. 175). I placed observer comments, or my feelings about what I observed in brackets to be easily identified in my field log and included questions that needed answering or any new hunches that surfaced. If a problem occurred, or if I discovered that I left something out, or wanted to make note of something a particular student had done, this was the opportunity to document that information. I dated and labeled these comments "OC" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

The first step at organizing my data was to create codes. According to Ely, et al. (1997), codes "identify a meaning unit" (p. 162). For example, one of the areas I was monitoring during my research was the behavior of my students during class; therefore "Behavior" became one of my codes. "Participation" became another frequently used code.

The next step was to look for patterns of related codes to be put into bins (Ely, et al., 1997). I gathered the bins and created a graphic organizer.

Figure 22 - *Bins and Theme Statements*



This helped me to look for relationships in my data. From this evolved my theme statements, "a statement of meaning that runs through all or most of the pertinent data" (p. 206). Through this whole process, I was able to see the results of my research more clearly as the patterns began to emerge.

Each day I would examine student comments on a Reflection Sheet. From this I was able to monitor understanding and enthusiasm on a regular basis and could thus make any adjustments accordingly to better reach my students.

I analyzed journal entries, where students gave feedback in detail about how they were progressing in the study and any suggestions or comments, both positive and negative that they may have had. This detail gave me a bigger picture of successes and problem issues, which I could use to tweak my plans in order to better accommodate my students. I scanned the journals, making a list of responses that needed immediate attention. I organized the responses into three columns. The first list was for those students needing help; the second column for any negative comments; and the third column for any positive suggestions that were made. By this quick scan, I could focus on the major issues first. However, every journal warranted a personal response from me.

I used a Behavior Chart to monitor class interruptions, such as bathroom requests, nurse requests, any other excuses to leave the room, as well as disruptive classroom behavior, such as not paying attention, excessive chatter, etc. I analyzed this chart by comparing it to each lesson, looking for patterns among

particular students, or the class as a whole. This chart gave a picture of overall class interest. I have noticed that students at this age, when not captivated by a lesson, will look for excuses to leave the room when they become bored. This is also the time that they become chatty. By looking at the Behavior Chart, I noticed the relationship between the lesson and how many, if any, students requested to leave the room or needed to be reprimanded because of excessive chatter.

I gathered student surveys and tallied the information to look for any patterns in understanding or not understanding. I looked for interest and disinterest. If there were complaints, I wanted to know why. I wanted to know what their favorite lessons were and how they reacted to each piece of music. I wanted to know if there was a particular area that was causing any problems. I needed to be reassured that they were progressing. At the end of the study I administered a final survey and used this to compare the results to the survey given at the beginning of the study to see if the attitude of the class toward grammar, writing, and poetry had changed.

I analyzed student work in order to monitor their progress and understanding. All work was kept in an individual folder, which made easy access for me to keep track of each student.

Throughout the study I read works by Delpit (2002); Dewey (1938); Freire (1970); and Vygotsky (1978) and I wrote reflective memos relating my own teaching practice to the ideas of these educational philosophers. This kept me

constantly reviewing my own teaching practice and discovering new ways to better reach my students.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The use of music in my seventh grade classroom enabled my students to build on what they already know and enjoy, thus increasing interest and motivation.

Taken in isolation, English is often a subject that generates little interest among seventh grade students. According to Delpit (2002), "Teachers seldom know much about the children's lives and communities outside of the classroom and either don't know how to or aren't willing to connect instruction to issues that matter to students, their families, and their community" (p. 41). I repeatedly find that music is what matters to so many of my students and this year it served as the tool I used to generate interest and enthusiasm among my students. As soon as they leave the school, their headsets are on, and they are listening to music. I used my own passion for music to build a trust with my students who also share that passion. They responded with a willingness that is not always typical in English classes at the seventh grade level. It was clear to them that I cared about whether or not they were learning and that I was trying my best to meet them halfway to help them to learn.

Smith (1998) says that in order to remember something, we must have a current connection to it. We forget what is not immediately relevant to us. Smith says that "Paradoxically, the effort to memorize interferes with memorization because it destroys understanding...Understanding means that you are connecting what is new to what you know already. Confusion means there is no such

connection" (p. 88). I used music to help my students to connect to the grammar concepts I needed to introduce to them. This eliminated the confusion that Smith speaks of because I used something with which my students were familiar and at the same time, something that they enjoyed.

My students came to class eager to start something new each day. The music brought smiles to their faces and when music played, it seemed to calm them as they worked. My research group was a lively one, and turned out to respond quite well to the music and activities I incorporated. Initially, I suspected that they might not be open to any kind of music, but I was pleasantly surprised that it really didn't matter. They seemed to be so grateful to be doing something different, that they came to class each day with an open mind and usually gave every piece of music that I used a chance. There were only two journal entries in which students complained about not having enough opportunities to listen to rap. The rest enjoyed everything we did. Of course there were favorites, but that is what I expected.

Improved interest in the seventh grade English classroom can be generated when grammar is taught through song.

When I passed out song lyrics for them to sing and then to dissect, they tackled the job with a great deal of vigor, which was such a difference from their typical response to the language arts textbook. Throughout the duration of this project, students really wanted to learn. There were no questions like, "Why do

we have to learn this?" or "When will we ever use this?" Finding the parts of speech in a song helped students see how real artists use real parts of speech in their song lyrics. Exercises in a textbook are all too often isolated and have nothing to do with students' lives. Using the songs made them see that, in fact, there are nouns, verbs, pronouns, etc. in every song. Some students came to me later with songs they had been inspired to write after the exercises we had done. They were now putting to use the new information and truly understanding what they were doing. Student comprehension is generally quite short term when textbook exercises are used; however, when the concepts can be put to use by the students on something of personal interest, they are much more likely to remember.

My students discovered that our language is used in stories, songs and poetry. They found a connection, which they previously could not find on their own, and this has made our discoveries this year worthwhile. Music became my catalyst to deliver the "magic" to my students. I took something important to me, as the teacher, and used it to touch what was also important to my students, *music*.

My students became used to the routine. When we learned a new part of speech, a song was always involved, whether it was singing the linking verbs to the tune of "London Bridge" or perhaps a song from the "Schoolhouse Rock" CD. It became something they looked forward to and asked for.

Students will write more freely and share their writing when music is used to motivate in the seventh grade English classroom.

I also discovered that my students wrote more freely when I used music. I believe that the music gave them the emotional freedom to write in a more uninhibited fashion than they customarily do in school. The normal groans at the words "writing" or "poetry" were nonexistent. They gave it a chance. Often when students at the seventh grade level are asked to write, I am lucky to get a few sentences. It was wonderful to see whole pages of work that they had written inspired by music. The music helped them to use their imaginations and write creatively. The best part of this was that they were enjoying what they were doing. I was clear that during these exercises, I would not grade their work. Students had already become afraid of the "red pencil" thanks to their earlier school encounters with writing, and I didn't want to discourage them before they even started. I just wanted them to be able to enjoy writing and not be afraid. When it came time to share orally, there were more students willing to read their work. Usually at this age, they are embarrassed to share what they have written. They are afraid it is not good enough, not worthy of sharing. However, they began to see that each had something worthwhile to share and no one was being criticized. At first, they were a little shy about sharing, but when more and more students offered, soon all of them wanted to be heard. It was quite a moment for me to see the rising self esteem among my students.

All of the above was evident in the culminating project, the ten-minute radio segments. My research participants looked forward to working on the projects and came to class each day with anticipation. I was pleasantly surprised by the artistic talent of many of my research participants and glad that I changed my original plan from a strictly oral presentation of the radio segment. Allowing them to do a poster to advertise their radio station gave them an additional prop and an additional hands-on project to focus their attention. I believe just the fact that they could hold something gave them more courage to face the class on presentation day. Using music in their radio segment also took the pressure off their task. Not a single student refused to go to the front of the class on the designated presentation day. They were all serious and focused. If someone was about to make a mistake, the group leader was quick to pull things together. In addition to this, those most likely to be off-task among my research participants were quiet and focused on each presentation with interest. There was also no trouble getting students to sign up in spots to present. It took three class periods to get all groups to perform. Someone had to go on the first day and I suspected that no one would volunteer. Once again, I was pleasantly surprised that it was no problem and all spots were filled in an orderly fashion. No one had to be coaxed to be first on the agenda.

When teaching poetry accompanied with music, the quality and interest in work increases in the seventh grade English classroom.

Poetry became something my students looked forward to and truly enjoyed. They were no longer frightened. No one felt defeated before they even started, as is often the case at this level. Everyone made an attempt. All participants created worthwhile poetry, adhering to the rules of each poem. Every student became comfortable enough to share his work orally with the class.

Student journaling, surveys and daily reflections monitor progress and keep track of any issues that need immediate attention.

My students were classified as an on-level, or average, group and students came from various backgrounds, with seemingly little interest in the subject I was being paid to teach them, and I wanted desperately to create a spark in each one that would motivate them. Often the reflection sheet told me that I had created the spark of interest that I was looking for. As Dewey stated, "Now, all principles by themselves are abstract. They become concrete only in the consequences which result from their application. Just because the principles set forth are so fundamental and far-reaching, everything depends upon the interpretation given them as they are put into practice in the school and the home" (p. 20). By this quote Dewey meant that no knowledge has any meaning until it can be personally applied and put into practice. No matter how straightforward and all-encompassing the principles are, it is only how they are interpreted and used in

the school and home that make learning exist. The most important reason for my study was to use something for which I have a passion to make meaning for my students from something that may be otherwise abstract to them. The parts of speech, which are abstract, often have no meaning to my students when they come to me at the beginning of the year. Students have never truly understood the meaning enough to be able to apply it to anything they know in their own world. Previously, my students have been introduced to grammar isolated from anything personal, either through the use of textbooks or accompanying worksheets. During my research I used material that I pulled from the personal realm of my students, specifically the music they love to listen to. By taking the lyrics from their songs, the grammar that I tried to teach them was no longer abstract to them because they were actually seeing language used in examples from their own personal lives.

One mustn't mistake this untraditional method of teaching as a "run-with-the-wind" method of teaching in which there is no structure, no planning, but impromptu planning on the spot. As Dewey also explained, "Just because traditional education was a matter of routine in which the plans and programs were handed down from the past, it does not follow that progressive education is a matter of planless improvisation" (p. 28). My whole study was based on nontraditional teaching, but planning was extremely important in order for concepts to be grasped. When there is no book, this doesn't mean that the concept

can be pulled from the air. Careful planning and monitoring of student learning is vital to the success of learning in any classroom. It is far more difficult to consistently plan useful lessons in which students are learning, practicing, and grasping the material than it is to begin at the beginning of the grammar book and complete the exercises one after the other. "The difficulties are aggravated and the criticisms are increased when it is supposed that the new education is somehow easier than the old" (Dewey, p. 29). Progressive teaching is not always accepted by traditional teachers. Some think that new teaching is an escape from the old. Because progressive education is often construed as a "hands-on" way of teaching (or constructivist as is popular today), traditional teachers may feel this is merely a way out of the drudgery of books, and thus it must be easier for the teachers because the students are doing more themselves. Thus, they surmise, the teacher's load is lightened. Ah, this is such a fallacy! There is such diversity in the student population today that it is a full-time job just trying to reach each and every student. Traditional education does not focus on any individuality. Progressive education focuses on the multiple intelligences of the students. I discovered early-on in my teaching that my students learn differently. Some of them did better than others on certain projects, some tested better than others, some were better participants, but did not test well, etc. As I incorporated the musical intelligence through my study, I also touched on the other multiple intelligences.

"Perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is the notion that a person learns only the particular thing he is studying at the time" (Dewey, p. 48). In the traditional sense of teaching, past learning involved only the specific material being covered in the lesson. The book was explicitly followed, and a teacher never dared to stray from the topic at hand. I have first-hand experience in the traditional sense, having gone to a parochial school in my elementary years. I never remember having a topic discussed and going off on a tangent in another direction. A class discussion was unheard of. I remember only following the book and a great deal of rote memorization and reciting what we remembered...if we remembered. Those who were poor at memorization failed. I don't believe that any of us really knew what we were saying, as we recited the pieces, word for word.

In progressive teaching much more than the concept at hand is learned. There is an openness for cross-curricular activity and connectedness. This is what makes sense to students, specifically, the connection to other material. Dewey termed this collateral learning. In my study, while my students learned the English concepts I needed to convey to them, there was meaning beyond. For example, when they wrote a story to accompany program music, they were introduced to a musical piece. Not only did they become more musically knowledgeable, but they learned to share ideas and emotions, to enjoy writing creatively, and much more.

In the traditional education picture, the teacher stands in front of the class and lectures. The students sit at their desks and the teacher stands, looking down on them. When teachers are permitted to draw on their own experience to teach their subject, there is much more passion involved. This then becomes a social interaction. It is something personal from the teacher, something valuable, and something most likely to be remembered, rather than a name and a date from a textbook. "When education is based upon experience and educative experience is seen to be a social process, the situation changes radically. The teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on that of leader of group activities" (Dewey, p. 59). In my study I brought the personal part of me into the picture. I put aside the book and planned lessons that interested me and therefore, I expected that my students would also be more interested in English class and really want to learn more. I allowed my students more freedom to learn and to help their learning process by adding their own comments and suggestions in a way from which I was able to learn, too.

When students have a voice, there is increased interest in lessons and thus better understanding.

Freire understood knowledge to come from inquiring minds. "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (p. 72). It is only through questioning, applying what is

learned and asking more questions, that knowledge surfaces. Students need to be interested in order to ask questions. I could dictate notes to my students and have them memorize them. They may or may not pass the test, but whether or not they do pass, what they have learned is not true knowledge because they haven't used it or questioned it. As I monitored the daily work of my students, answered their questions, and read their reflections, I was given a much better picture of their newfound knowledge than any test could have revealed. For this reason, standard test results were not a major part of my study. I was more interested in motivating my students to learn and to remember what they have learned because they were truly interested.

I used frequent journal entries for a better picture of whether or not learning was taking place. Students will often state their difficulties in a journal entry, rather than in a face-to-face meeting with the teacher. In this way I was able to get to the root of any problems before the situation got worse. Journal entries provided a chance to get to know my students. The dialogue between us became very important and crucial to my study. It gave me a chance to provide much-needed encouragement and I believe it improved the self-esteem of many of my students. I would skim the journals, making lists of those needing immediate attention. Specifically, I was looking for those who had a problem I needed to deal with, those who had a negative comment and those who had some suggestions for me. I personally responded to each journal entry, and I felt that

this ongoing dialogue was important for my study because it provided an element of trust and allowed me to get to know my students on a more personal level.

Meeting with my students individually was important not only to me, but also to them. It gave them a feeling of acceptance and importance in the research study. Each student was eager to be interviewed. None were afraid to express their opinion. I frequently reiterated the fact that negative feedback, as well as positive feedback, was welcome. Most of them came to me with enthusiasm, expressing a favorite lesson or song. Some were honest enough to tell me about something they didn't like. Usually if they didn't like something, it had something to do with the music choice of the day, not the lesson in particular. All students expressed that their interest in English class had improved with the use of music. Most, but not all of them, said they had a better understanding of grammar than before. Most enjoyed writing with the use of music. They said that it relaxed them and it helped them to write. Several said that it made more sense to them to find the parts of speech in song lyrics, which they could relate to. Most of them said they do not enjoy the English textbook and that the exercises are so boring that they lose interest very quickly.

One of the favorite lessons was one I did with a song called "The Pizza Song," which I used for introducing nouns. Students sang about all the things that can be put on a pizza. It was a funny song and one that engaged them in writing new verses. It had an easy melody and became a good teaching tool. I was

pleasantly surprised when I discovered how quickly my students could find meaning from such a simple song, and exercises from the textbook left them clueless.

When the classroom noise level increases because of enthusiasm and excitement, it is a healthy increase.

By making frequent entries on a "Behavior Chart," I discovered that when there was interest and enthusiasm in a lesson, there were fewer bathroom and nurse requests. In fact, any class disruption, such as excessive chatter or off-task behavior, was at a minimum when students were motivated and engaged in a lesson. If they were physically doing something, like dissecting song lyrics, there were no behavior problems, as there were sometimes when students would try to do the same with a textbook. When music was playing, there was less chatter and students became more relaxed, especially during testing. When the chatter involved excitement over the lesson, it was encouraged and considered healthy. When working in groups, or pairs, it was expected that the noise level would increase somewhat.

The influence of music can trigger the positive turnaround of a previously poor English student.

George, my student who was repeating the seventh grade, became an extremely interested English student during the study. He came to class with enthusiasm each day and his hand was always up to participate. His reflections

and journal entries were always positive. He never needed to be prodded to write, and appeared to look forward to my class. On the frequent days that he was late to school, he arrived in time for my class, which was the third period of the day. I had hoped that this was because of his interest in our English class and that he didn't want to miss. I never had to deal with any classroom disruption problems from George during the entire study.

Although the purpose of my study was not to improve grades, I had hoped that there would be an increase in grammar scores, along with motivation and interest. I administered the same tests that I used for my other classes, which were multiple choice tests on grammar. There was not a significant improvement in the grades of my students in the grammar area, but there was definitely more interest, enthusiasm, and participation among them.

While there was no significant change in grammar scores, there was in writing and poetry. Because the fear of writing was lifted, there was more product from my students. Instead of getting the bare minimum for an essay, they wrote more freely and the frequent question, "How long must it be?" was not heard. Poetry was no longer a burden placed upon them, but something that now made sense to my students. Their initial fear was replaced with enthusiasm and motivation and a realization that they could succeed at the task. No pencils were idle and sincere efforts were made to adhere to the poetry rules that guided each lesson.

THE NEXT STEP

My study encompassed so large an area that there are several things that I would like to study further. In my study I was able to create motivation, interest and participation in the seventh grade English classroom. With further study, I would like to take an in-depth look at how grades could be improved. There was not a significant change in grades during my study, but questions did arise about the possibility of experimenting with different methods of testing. I used the standard multiple-choice test for grammar that I used with my other classes.

I had planned on using journals weekly, but ran into problems some weeks on timing. With further study, more time would be specifically set aside for journal writing. This was crucial to getting to know my students, and I feel that more time devoted to this area would certainly be worthwhile to keep the ongoing teacher/student dialogue.

My survey did not reveal the results I expected. One of the reasons for this is that students had some difficulty reading the surveys. First of all, I hadn't anticipated that they would not know what "grammar" was. Secondly, there was some confusion in how the questions were worded. I would revise the questions to make it more understandable to my student population.

I would also like to further my research by using technology. I believe my study could have been greatly enhanced using a program such as "GarageBand," in which students create their own music on the computer.

Throughout my study, students asked to bring in their own music, but I did not encourage it because of lyrical content in today's music. I knew that I would need to preview anything I played in class and I didn't have time to do that. In another study, I would be more encouraging of student musical contributions and incorporate time into my study to preview music so that this could be done more often. I used a wide variety of music, but not as much of the type of music they listen to as I had planned.

With further study, I would like to see music integrated throughout the curriculum. I believe that music can enhance the learning of any subject. Cross-curricular activity with music could bring about the same results that I found in my English classroom. In social studies, why not introduce the music of the countries being studied, or sing math songs from the Grammar Grooves CD? Seventh grade children of today need more than a textbook to learn. If we want to reach them, we need to spark their interest with more than a pencil and paper. We need to touch their emotions, and why not do this through song?

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: HSIRB Approval Letter



August 22, 2005

Mary Paini

Dear Mary Paini:

The Moravian College Human Subjects Internal Review Board has approved your proposal: Using Music to Enhance Learning in a Seventh Grade English Classroom. Given the materials submitted, your proposal received an expedited review. A copy of your proposal will remain with the HSIRB Chair.

Please note that if you intend on venturing into other topics than the ones indicated in your proposal, you must inform the HSIRB about what those topics will be.

Should any other aspect of your research change or extend past one year of the date of this letter, you must file those changes or extensions with the HSIRB before implementation.

A hard copy of this letter will be sent to you through U.S. mail shortly. If you do not receive the letter by the time you need to begin gathering data, please do not hesitate to contact me. Also, please retain at least one copy of the approval letter for your files. Good luck with the rest of your research.

Debra Wetcher-Hendricks
Chair, Human Subjects Internal Review Board
Moravian College
610-861-1415 (voice)
medwh02@moravian.edu

Appendix B: Principal Consent Letter

August 29, 2005

Dear (principal's name),

During the 2005-2006 school year, I will be taking course work towards a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. These courses will help me stay in touch with the most effective ways of teaching in order to provide the best learning experience for the students.

Moravian's program requires that I conduct a systematic study of my own teaching practices. The focus of my research this year is using music to enhance learning in the seventh grade English classroom. Many students at this level dislike the subject of English in school. During this research, I hope to discover why some students dislike grammar, writing, and poetry and to entice them to learn and enjoy learning through the use of music. I hope to improve writing and grammar abilities throughout this research and to develop a renewed and improved interest among my students for the subject of English. This study will take place from September 12, 2005 to December 23, 2005.

As part of my study, I will be observing and reflecting on how the students are progressing in learning grammar, writing, and poetry, as I incorporate music into my lessons. I will be interviewing interested students about their thoughts and feelings both formally and informally during class time and during study halls. My students will be completing a survey both before and after the research. There are no anticipated risks in this study.

All the children's names will be kept confidential. Neither the children's names, nor the name of any other faculty member or public school will appear in any written report or publication of the study or its findings. Minor details of the student's writing, which may give a clue to his or her identity, may be altered to ensure confidentiality without changing the content, implications, or tone of the response. All research materials will be secured in a protected location.

My faculty sponsor is Dr. Joseph Shosh. He can be contacted at Moravian College by phone at (610) 861-1842 or e-mail at (e-mail address).

If you have any questions or concerns about my in-class project at any time, please feel free to contact me at school, home (phone number), or e-mail me at (e-mail address). If not, please sign and return the bottom portion of this letter. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Mary F. Paini

I attest that I am the principal of the teacher participating in the research study, and that I read and understand this consent form, and received a copy. Mary F. Paini has my permission to conduct this research at (name of school), Pennsylvania.

Principal's signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Parent Consent Letter

August 30, 2005

Dear Parents/Guardians:

During the 2005-2006 school year, I will be taking course work towards a master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. These courses will help me stay in touch with the most effective ways of teaching in order to provide the best learning experience for your child.

Moravian's program requires that I conduct a systematic study of my own teaching practices. The focus of my research this year is using music to enhance learning in the seventh grade English classroom. Many students at this level dislike the subject of English in school. During this research, I hope to discover why some students dislike grammar, writing, and poetry and to entice them to learn and enjoy learning through the use of music. I hope to improve writing and grammar abilities throughout this research and to develop a renewed and improved interest among my students for the subject of English. This study will take place from September 12, 2005 to December 23, 2005.

As part of my study, I will be observing and reflecting on how the students are progressing in learning grammar, writing, and poetry, as I incorporate music into my lessons. I will be collecting samples of student writing to analyze and compare. I will be interviewing interested students about their thoughts and feelings both formally and informally during class and during study halls. My students will be completing a survey both before and after the research. There are no anticipated risks in this study.

All children in my classroom will be involved in the hands-on study of English enhanced with music. However, participation in this study is entirely voluntary and will not affect the child's grade in any way. Your child may withdraw from the study at any time. If your child is withdrawn, or you choose not to have your child be a part of the study, I will not use any information pertaining to that child in my study.

All the children's names will be kept confidential. Neither your child's name, nor the name of any student, faculty member, teacher, or public school will appear in any written report or publication of the study or its findings. Only my name and the names of my sponsoring professors will appear in this study. Minor details of the student's writing, which may give a clue to his or her identity, may be altered to ensure confidentiality without changing the content, implications or tone of the response. All research materials will be secured in a protected location.

My faculty sponsor is Dr. Joseph Shosh. He can be contacted at Moravian College by phone at (610) 861-1482 or e-mail at (e-mail address). The principal, (principal's name), has approved my study and can be reached by phone at (principal's phone number).

If you have any questions or concerns about my in-class project at any time, please feel free to contact me at school, or e-mail me at (e-mail address). If not, please sign and return the bottom portion of this letter. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Mary F. Paini

I attest that I am the student's legally authorized representative and that I read and understand this consent form, and received a copy.

Legal representative signature: _____

Child's name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Behavior Chart

BEHAVIOR

Appendix E: Reflection Sheet

NAME: _____

MY REFLECTIONS

Appendix F: Student Interview Questions

NAME: _____

STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Has your interest in English class improved since we have used music?
2. Do you have a better understanding of grammar than before?
3. Do you enjoy writing more than before? If so, why?
4. Do you enjoy writing poetry more than before? If so, why?
5. In what ways did the music help you in the lessons?
6. What was your favorite lesson during the study?
7. What kind of music did you like the most?
8. Was there any music that you did not like?
9. If there was music you did not like, did it make a difference in your interest in the lesson or your learning?

Appendix G: Student Survey (Before Study)

SURVEY

	Strongly Agree	Agree Most of the time	Agree some of the time	Agree little of the time	Strongly Disagree
I like the subject of grammar.					
Grammar is difficult for me.					
I enjoy creative writing in class.					
I like to write at home.					
I consider myself a good writer.					
I enjoy reading poetry in class.					
I enjoy writing poetry in class.					
I like writing poetry at home.					

Appendix H: Student Survey (After Study)
SURVEY (after study)

	Strongly Agree	Agree most of the time	Agree some of the time	Agree little of the time	Strongly Disagree
I like the subject of grammar.					
Grammar is difficult for me.					
I enjoy creative writing in class.					
I like to write at home.					
I consider myself a good writer.					
I enjoy reading poetry in class.					
I enjoy writing poetry in class.					
I like writing poetry at home.					
I enjoy English class more when we use music.					
I enjoy writing more when we use music.					
I like poetry more when we use music.					
Using music to help me learn grammar, writing and poetry has not made any difference at all.					