

EdRugby Online Educational Resource

LESSON: Rugby songs

LEVEL

Upper primary

THEME: Australian pride

DESCRIPTION:

Students are introduced to the song 'A Number on my Back', written for the Wallabies. They explore the purpose of the text, the structure, meaning and the language features of the song form. Students use the same structure, rhyme and rhythm to write their own song on the theme of a dream fulfilled.

OUTCOMES

This lesson contributes to the achievement of the following unit outcomes:

English

- With teacher guidance, identifies and discusses how linguistic structures and features work to shape readers' and viewers' understanding of texts.
- Identifies and discusses some of the relationships between ideas, information and events in visual texts designed for general viewing.
- Justifies own interpretation of ideas, information and events in texts containing some unfamiliar concepts and topics and which introduce relatively complex linguistic structures and features.
- Uses writing to develop familiar ideas, events and information.
- Adjusts writing to take account of aspects of context, purpose and audience.

SUGGESTED TIME:

50 minutes

WHAT YOU NEED:

- recordings of songs that are usually sung to celebrate and to arouse emotions, patriotism or pride
- class copies of the student handouts (at the end of this lesson plan)
- examples of parodies of well-known tunes if available

PART 1 WHY PEOPLE SING

- a. Choose a song that most students know that has a rousing effect. It could be one that's on the current radio playlist or a traditional one such as 'Waltzing Matilda', 'I Still Call Australia Home', a more universal song such as 'Happy Birthday' or the National Anthem.
- b. Sing the song together with accompaniment if possible, encouraging students to give it everything they've got.

Discuss the students' responses after singing together. Emphasise feelings of heightened emotion and camaraderie.

- c. Brainstorm other songs the students know that arouse such responses in different situations, in church for example. Play sample songs collected if available. For each mentioned, ask students to suggest where and when the song could be sung. Discuss whether it's likely that the author of the songs intended them to have that purpose.

PART 2 READING THE SONG

- a. Distribute copies of the Student handout – 'A Number On My Back'. Read out the title of the song and talk about what the title means, keeping in mind that the song was written for the Wallabies. Note that the subtitle–'The Wallaby Anthem'–groups the song with others discussed in the previous activity.
- b. Let students read through the song by themselves. Clarify words if necessary.
- c. After reading, ask for students' observations about the structure and organisation of the song, such as verses of 4–8 lines, rhyme and repetition.
- d. Ask students to consider and note down what situation they think the song tells about. Explore reasons for any divergent answers.

PART 3 UNDERSTANDING THE SONG

- a. Explain and discuss the meaning of the phrases:
 - took the knocks
 - made the grade
 - my father's son
 - cracks in the foe
 - seize the day (relate to the war cry in Shakespeare's Henry V)
 - keep a solid chin
 - make amends.

Discuss whether use of such phrases clarifies or obscures the meaning and whether readers from different cultural backgrounds would find the song had meaning for them.

- b. Distribute the Student handout – Understanding the song. Use the questions as a guide to your discussion of the song, working through it together, or as a worksheet for students to write answers on and then discuss their responses.

PART 4 WRITING A SONG

- a. Talk with students about the dreams of great achievements that some people may have. Collect their ideas about such dreams. Some suggested responses may include becoming a ballerina, flying an aeroplane, owning an island, playing sport for Australia, becoming a doctor or a famous artist or travelling to an overseas country. Encourage students to visualise themselves, like the Wallaby in the song, achieving their own dream. Ask them how they'd look and how they'd be feeling.

Collect students' contributions to a word bank of ideas to describe these achievements and thoughts. Encourage students to include similes and other descriptions and imagery.

- b. Read out and discuss the verse of the song:

*Could it be a dream
 My father's son that's me
 Humbled by the truth I am
 A Golden Wallaby
 And I will seize the day
 'Cause it belongs to me
 I have a number on my back
 I am a Wallaby.*

- c. Distribute the Student handout – Your own song or poem. Explain how it is possible to change the words to make a new song or poem with a very different meaning while keeping a similar structure. Ask students to use their word bank and create their own song chorus that relates to their own dream. Keep the first line 'Could it be a dream' and part of the final line 'I am a...' then create the rest. Remind them to keep the rhythm consistent and change the words to rhyme where necessary. Share the results with the class.

PART 5 REFLECTION

Reflect on songs such as 'A Number On My Back' and how they inspire people. What sort of people might be most inspired by songs? Where are songs used in our lives to stimulate our feelings? Discuss songs such as anthems, TV advertisements and pop songs. What emotions are inspired? Which songs encourage Australian pride?

PART 6 EXTENSION

- Students create a bank of rhyming words, similes and metaphors and write an original song which will inspire others to achieve their dream.
- Create a new sound track to accompany this song or their own.
- Research and find the music to go with this song. Discuss how it matches the expectations formed.
- Find and share other inspiring songs. Discuss why people find them inspiring.
- Where are songs used in our lives to stimulate our feelings? Find out more about different songs, including pop songs and TV advertisements.
- Use the Internet to find out more about song lyrics.

STUDENT HANDOUT A NUMBER ON MY BACK**(The Wallaby Anthem)****by JOHN WILLIAMSON**

When I think of all the men that played
That took the knocks and made the grade
The legends that the game has made
I can't believe I'm here.

I'll wear the gold with a sleeve of green
It makes me strong it makes me keen
And I'll go forward like a steel machine
'Til cracks in the foe appear.

Could it be a dream
My father's son that's me
Humbled by the truth I am
A Golden Wallaby
And I will seize the day
'Cause it belongs to me
I have a number on my back
I am a Wallaby.

And if the ball won't roll my way
No matter how I try that day
I won't let my temper fray
I'll fight on 'til the end
And I will keep a solid chin
'Cause champions don't always win
They're known for coming back again
And we will make amends.

Could it be a dream
My father's son that's me
Humbled by the truth I am
A Golden Wallaby
And I will seize the day
'Cause it belongs to me
I have a number on my back
I am a Wallaby.

Yes could it be a dream
My father's son that's me
I have a number on my back
I am a Wallaby.

Words and Music
John Williamson
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From the EMI CD Anthems

STUDENT HANDOUT UNDERSTANDING THE SONG

Understanding the song 'A Number On My Back' by John Williamson.

- Whose 'voice' is the song written in? What effect does that have?
- What are his thoughts and feelings? Which words show these thoughts?
- In verse 1, what could the 'legends' be?
- In verse 2, what do the colours refer to?
- What image does the simile, 'like a steel machine', create?
- In verse 4, what does the songwriter say about winning and losing? Say why you agree or disagree.
- What is likely to be the most memorable part of the song? Why?
- Do you think the songwriter was actually a Wallaby? If not, why would he have written the song?
- What effect could this song have on young Rugby players? What about older players?
- What sort of music do you imagine could go with verse 3 or the chorus of the song?
- What difference would the music make to your understanding of the song's message?
- What sort of photograph do you imagine could go with the song?

STUDENT HANDOUT **YOUR OWN SONG OR POEM**

ORIGINAL

Could it be a dream
My father's son that's me
Humbled by the truth I am
A Golden Wallaby
And I will seize the day
'Cause it belongs to me
I have a number on my back
I am a Wallaby.

YOUR VERSION

Could it be a dream

I am a _____

YOUR VERSION

Could it be a dream

I am a _____