

# WS5 COLLEGE Lesson Plan

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***Title: Bela Fleck, Abigail Washburn and The Banjo***

***Subject: English, Music, Drama, History***

***Length of Lesson: three class periods***

***Grade Level: College***

The topic of this lesson is the banjo. This lesson plan is designed to explore the history of the banjo in Appalachia. This lesson encourages students to reflect upon the various sounds and types of banjo within episode 782 of WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour, which features Bela Fleck and Abigail Washburn. Before watching the episode, there will be a warm up discussion time which will allow students to access prior knowledge. Bela Fleck and Abigail Washburn play several different banjos throughout this one episode of WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour. This lesson will inspire students to reflect upon making music their own as referenced by Michael Jonathon. Students will reflect upon Bela Fleck and Abigail Washburn's version of "I've Been Working on the Railroad". They have taken a very old song and made it their own. Students will explore the various instruments and sounds and then write down which sounds and songs stood out most to them and why. Students will recall the sounds of the various banjos used throughout their performances. These include the following: Banjo uke, cello banjo, fretless banjo, and open-back frailing banjo.

The other activity within this lesson will have students choose and reflect upon a song they like, and then create their own version of this song. Michael Jonathon mentions the love of art and music at the end of the episode. He references an inspirational quote by William Barkley which is as follows: "There are two great days in a person's life, the day we are born and the day we discover why." Ask students to reflect upon this quote as they begin to think about what song they will choose and why they want to choose this song. What does this song mean to you? How does it inspire you? The goal is for the students to not simply choose any song that comes to mind, but rather one that inspires them and has meaning to them. This will ignite the love and passion for creating and making it their own. Michael Jonathon also references in the show making a song your own. Students are encouraged to do this and also reflect on the words of this song and what it means to them. This will allow the students to think about symbolism of words, literal and figurative language. Students are really encouraged to think creatively and in depth for this activity. In addition, students will also reflect upon their inspiration for having chosen the song and their reasons for the way they've designed their own version.

***Goals & Objectives:***

- Students will understand the banjo and Appalachian history
- Students will be familiar with the sound of the banjo and various types of banjo and their sounds
- Creativity encouraged through creating their own unique version of a song

- Knowledge of music as applied to creating their own version of a song/sounds of the instruments
- Knowledge of musical instruments introduced and played in WoodSongs episode
- Builds communication and presentation skills
- Encourages descriptive writing
- Understanding & Application of literary terms
- Critical Thinking applied in terms of the mission statement activity
- Connection to their life experience when selecting a song

*Vocabulary within the lesson:* Banjo Uke, Fretless Banjo, Cello Banjo, Frailing banjo style, alliteration, ballad, consonance, figure of speech, hyperbole, lyric, metaphor, narrative, ode, onomatopoeia, personification, rhyme, simile, trope, verse, characterization, point of view, symbol, tone, imagery

*Reference:* <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

*Alliteration:* Repetition of sounds through more than one word or syllable

*Consonance:* The same or similar consonant sound repeated in the stressed syllable, preceded by uncommon vowel sounds

*Ballad:* <http://www.encyclopediaofappalachia.com/entry.php?rec=31>

*Banjo:* <http://www.encyclopediaofappalachia.com/entry.php?rec=32> also, use WoodSongs episode as a reference to the sounds of the various banjos.

*Figure of Speech:* a rhetorical device that achieves a special effect by using words in distinctive ways

*Metaphor:* comparison between two unlike things

*Simile:* comparison between two unlike things using "like" or "as"

*Personification:* a non-human thing is endowed with human characteristics

*Characterization:* the author's expression of a character's personality through the use of action, dialogue, thought, or commentary by the narrator or another character

*Point of view:* the vantage point from which the author presents action of the story. Who is telling the story? An all-knowing author? A voice limited to the views of one character? The voice and thoughts of one character? Does the author change point of view in the story? Why? Point of view is often considered the technical aspect of fiction which leads the critic most readily into the problems and meanings of the story

*Symbol:* related to imagery. It is something which is itself yet stands for or means something else. It tends to be more singular, a bit more fixed than imagery

*Imagery:* the collection of images within a literary work. Used to evoke atmosphere, mood, and tension

*Tone:* suggests an attitude toward the subject which is communicated by the words the author chooses

*Hyperbole*: obvious and intentional exaggeration

*Lyric*: Of or relating to a category of poetry that expresses subjective thoughts and feelings, often in a songlike style or form

*Narrative*: Consisting of or characterized by the telling of a story

*Ode*: a type of lyrical stanza

*Onomatopoeia*: The formation or use of words such as buzz or murmur that imitate the sounds associated with the objects or actions they refer to

*Rhyme*: Correspondence of terminal sounds of words or of lines of verse; a poem or verse having a regular correspondence of sounds, especially at the ends of lines; poetry or verse of this kind

*Trope*: a figurative or metaphorical use of a word or expression

*Verse*: a single metrical line in a poetic composition; one line of poetry; a division of a metrical composition, such as a stanza of a poem or hymn

### ***Description of Lesson/Activities & Procedures:***

Before watching the episode, there will be a brief warm up discussion. Questions may include: "Have you ever thought about the various types and sounds of one instrument? For instance, have you ever thought about the similarities and differences of one instrument; the guitar, the banjo, drums. Bela Fleck and Abigail Washburn will play several different banjos throughout this one episode of WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour. Students will then watch episode 781 of WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour featuring Bela Fleck and Abigail Washburn.

This plan will inspire students to reflect upon making music their own as referenced by Michael Jonathon. For instance, in Bela Fleck and Abigail Washburn's version of, "I've Been Working on the Railroad", they have taken a very old song and made it their own. Students will explore the various instruments and sounds throughout the show. Students will recall the sounds of the various banjos used throughout their performances. These include the following: Banjo uke, cello banjo, fretless banjo, and open-back frailing banjo. Students will also read more about the history of the banjo in Appalachia and write a brief paper in which they explore this history. The paper should be at least one page typed and also include references and a works cited page. This will allow the students to practice their writing skills. This may be used as in class assignment or instructors may assign this as work for outside of class.

The second activity of this lesson will have students choose and think about a song they like, and then create their own version of this song. Michael Jonathon reflects upon the love of art and music at the end of the episode. He references an inspirational quote by William Barkley to begin the activity: "There are two great days in a person's life, the day we are born and the day we discover why." Ask students to reflect upon this quote as they begin to think about what song they will choose and why they want to choose this song. What does this song mean to you? How does it inspire you? The goal is for the students to not simply choose any song that comes to mind, but rather one that inspires them and has meaning to them, because this will ignite the love and passion for creating and making it their own. What instruments will you include? Will you slow it down? Will you turn it into more of a folk song or ballad? Will it be

acoustic? Michael Jonathon references in the show making a song your own. Students are encouraged to do this as they create their own version of a song. For the purpose of this class, students will write down a description of their song choice and how they plan to make it their own version. This will allow students to explore the various literary aspects of the song, the words and what the words mean to them, sounds of the instruments, and also allows them to creatively think about their own version of the song. Students will list and explore the following literary aspects (not all aspects will be in each song) in the song of their choice: alliteration, ballad, consonance, figure of speech, hyperbole, lyric, metaphor, tone, narrative, ode, onomatopoeia, personification, rhyme, simile, trope, verse, imagery, characterization and point of view. Students will explore in depth each literary term that applies to their song. Students will then plan an additional class to explain their song choice and how they've made it their own. Students have the option to perform their song if they choose to do so. Students may create a performance piece to accompany, in which they work on it over the course of the semester. The overall goal is for student's to select a song that has meaning to them and then make it their own, as demonstrated by the artists in the episode of WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour. This allows them to think creatively and also explore the sounds of various instruments. Within this lesson, students also learn about the various sounds of instruments and then apply what they hear to re-creating a song. Students are encouraged to practice the instrument if they so choose and this could transform into a semester-long project to include a performance piece.

#### *Materials/Media Needed:*

- Access to computer/iPad to listen to song students choose and also to explore various instrument sounds, the banjo sounds & research vocabulary used and also literary terms to explore and apply to song
- Also, students will research songs in which artists have made a song more of their own version to include their own unique sound.
- Personal Mission Statement page

#### *Personal Mission Statement*

Do you have a personal mission statement? What makes you, YOU? What are your goals and what do you stand for each and every day? How do you feel that music and art play a role in who YOU are and what makes you, YOU?

Please first create a mission statement first for one of your favorite musicians.

The Mission Statement should be:

- Short
- Understandable
- Memorable
- Distinctive

Once you have created this mission statement for someone else, you will then create your own mission statement.