



Muse Machine 2024 Summer Institute-Inspired Lesson Plan

# Writing Journal Album Covers

Developed by Brittany Spitnale

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## Lesson Plan Summary:

From Muse Machine's 2024 Summer Institute: *Get in the Groove! Foundations for a Funky Classroom*, high school ELA teacher Brittany Spitnale uses her experience creating a funk album cover to inspire her students to do the same, only with the purpose of creating a cover for their personal writing journals. In this lesson, students learn how the process of creating artwork enhances one's ability to interpret and connect with texts. This lesson combines clear standards with valuable lifelong skills and meaning, and teachers may be surprised by the deep thinking generated by this activity. Brittany also learned that her students now value their writing journals because of the personal attachment they feel toward them.

**Instructor:** Brittany Spitnale, David H. Ponitz Career Tech Center

**Title of Lesson:** Writing Journal Album Covers

**Date of Implementation:** September 2024

**Subject Area & Grade Level:** English Language Arts, 12th grade

**Summer Institute Inspiration:** Album Cover Activity

## OVERVIEW OF THE LESSON

### *Summary:*

Students will work on creating a visual text (album cover) to represent their writing. This ties into our development of Reader Response theory for literary analysis and eventually analytical writing. To better understand Reader Response theory, students need a better understanding of 1.) their own identity and 2.) the choices an author makes when composing a text.

### *Standards:*

#### **Ohio Learning Standards: English Language Arts**

**RL.11-12.10** By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11–CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently, building background knowledge and activating prior knowledge in order to make personal, societal, and ethical connections that deepen understanding of complex text.

**W.11-12.1** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

### *Objectives & Outcomes:*

Students will be able to better identify their own perspective after stepping into the role of the author and creator of a text. In a future lesson, students will apply this same strategy to creating album art for the poetry of another author instead of themselves using critical lenses.

### *Teaching Approach(es):*

Bell work, writing journals (low-stakes daily writing), brief lecture with models, independent work (“Leave room for the funk!”)

### *Assessment Tool(s):*

- *Pre-assessment:* Teacher observation of students’ application of OPTIC strategy to commercial album covers
- *Formative assessment:* Teacher observation of students’ discussion and in-progress work on album covers
- *Summative assessment:* Rubric for artwork and artist statements

# LESSON PREPARATION

## *Teacher Needs:*

### **Teacher Context & Research**

- [Art Center of the Bluegrass article on expressing identity through art](#)
- [National Association of Elementary School Principals article on the value of arts integration when teaching personal narrative](#)
- [Reader Response Theory](#)
- [OPTIC strategy for visual analysis](#)
- [Resource for album cover examples](#)

### **Helpful Hints**

1. Have art supplies prepared and ready before class.
2. Have students work on identity poetry the day before to help them generate ideas using a “fill-in-the-blank” model for poetry.
3. Utilize bell work to help students connect the “album art” idea to their own work.

## *Student Needs:*

### **Prior Knowledge**

Students have a basic understanding of reader response theory; however, they are struggling to fully understand how to identify their own biases and opinions while reading, often limiting their commentary to similarities or differences between themselves and the main characters.

Students have been studying vocabulary terms related to poetry and analysis.

In the prior lesson, students composed identity poetry to help them define their sense of self and (unknowingly) generate ideas for this cover. Students may struggle with the belief that they are “not artistic” and may struggle with working inside a time constraint.

Students have also previously been instructed in using the OPTIC strategy for visual texts. The OPTIC strategy has students examine visual texts by looking for Overview, Parts, Text, Interrelations, and Conclusions.

### **Student Voice**

Students have previously expressed an interest in creative projects and working outside of the textbook.

Some students asked about using digital designs on Canva or other visual editing tools.

Student response to the cover art- I have specifically chosen some favorite artists and some that will be unknown.

### **Vocabulary**

- *Analysis*: Detailed examination of the elements or structure of something
- *Reader Response Criticism*: Criticism that focuses on a reader's active engagement with a piece of print or nonprint text; shaped by the reader's own experiences, social ethics, moral values, and general views of the world.
- *Visual text*: A non-moving image or picture that conveys meaning

## **ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS**

Our understanding of texts is shaped by what we bring to them as the reader. As we become more aware of our own biases and opinions, we can engage more deeply with a text and construct meaning that is personally relevant.

Creating our own personally meaningful art and writing helps us to better appreciate other authors' creative choices.

## **EVIDENCE OF OUTCOMES**

Improvement from pre assessment to post assessment

## **LEARNING PLAN**

### **Teaching Inquiry Question**

How can creating a cover for their writing album help students understand their own identity as a writer?

### **Essential Question**

Who are you?

### **Resources/Materials**

- Blank white paper, 6"x6" square
- Markers
- Crayons
- Colored Paper
- Pencils
- Scissors
- Rulers

- Student Composition Notebooks, if adding to cover
- Teacher access to laminator
- Optional: Computers with Canva access
- [Slides for Album Art examples](#)
- [Slides for OPTIC strategy](#)
- [Project Rubric](#)

## Hook

The hook will be in the form of bell work: “If your life had a soundtrack, what are five songs you would include?”

## Main Lesson Narrative/Sequence

Student desks are arranged in small groups. Art supplies are located on a central table, giving students access to a variety of materials for their use.

1. Per class procedure, students enter the room and retrieve their writing notebooks. Bell work for the day states, “If your life had a soundtrack, what are five songs you would include?” Students write down their five tracks in their writing notebooks.
2. Introduce the lesson and make connections to prior content knowledge: “Today we’re continuing our work exploring our own identities to help us better understand reader response theory. Yesterday, we worked on identity poetry. Using those ideas, or any others you have about yourself, you will create a cover for your writing notebook. Think of this as your album: your collection of writing. If your work were an album, what would the cover art look like? Cover art is created by an artist- an author of the visual text. Just like we practiced reading advertisements, cover art can be read much the same way – and we can still use the OPTIC strategy. Let’s look at a few examples.”
3. Go through the cover art slides, letting students respond to the artwork. Share a few historical/cultural notes on each after they have the initial response. (Slides are intentionally left blank other than the artwork and citation.)
4. Students will create a 6”x6” square album cover of their own design. Provide art supplies and laptops. Digital art MUST be submitted as a 6”x6” PDF on Google Classroom. This cover will later be laminated and attached to the front of their writing notebooks as the “album cover” of their own written art.
5. Circulate while assisting and encouraging students as they work. Ask thoughtful open-ended questions when students are struggling (“What color-scheme best represents you?” “What font/lettering style do you intend to use?” “What text, if any, are you including?”) Students will be more successful if they select ONE aspect of themselves to represent instead of trying to include many ideas.
6. When finished, students will also include an Artist Statement written in the third person. A complete statement will include who they are, a description of what they created, and why they feel the artwork represents them.

## **Demonstration of Learning**

Student created album cover with artist statement

## **Final Review**

I will know that students have formed a clearer understanding of themselves and their own identity as they are able to create their cover and can explain its significance as the author. Students will continue to practice reader response theory on upcoming assignments. I anticipate seeing a clearer understanding of the interaction between the reader, the situation, and the text in upcoming assignments after this lesson, once the reader is more clearly defined. I also anticipate that students will demonstrate deeper analysis in this unit's final analysis essay.

# LESSON REFLECTION

## **Students**

Students enjoyed the activity and have taken pride in their bell work journals.

## **Teacher**

I was hopeful that students would further understand their role in creating meaning from text. After this activity, we revisited the Reader Response to poetry. Student answers showed improvement after spending time examining themselves and the decision-making process authors/artists make as they work to generate their own image. Students also were able to demonstrate competence with the OPTIC strategy.

What I did not expect was that students took such extreme pride in their work, showing it off to classmates, discussing their art independently, and writing about it during that week's Freewrite Friday. Students have asked to do more projects like this one in the future.

# STUDENT ARTIFACTS

Final copies of album art, laminated and added to covers of writing journals

[See student examples here](#)