



Massey Hall and Roy Thomson Hall presents
COLLABORATIONS SONGWRITING PROJECT



TEACHERS' GUIDE

ABOUT

This resource contains suggestions to support The Corporation of Massey Hall and Roy Thomson Hall's "Collaborations" Songwriting Project, which partners professional musicians with your class or school group. Within this guide, you'll find structures and ideas that might act as starting points for collaborative songwriting in your classroom. Feel free to adapt these ideas for the needs of your classroom and students! Although this project has a structured timeline, the hope is that songwriting can become a common part of classroom work and an activity within individual student lives outside of school (as it may already be).

SCHEDULE

BEFORE THE PROJECT BEGINS you'll meet and/or email with an artist-educator and a staff representative from the Education & Outreach department. You'll map out the exact timing of your project and receive specifics about the artist you'll be collaborating with. In-between the two visits from the mainstage artist, the artist-educator will be available to visit and work with your class to help refine your song.

- BEFORE FIRST VISIT**
- Introduce most common parts and structure of a song (using activities below)
 - Listen through a few examples with students (suggestions are included in this guide, examples from the artist visiting your classroom will be provided by the Education & Outreach department)
 - Listen through a few examples that have different forms
 - Ask students to map the form of a favourite song
 - Discuss some possibilities of themes students might explore (suggestions below)

- 1ST ARTIST VISIT**
- General introductions
 - Artist can play one of their own songs and talk about how they wrote it
 - Artist and students can collaborate on an idea for a song - as much of the form as is possible in time given
 - Students in small groups may work on specific sections of the song and teach them to the larger group

- IN BETWEEN VISITS**
- Students and teacher finish, reflect on, edit, and rehearse the song
 - Students may be encouraged to work on more songs in small groups or individually (This may be done with the help of additional artist-educator/MHRTTH representative visits)

- 2ND ARTIST VISIT**
- Students show the nearly finished song to the Artist
 - Artist makes some suggestions (edits, shifts, additions, melodic, chordal, or form changes)

- EXTENSIONS**
- Your class may receive tickets to the artist's concert, and possibly be able to attend a soundcheck or backstage tour to see more of what happens at a concert. (subject to availability)

PARTS OF A SONG

VERSE

The story. The melody sounds the same each time it's repeated, but the lyrics change. Maybe less exciting than the Chorus.

PRE-CHORUS

A "lift," set-up, and/or question that leads into the chorus

CHORUS

Usually the same each time, a refrain, "repeatable." Maybe it's a chant, maybe it mentions the title of the song. This might be one of the first parts of the song you write.

BRIDGE

Used in place of the verse as a change of pace and/or another perspective. It's different enough that listeners sit up and take notice that the verse has been replaced.

HOOK

An element of melody, lyric, chord, or rhythm that attracts the listeners' attention by standing out from the texture. Can come from a strange choice or experiment that might not seem right at first.

TWO COMMON SONG FORMS

Verse (V) - Pre-Chorus - Chorus (CH) - V - Pre-CH - CH - Bridge - V(or solo) - Pre-CH - CH - CH
OR
V - CH - V - CH - V - CH - CH

Adjust these forms as you see fit - have fun with it as a class!
How does the song sound when you move things around?

EXAMPLES TO LISTEN TO WITH YOUR STUDENTS

Can you map the form of the following? Are they the same as the above? (*Lyrics in Appendix A on page 5*)

RAINBOW CONNECTION - KERMIT (THE MUPPETS)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awhyiBv-oQc>

BUDDY HOLLY - WEEZER

(has a solo verse to pre-chorus after the bridge)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kemivUKb4f4>

FIGHT SONG - RACHEL PLATTEN

(verse melody changes over same structure and progression)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoIVInw-SKc>

BELIEVER - IMAGINE DRAGONS (has a long pre-chorus)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wtfhZwyrcc>

Ask students for their favourite songs.



STARTING POINTS FOR WRITING HARMONY

It can be useful to begin with a partially filled-in order of some of the most common chords (harmonic structure). See page 9 for an example. Shift this as much as you or your students might like.

You may want to create flashcards with the following chords so students can practice rearranging them to hear what different beginnings, endings, and orders sounds like. This can be done with voice, piano, guitar, ukulele, orff instruments, or using online/app guitar simulators like those on Bandlab, Soundtrap, or GarageBand.

C	F	G	Dmin	Amin
I	IV	V	ii	vi

(feel free to use a key that works best for your class: for example D: D, G, A, Emin, Bmin or G: G, C, D, Amin, Emin)

Some next steps can be seen in the suggested harmonic structure:

- Using a “three”/Emin chord in Pre-Chorus
- Trying to fit in a “Wild Chord” as given. The “Wild Chord” is a chord “borrowed” from another key.

RHYTHM

BEGINNING WITH 4/4 (4 BEATS PER “BAR”) WITH STRUMS OF THE CHORD ON EVERY BEAT, AND A CHORD CHANGE FOR EACH BAR IS A GOOD STARTING POINT, BUT LISTEN FOR STUDENTS TO MAKE SUGGESTIONS THAT PRODUCTIVELY SHIFT THIS.

Some variations:

- Don’t strum the chord on every beat
- Strum the chord twice on one beat.
- Try a chord change in the middle of bar (maybe just once in the verse or chorus)
- Try a chord change on both beats 3 and 4 (maybe just once in a section).
- Once you’re experienced songwriters, you might try three beats in each bar, or six.

LYRICS

WORDS CAN ARISE FROM MANY SOURCES AND METHODS OF DISCUSSION. TRY SOME OF THE STARTING POINTS BELOW, ON PAGE 8, OR MAKE UP YOUR OWN. WHEN WRITING LYRICS WITH A GROUP, TRY GETTING A SHORT ANSWER/SUGGESTION FROM EACH INDIVIDUAL AND WRITING EACH IDEA ON THE BOARD.

- Ask students about the best parts of their days. The toughest parts.
- Ask students about the different sounds they hear in the morning, afternoon, evening, and night time.
- Ask students about their earliest sound memory.
- Together pick a theme that affects their daily lives and ask for some words that you might categorize into verses.
- Ask students to write a song about the city, with lots of detail from the students’ daily life in their neighbourhood.
- When looking at ideas written on the board or chart paper, try looking for rhymes to end lines.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO TRY AND GET INPUT FROM EVERY STUDENT. SOMETIMES THE STUDENTS WITH FEWER CHANCES TO SUGGEST IDEAS WILL CREATE THE MOST MEMORABLE PARTS OF THE SONG. SUGGESTIONS THAT MIGHT NOT MAKE SENSE AT FIRST MIGHT BECOME THE “HOOK” OF THE SONG.



MELODY

- After you’ve got some ideas on the board, try fitting a line or a few words into the verse chord progression you created earlier.
- Play the chord progression over and over while thinking about or singing the words and see what melody and rhythm might arise. The whole class can try this all together.
- How can you hear your words sung over those chords? Students, especially younger ones, can be very good at this.
- Break into groups and ask them to do the same with the various parts of the song.
- Remember to not always stick with the first choice (reflect and revise) but also remember to stick with ideas that might seem, at first, to not work.
- Write a catchy “do re mi” melody, using only the first three notes of the scale.
- Teach the students the pentatonic scale (CDE GA). They can use this as a melody engine.

EXTENSIONS

The forms given here (suggested structure, song examples, student-provided examples) do not have to be adhered to. Take chances! Experiment! Some ideas: start with a half chorus, leave out the bridge or pre-chorus, repeat the first word of the chorus four times then continue, try replacing the second verse with only half of a verse, end on a “V” chord (G), start with the pre-chorus, etc.

Group writing can be great and can be propelled by small group work on various sections. Students should continually be encouraged to each generate and suggest ideas, listen, reflect, and make revisions.

Most importantly, have fun! With this preparation, your students will be primed and ready to write a song during your artist visits.

QUESTIONS? EMAIL EDUCATION@MH-RTH.COM AND OUR EDUCATION & OUTREACH STAFF WILL BE HAPPY TO HELP.

APPENDIX A - LYRICS

RAINBOW CONNECTION

Paul Williams

Why are there so many songs about rainbows
And what's on the other side
Rainbows are visions
But only illusions
And rainbows have nothing to hide

So we've been told
And some choose to believe it
I know they're wrong, wait and see
Some day we'll find it
The rainbow connection
The lovers, the dreamers, and me

Who said that every wish
Would be heard and answered
When wished on the morning star
Somebody thought of that
And someone believed it
And look what it's done so far

What's so amazing
That keeps us stargazing
And what do we think we might see
Someday we'll find it
The rainbow connection
The lovers, the dreamers, and me

All of us under its spell, we know that it's probably magic

Have you been half asleep?
And have you heard voices?
I've heard them calling my name
Is this the sweet sound
That called the young sailors?
The voice might be one in the same

I've heard it too many times to ignore it
It's something that I'm supposed to be
Someday we'll find it
The rainbow connection
The lovers, the dreamers and me

La da da di da da dum da duh da da dum di da ohhh

BUDDY HOLLY

Weezer

What's with these homies, dissing my girl?
Why do they gotta front?
What did we ever do to these guys
That made them so violent?

Woo-hoo, but you know I'm yours
Woo-hoo, and I know you're mine
Woo-hoo, and that's for all of time

Oo-ee-oo I look just like Buddy Holly
Oh-oh, and you're Mary Tyler Moore
I don't care what they say about us anyway
I don't care 'bout that

Don't you ever fear, I'm always near
I know that you need help
Your tongue is twisted, your eyes are slit
You need a guardian

Woo-hoo, and you know I'm yours
Woo-hoo, and I know you're mine
Woo-hoo, and that's for all of time

Oo-ee-oo I look just like Buddy Holly
Oh-oh, and you're Mary Tyler Moore
I don't care what they say about us anyway
I don't care 'bout that
I don't care 'bout that

Bang, bang a knock on the door
Another big bang and you're down on the floor
Oh no! What do we do?
Don't look now but I lost my shoe
I can't run and I can't kick
What's the matter babe are you feeling sick?
What's the matter, what's the matter, what's the matter you?
What's the matter babe, are you feeling blue?

And that's for all of time
And that's for all of time

Oo-ee-oo I look just like Buddy Holly
Oh-oh, and you're Mary Tyler Moore
I don't care what they say about us anyway
I don't care 'bout that
I don't care 'bout that
I don't care 'bout that
I don't care 'bout that

FIGHT SONG

Dave Basset/Rachel Platten

Like a small boat
On the ocean
Sending big waves
Into motion
Like how a single word
Can make a heart open
I might only have one match
But I can make an explosion

And all those things I didn't say
Wrecking balls inside my brain
I will scream them loud tonight
Can you hear my voice this time?

This is my fight song
Take back my life song
Prove I'm alright song
My power's turned on
Starting right now I'll be strong
I'll play my fight song
And I don't really care if nobody else believes
'Cause I've still got a lot of fight left in me

Losing friends and I'm chasing sleep
Everybody's worried about me
In too deep
Say I'm in too deep (in too deep)
And it's been two years I miss my home
But there's a fire burning in my bones
Still believe
Yeah, I still believe

And all those things I didn't say
Wrecking balls inside my brain
I will scream them loud tonight
Can you hear my voice this time?
This is my fight song
Take back my life song
Prove I'm alright song
My power's turned on
Starting right now I'll be strong
I'll play my fight song
And I don't really care if nobody else believes
'Cause I've still got a lot of fight left in me

A lot of fight left in me

Like a small boat
On the ocean
Sending big waves
Into motion
Like how a single word
Can make a heart open
I might only have one match
But I can make an explosion
This is my fight song
Take back my life song
Prove I'm alright song
My power's turned on
Starting right now I'll be strong (I'll be strong)
I'll play my fight song
And I don't really care if nobody else believes
'Cause I've still got a lot of fight left in me

Know I've still got a lot of fight left in me

BELIEVER

*Daniel Wayne Sermon / Daniel Coulter Reynolds
/ Benjamin Arthur Mckee / Daniel James
Platzman / Robin Lennart Fredriksson / Mattias
Per Larsson / Justin Tranter*

First things first
I'ma say all the words inside my head
I'm fired up and tired of the way that things have
been, oh ooh
The way that things have been, oh ooh
Second thing second
Don't you tell me what you think that I can be
I'm the one at the sail, I'm the master of my sea, oh
ooh
The master of my sea, oh ooh

I was broken from a young age
Taking my sulking to the masses
Write down my poems for the few
That looked at me, took to me, shook to me, feeling
me
Singing from heartache from the pain
Taking my message from the veins
Speaking my lesson from the brain
Seeing the beauty through the

You made me a, you made me a believer, believer
(Pain, pain)
You break me down, you build me up, believer,
believer
(Pain)
Oh let the bullets fly, oh let them rain
My life, my love, my drive, it came from
(Pain)
You made me a, you made me a believer, believer

Third things third
Send a prayer to the ones up above
All the hate that you've heard has turned your spirit
to a dove, oh ooh
Your spirit up above, oh ooh

I was choking in the crowd
Building my rain up in the cloud
Falling like ashes to the ground
Hoping my feelings, they would drown
But they never did, ever lived, ebbing and flowing
Inhibited, limited
'Til it broke up and it rained down
It rained down, like
You made me a, you made me a believer, believer
(Pain, pain)
You break me down, you built me up, believer, believer
(Pain)
I let the bullets fly, oh let them rain
My life, my love, my drive, it came from
(Pain)
You made me a, you made me a believer, believer

Last things last
By the grace of the fire and the flames
You're the face of the future, the blood in my veins, oh ooh
The blood in my veins, oh ooh
But they never did, ever lived, ebbing and flowing
Inhibited, limited
'Til it broke up and it rained down
It rained down, like

You made me a, you made me a believer, believer
(Pain, pain)
You break me down, you built me up, believer, believer
(Pain)
I let the bullets fly, oh let them rain
My life, my love, my drive, it came from
(Pain)
You made me a, you made me a believer, believer

LYRICS

verse:

- “boring”
- tells a story
- different lyrics each verse

HINT: try starting with **I, YOU OR WE**

prechorus:

- gives a lift
- sets up the chorus
- asks a question

HINT: try starting with **WHY, WHO OR WHEN**

chorus:

chant
usually the same lyric
“repeatable” sounding
may contain the song title

HINT: try starting with **WE, I OR YOU**

bridge:

another perspective
change of pace
new material
makes you miss the “good part” of the song

HINT: try starting with **MAYBE, PERHAPS OR IF ONLY**

**WHAT'S THE NEXT CHORD? PICK FROM THESE.
HOW MANY STRUMS?**

C	F	G	Dm	Am
I	IV	V	ii	vi

verse

C	\\	\\	\\			

↑
An even number of strums will sound “regular”. An odd number will sound “irregular”

prechorus

F			

For variety,
work in the iii chord.

Em
iii

Wild chord! For extra
colour try one of these.

A ^b	E ^b	B ^b
^b VI	^b III	^b VII

chorus

C			

bridge

Am			G

unresolved ending!

**A PROJECT BY THE CORPORATION OF MASSEY HALL AND
ROY THOMSON HALL'S EDUCATION & OUTREACH DEPARTMENT**

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If you have questions or wish to apply for a Collaboration in your school,
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