

Lesson 6 - Umm Kulthum's Impact on Contemporary Listeners



Essential Questions:

- What makes one person, especially an artist, famous or successful?
- How can a figure from a different time and place be relevant to our lives today?

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Make connections between Umm Kulthum's power to move her audience and the effect that she has on individual listeners.
- Reflect on the impact that music has had on their lives.

Standards Alignment:

- Common Core Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies
 - RH 1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
 - RH 4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
 - RH 5. Describe how a text presents information
- National Standards for Foreign Language Education
 - Standard 4.2: Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

Materials:

- Poet Suheir Hammad performing "Bint il Neel" about Umm Kulthum
 - Start at 05:43 with musical prelude: <http://youtu.be/m4Q885qRMwU?t=5m43s>
- Excerpt of "Bint il Neel" – Suheir Hammad's poem about Umm Kulthum (for students)
- About Suheir Hammad (for teacher use)

Procedure (suggested time):

Opening/Hook/Activate Prior Knowledge/Do Now (5)

As students come in, they should write their answer in a journal or on other paper to the prompt you have written on the board. “What kind of music do your parents listen to? Do you like or dislike that kind of music? What do you like or dislike about it?”

Viewing Suheir Hammad’s Performace of “Bint il Neel” (5)

Introduce Suheir Hammad, an Arab-American poet. Her work has appeared in books, plays, and poetry performances. Tell students that today we will be viewing and reading a poem by Suheir Hammad, relating her memories of Umm Kulthum. View this performance of “Bint il Neel” (“Daughter of the Nile”). Stop when the video reaches 10:26. Invite student reactions. Ask them to make connections between this poem and other poems or performances they have seen. Ask them to think of important music or movies or art that they have experienced.

Reading and Analysis of “Bint il Neel” excerpt (10)

In class, distribute the attached excerpt of Suheir Hammad’s poem “Bint il Neel,” and either read it yourself, or allow the students to read in turns. When the excerpt has been read, direct your students to reflect on the experience of being shaped by one’s recollections of music. You may possibly use the discussion questions below as an example.

Possible Discussion Questions:

- Who is the “you” that Suheir Hammad writes the poem to? Does this perspective change?
- At what points in the poem does Suheir Hammad include clear, striking imagery?
- How do Suheir Hammad’s thoughts of Umm Kulthum change over time?
- What can you infer about Suheir Hammad’s life from the poem she writes?

Personal Music Reflection Activity (15)

Direct students to write a poem about their experiences and memories with a certain song, singer, or type of music.

- Brainstorm artists or musical styles that they might reflect on.
- It could be an artist they really enjoy, or an artist they dislike, or an artist that they have complicated feelings about.

Questions to consider

- How did they first hear this music?
- What were their first reactions? What were the reactions of other people close to them?
- Did their feelings about the music change over time?
- How has this music shaped you, your likes and dislikes?

Options for Guiding Students Through the Writing Process

The following options are by no means an exclusive or exhaustive list of poetry writing techniques. They may be utilized and combined, depending on the age, ability level, and interests of the students in the classroom.

- The teacher may guide the class as a whole through distinct steps in the writing process, such as “Brainstorming,” “Drafting,” “Sharing” and “Revising.”
- The teacher may identify the above steps as helpful for organizing the writing process, but then allow students to proceed through them at their own pace.
- During “Sharing” time, students may break into partners or small groups, and read aloud what they have written, inviting their classmates to give feedback.
- Likewise, students may read their poems – either drafts or completed works – for the entire class.
 - In either of these cases, or any case where students are reading their work for others, it is important to establish norms and expectations of respectful critique and positivity.
 - Examples (“Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?” “Make two positive comments for each critique” etc.)

Closing

Ask for volunteers to share what they have written for the class. Pay attention to students’ use of imagery and description, in relating the effect that music has had on them.

Homework and Follow-Up

If students do not complete their poems during class time, they may take their work home with them. At home, students should read aloud their poems and edit them for clarity, imagery, and rhythm.

Bint il Neel

Excerpt from *Zaatar Diva* by Suheir Hammad

I

It was no surprise it was your father
started it taught you allah's
word and said sing daughter
sing

a bird you sang
from your belly to soar over
all of egypt

in the delta's villages
*muwlad*s weddings
ramadan breakfasts you flew your voice
no surprise

it was god started it
put a burning
in your mouth and said
open up and sing

you were young and a novelty
voice so big baba dressed you
a boy and you traveled
to the ears

of rich men learned men
men of leisure with shillings and servants
entrances for you to shadow

About Suheir Hammad

Suheir Hammad is a Palestinian-American poet, author and activist. She was born in 1973 in Amman, Jordan. Her parents were Palestinian refugees who immigrated to Brooklyn, New York City when Hammad was five years old.

As an adolescent Hammad was heavily influenced by Brooklyn's vibrant Hip-Hop scene. She had also absorbed the stories her parents and grandparents had told her of life in their hometown of Lydda, before the 1948 Palestinian exodus, and of the suffering they endured afterward, first in the Gaza Strip and then in Jordan.

From these disparate influences Hammad was able to weave into her work a common narrative of dispossession, not only in her capacity as an immigrant, a Palestinian and a Muslim, but as a woman struggling against society's inherent sexism and as a poet in her own right.

Hammad attended Hunter College where she won the Audre Lorde Writing Award for her poetry. Her publications include *ZaatarDiva*; *Born Palestinian*, *Born Black*; *Drops of This Story*; and *breaking poems* which received in 2009 the American Book Award and the Arab-American Book Award. Hammad has also received a Morris Center for Healing Poetry Award, a New York Mills Artist Residency, and a Van Lier Fellowship. Her work has been widely anthologized and also adapted for theater. Her produced plays include *Blood Trinity* and *breaking letter(s)*, and she wrote the text for the multimedia performance *Re-Orientalism*. Hammad played a lead acting role in *Salt of this Sea*, a 2008 Cannes Film Festival Official Selection. She was an original writer and performer in the Tony-winning Russell Simmons Presents *Def Poetry Jam on Broadway* for over two years. She was an Artist-in-Residency at the NYU's Asian/Pacific/American Institute.

More about Suheir Hammad:

Biography at ArabWomenWriters.com

http://arabwomenwriters.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=288&Itemid=77