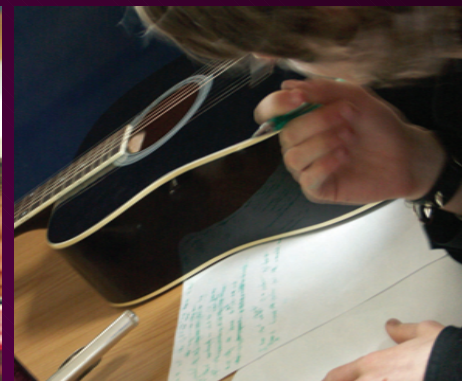




musical futures
leeds

paul hamlyn foundation
special project

Personalising Extra-Curricular Music Activities for 11-18 Year Olds



Section 2

Writers Unblocked

Step by step guide to running song writing clubs

Tips, templates, ideas and extension activities



Writers Unblocked

A music leader's guide to songwriting

To inspire and instill confidence in young songwriters

To expand musical skills and awareness

To encourage experimentation

1. Introduction

Supporting young people as they begin to express themselves through their own music can present any practitioner with a conundrum.

How do you help them to become more sophisticated in their writing without interfering?

The solution seems to lie in both parties negotiating a balance between the 'vibe' (respect, authenticity, credibility) and the 'technical bits' (lyrics, melody, chords, genre, style)...in other words ownership.

This guide follows the journey taken by a group of students at Allerton Grange High School in Leeds, from working with 'Pixel' (four young, trendy, talented, experienced and approachable professional musicians), to setting up and running their own songwriting club for younger pupils.

The booklet tracks the process (warts and all), and suggests how ideas explored during workshops can form the basis of a progressive programme.

We hope you enjoy following the pathway as much as the students and Pixel did. Feel free to use, develop, adapt, and maybe even discard the ideas, to suit your own circumstances.

2. Background

Phase 1 of the Musical Futures Writers Unblocked Pathway worked with twenty Year 8 and 9 students who were interested in music but hadn't really got involved with what was on offer at the school. The group presented a wide range of previous experience; some demonstrated a high level of musical and instrumental proficiency, whilst others had more limited skills but were nonetheless very keen.

A series of three one-day workshops spread over three months, culminating in a performance to friends and family, and supported via online mentoring between sessions, focused on developing the students' songwriting skills.

Many of the workshop tasks were unfamiliar to the participants, and initially there was some reluctance in contributing to group work. However, it was striking to observe how relationships between the young people and Pixel developed over the course of the three months. As everyone became more comfortable with each other the atmosphere relaxed, and by the end of session two everyone had been placed in a band. As confidence grew the young musicians took on leading roles, utilising the individual strengths of even the least confident members. By the end of the third workshop, all groups had produced two songs and were comfortable about performing them to an invited audience.

Phase 2 followed a term later. This time the workshops took place on a weekly basis as after-school sessions. Most of the phase 1 students came back, and the pathway drew in a few new members. Participants were able to extend their skills through exploring different musical genres, playing covers, and creating pastiche Hip Hop and Country numbers. Alongside the songwriting workshops, Pixel ran a multi-media project for an additional group of Year 8 students who had very little previous musical experience or inclination. Participants made their own short films and created music to go with them, primarily using Garage Band software. Both phase 2 pathways ran for eight weeks and culminated in a public performance showcasing both the finished films and the new songs.

Phase 3 Nine of the original phase 1 students were encouraged and supported to act as Young Music Leaders. Overseen by a musically talented sixth form student, they set up and ran their own songwriting club for Year 7 pupils based on what they'd learnt in phases 1 and 2. The club takes place on two lunchtimes each week, and has 30 members and a waiting list of 20. All the Young Leaders used the experience to successfully complete a Trinity/Guildhall Youth Arts Award (Bronze Level). The club goes from strength to strength: the original Young Leaders are now training their peers to roll out the club for the school's new intake, and are once again using the experience as the basis for their YAA (Silver).

3. Tips

- Although Pixel worked with students aged 13 to 15, all the ideas in this guide can be expanded or simplified depending on the age and capability of the group.
- Pixel's main advice is 'be prepared'. Have a rough plan of what you want to achieve in each workshop, even if you don't make it or things go off at a completely different tangent.
- Plans help you track the speed at which you and the participants are working.
- Most workshops and projects operate on a tight timescale. Stress levels always escalate towards the end, but be reassured, the outcome is invariably good.

- Be clear in your own mind what is most important - the process or the product. Pixel favours the process, but achieving a good performance is an added bonus and helps participants to realise just how far they have developed as musicians.
- You may not always have the luxury of employing several practitioners. But whenever you can, incorporate people with different specialisms and pool your skills. Skill sharing keeps the group energy up and the creative juices flowing.
- If the practitioners are new to the group, it may help the comfort zone if you can have a familiar adult or older student around to begin with.
- Last but not least, design initial workshops that you as a practitioner are very comfortable and happy with. It sounds obvious but the participants need to gain confidence in the first couple of sessions. You will need to get the energy going, drive the workshops along in a fun but productive way, establish your credentials and give the right vibe to your audience. And you won't be able to do this if you don't know your stuff.

The Writers Unblocked resources, templates, exercises and workshop ideas which follow should enable you to get your group having fun making music.

4. Words

(Sophie Jennings, vocals, Pixel)

"Words, words, words, I'm so sick of words" moans Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady* - a sentiment all too often heard by music leaders trying to get beginner song-writers into lyrics.

Sitting down with a piece of paper is never as exciting as plugging in a guitar.

You have to make the session fun and find ways for all learners to access the emotions, rhythm and form of language.

Young people often hit barriers with lyric writing, a common preconception being that it's too difficult to come up with a whole song. So it's best to tackle lyric writing in several short sessions if you can.

The timescale of Writers Unblocked phase 1 didn't allow us that luxury, and we had to give a lot of information in a relatively small amount of time. Inevitably, this led to brain overload for some members of the group.

I love lyrics and am fascinated by the way we all interpret them differently.

The following small exercises are designed to get participants thinking about words, descriptions and perspectives, and shaping them up into songs.

Try to incorporate two or three different exercises in your session so the participants get a taste of different approaches.

Acrostic

Young people will probably be familiar with this technique, as it's often used in English lessons. It can be really effective in producing a concise description of a broad topic eg. growth or friendship. It is also a good group activity, as confidence quickly grows as more ideas are contributed.

Our groups chose *Extinction* and *Purple*, the latter being picked at random by a group who weren't initially getting into the session. However once they did get going, it only took the groups around 15 minutes to complete their songs.

The two songs are very different, with *Extinction* being largely factual and *Purple* exploring emotions more.

As you can see, the students only used the acrostic technique in the first verse. The fact that *Extinction* is spelt incorrectly is immaterial...the exercise provided enough stimulus for the rest of the song.

'Extinction'

Verse 1

Evolution, evolution, evolution
Xcited that things have changed,
T-Rex has been and gone
Invisible and unexplained
Not here or even there,
Our past has ceased to exit
Time just isn't fair
Neglect continues to persist

Verse 2

We are trying to think clear
 Confused with the changes
 Things just disappear
 Everything rearranges
 Leave the past behind us
 The future is ours to use
 People need to trust us
 No rules, no dos, no don'ts

Chorus

What's left is yours and mine
 The future's our design
 If we work together
 Maybe we'll survive

‘Purple’

Verse 1

People walk on by
 Upset is what I am
 Rage building up inside
 Planets revolve around me
 Life swallows me
 Everyone walks on by

Verse 2

Something inside me
 Has left me so wrong
 The little love beside me
 Left me all alone
 The pressure on my heart
 Means there's nothing left inside me

Chorus

Now you've come back (x2)
 Hope has shown it's light (x2)
 The strain on my heart (x2)
 Together we can shine bright

Never ending sentences

Again, this is a game that many people are familiar with. Players take turns to add a word to a sentence on a given theme or topic. The aim of the game is to avoid finishing the sentence; players will need to use a lot of descriptive words in order to keep the sentence going. It is often the lack of descriptive words that makes a song seem banal. Getting the group to describe objects, feelings, people and atmosphere within a short story is a good way to make them aware of how the different details of language can be used.

Word Web

This is another way of generating words relevant to a topic. We've included a template for you to use, but it's sometimes more fun to just start with a blank page.

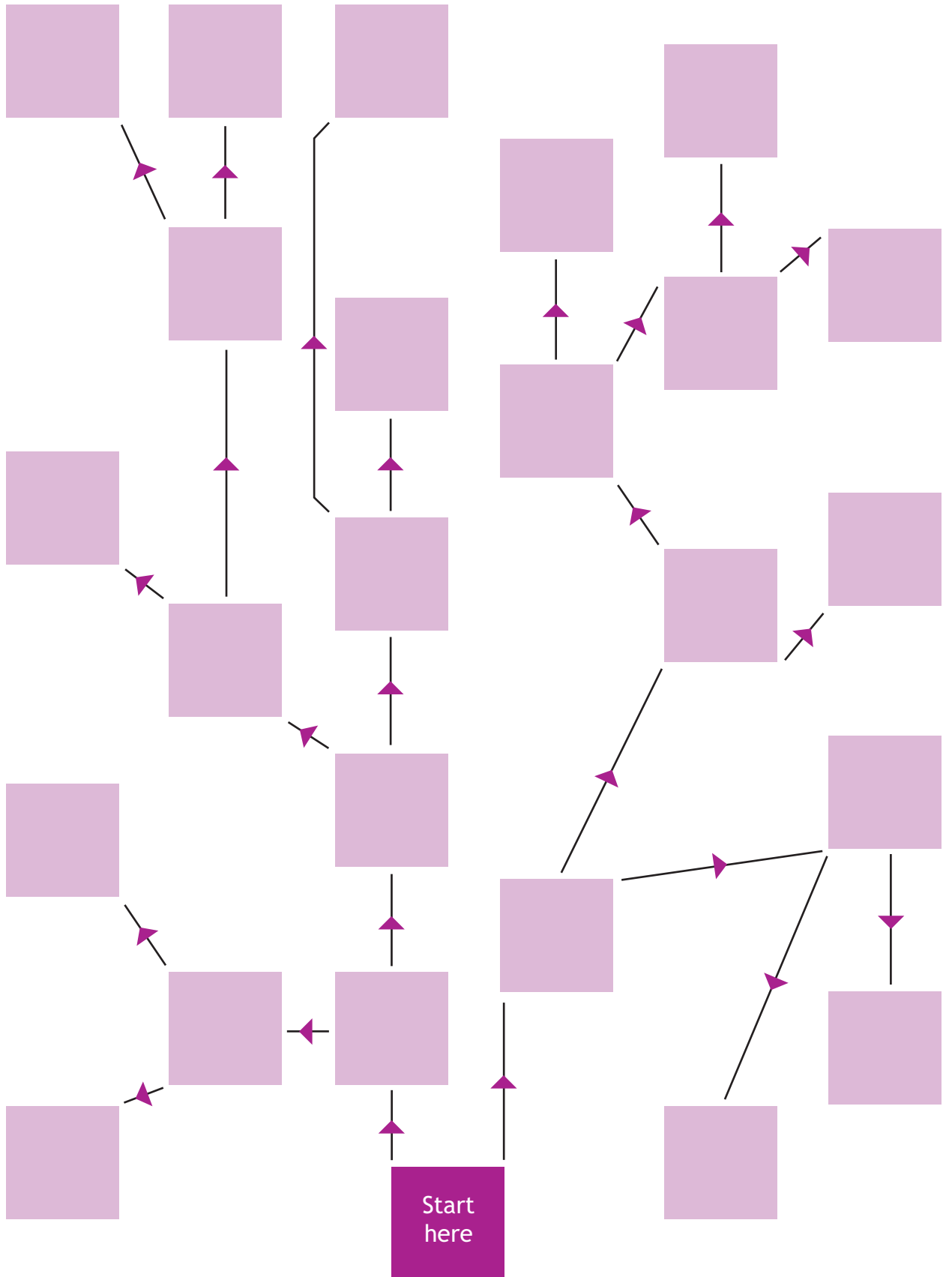
You start by writing the topic at the bottom of the page eg. music. Then add two branches and write in two new words which are connected to your original word. You might want to stipulate that one word should be factual and the other emotionally related.

Continue adding words to branches (each time relating your new word to its immediate predecessor) until the page is full or you've had enough!

The branches often create sub sections on the page, which allow you to pick a starting place for your song.

Word Webs are great resource banks. Encourage your students to keep them on file so if they get stuck when writing songs they can refer back to them.

Word Web template



Kennings

These are brilliant little poems that get the brain going. I often combine them with acrostics.

I use them for two reasons.

- a To raise students' self-esteem
(and it helps me find out more about individual students)
- b They employ descriptions and lend themselves to alliteration.

Strictly speaking, in a Kennings, every word should end in 'er'. The advantage of this is that you get a constant rhythm to the poem. However, during workshops I have had young people not do that and it still created a great poem, so it is up to you whether you apply the rule.

I start the exercise by showing the group an example of a Kennings using my name.

Super swimmer
Open speaker
Photograph taker
Happy laughier
Incredible singer
Excited life liver.

I then get the participants to write a Kennings about themselves, telling them they can only use positive statements. Some young people need huge encouragement to acknowledge their talents, but because I use dramatic statements in mine ('incredible singer') the students feel it's ok to do the same. If individuals find the process difficult then getting others to describe positive things about them can be helpful, and it also serves as a good team bonding exercise.

After this initial exercise I apply the Kennings principle to a word or topic. The resulting poems usually give a punchy summary of a topic and invariably employ descriptive vocabulary.

You can have great fun with this exercise. You can also develop the process by discussing how to refine the metre, syllables and rhythm of your poems and song lyrics.

Perspective

Once you have some words about a topic, it helps to discuss whose perspective the song will come from. This can help with creating a structure for the song.

- How much of one person's opinion are we going to hear in relation to the number of verses?
- How would a situation look from another person's perspective?
- Will the song need a bridge or middle 8?

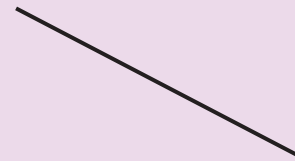
This exercise gets the participants to not only think up words, but also to set them within a context. Creating a person or story behind the song helps students to write whole songs rather than fragments.

Shaping the words

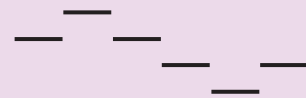
Once you've come up with your lyrics, you'll want to find a melody!

An easy and useful preliminary group activity is to get people to speak the lines with different inflections and intonations. As they do so, you draw a picture of what the lines sound like.

For example, if you take the line 'What's left is yours and mine' from the Extinction song cited earlier, and said it in a smooth tone from a high to low pitch, the picture would be:



But if you said the line in a more declamatory way, each word would have a different pitch and your drawing would look more like this:



Once you have spoken the line several times and agreed the shape you prefer, try to get the group to sing it in the shape.

Word shaping is an ideal session warm-up activity, as there are no wrong answers and everyone's suggestions can be used. If some individuals find it intimidating to begin with, make it as much fun as you can, and get people thinking of as many variations as possible.

What is fantastic about this game is that it's a fun way of reinforcing pupils' ability to keep a pulse, experiment with speaking and singing the lines to a steady beat, exploring the need to keep the rhythm and inflection within the pulse.

Ideas grid

Once you've had a go at the exercises, it's a good plan to bring all your students' contributions together and record the information in one place. The Ideas Grid is borrowed from 'Listen Compose Perform'¹.

It can be easily adapted for your chosen exercises, with each box representing one aspect, eg.

Starter words	Perspective - story
One lines	Words shapes

¹ Listen Compose Perform, Geoffrey Winters 1987 second edition, Longman group.

Summary

This is just the tip of the iceberg as far as words are concerned.

As a workshop leader you need to be enthusiastic and ready to think of a range of ideas to get the group going.

Making the environment safe and comfortable is of paramount importance for any aspect of a workshop, but especially when people are being asked to express their opinions, emotions and responses in word form.

It can take a while for a lyric writer to truly reveal themselves. One girl in Writers Unblocked didn't display her true talent until half way through the second phase of the project. It took some time for her to feel confident and safe enough to show her ability. In her case, coming to understand the relation between lyrics and poetry broke down her writer's block.

Everyone is different, and as a music leader you have to persevere in finding the right doors to open for each student.

5. Melody

(Krishna Thiruchelvam, guitar, Pixel and Gary Moore, drums, Pixel)

This section of the guide introduces one of the main elements of song writing - *melody*. It contains advice on how to create melodies from scratch, plus exercises designed to develop musical vocabulary.

Getting going

A sensible place to start is with a group discussion about melody, primarily so you can find out what the participants already know, but also to focus their thinking.

It's a good idea to introduce the concept of 'musical hooks' early on since they are crucial to successful melody writing.

The dictionary defines 'hook' as a catchy refrain: a pleasing and easily remembered refrain in a pop song.

During Writers Unblocked, we regularly got the participants listening to a wide variety of popular music genres to identify hooks within songs.

We also encouraged the students to keep listening diaries since:

- they are good starting points for group discussions
- they focus listening
- they encourage students to explore new genres.

You might find this template useful - our students certainly did, particularly as a prompt for their own songwriting, and later as an aide-mémoire when running their own clubs.

Listening Diary

Track/Album					
Artist					
Date listened					
Musical genre					
Comments on: structure instruments lyrics form					
Any interesting information about the track or band					

Next Steps

A melody can define the feel or mood of a song eg. depressing, joyful, mysterious. In order to understand how to create such a feel, an introduction to notes is needed.

This is best accomplished through the use of scales.

In Writers Unblocked we used a C major scale as the basis for our initial melody construction since it was the easiest to play on the instruments available. However, the following exercises work with all scales.

One...your first tune

- a Explain the notes of the C major scale and ask the students to write them down.
- b Let them explore playing up and down the scale on their instruments.
- c Now get them to jumble up the notes and write the new version below the original.

Original:	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C'
Rewrite:	A	B	C	D	F	G	E	C'

- d Next comes the fun part! Ask them to play these 'melodies' to each other. The usual reactions are "Oh, I didn't realise it was that simple" and "Can I do another one please?"
- e Intervene as little as possible at this stage. Offer assistance when asked but let the participants get on with exploring and creating.

Obviously this is melody writing in its simplest form. But it's a great confidence booster and starting point for those with little or no previous knowledge. The best thing about writing melodies in this way is that there are no wrong answers.

Two...adding a backing

- a Invite a volunteer to teach the rest of the group their melody (again, only help them if they ask you to).
- b If possible, write the melody down so all can see.
- c Once the whole group can play the volunteer's melody, you've got several options.
 - Get the whole group to play the melody while you play a chord progression that fits with it. Keep it simple; I suggest limiting your chords to C, F and G since participants will undoubtedly want to be shown how to do your bit!
 - Try getting individuals to direct the group playing the melody by giving signals to indicate note changes, speeds and dynamics. You could even suggest the idea of playing the melody backwards.
 - Teach a sub group of participants a simple root note bass line to go with the chords and melody.

Three...more about chords

It's now time to see how to approach melody writing in relation to chords.

By looking at a chord sequence you can determine the key. From this, you can work out which scales and notes will fit over the chord progression.

Explain to your group that chords are just made up from the notes of a scale. For example, C major is the first (C), third (E) and fifth (G) notes of the C major scale. You may want to go on to tell them that all basic chords follow a 1, 3, 5 formula - the root note being 1, with 3 and 5 counted from the root.

C Major Chord Triads (black = major chord, purple = minor chord, grey = diminished chord).

G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	(5th)
E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E	(3rd)
C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	(Root)

It is probably worthwhile spending some time identifying the difference between major and minor chords, maybe using happy and sad analogies and demonstrating how their use can alter the feel of a melody.

By this stage, participants will have a basic grounding in writing melodies and some understanding of how their tunes can be affected by the underlying chord tonality.

Working in pairs, get your students to play their composed melodies over the following chord sequences:

- a All major chords C/F/G in any order.
- b All minor chords D/E/A in any order.
- c Both major and minor chords in any order.

Ask the participants to feedback and share with the whole group what they thought worked well and what did not.

This exercise is useful as it helps to develop aural skills (pitch and harmony), and also extends ongoing compositional technique.

6. Plans, performances and peripherals

At this point, we're including a resumé of our session plans for Writers Unblocked phase 1 so that you've a good idea how all the exercises described in Sections 1 to 5 of this guide hang together as a whole programme.

For the final performance we asked the students to write their own programme notes so we're including the prompts we gave them together with a 'running order' template.

Writers Unblocked: Phase I

Session 1a (2hrs)	Session 1b (2hrs)	Session 2a (2hrs)	Session 2b (2hrs)	Session 3a (2hrs)	Session 3b (2hrs)	Finale (All day)
<p>Get to know the group</p> <p>Outline project aims</p> <p>Warm-up: Pulse, rhythm exercises</p> <p>Melody: Learn C major scale and experiment</p> <p>Lyrics: Use acrostic technique to get some starter lyrics</p>	<p>Warm-up: Never ending sentences</p> <p>Discuss use of language</p> <p>Lyrics: Write a Kennings about themselves and the topic(s)</p> <p>Melody: Extension of C major work, use and discuss chords and chord progressions</p>	<p>Warm-up: Focus game/ group playing</p> <p>Lyrics: Continue work on either acrostic or Kennings song</p> <p>Melody: Start to get ideas for music for the lyrics or develop ideas that have come up in previous sessions</p> <p>Perform: Feedback ideas and perform them as appropriate</p>	<p>Warm-up: Pulse, rhythm exercises</p> <p>Writing session: Try to finish first song</p> <p>New task: Choose style and topic for new song - use word bank for lyrics. Use chords for starting point for melody</p>	<p>Warm-up: Focus game/ group playing</p> <p>Writing session: Continue work on songs</p> <p>New task: Free choice of how they write the song and in what style. [You can define parameters if you feel it's necessary, for example a chord progression]</p> <p>Perform: Each group performs songs in progress - group feedback</p>	<p>Warm-up: Group jam, facilitated to start with and then pass leader's role to a participant</p> <p>Writing session: All songs need to be finished off.</p> <p>Perform: Each group performs songs - group feedback and aims for next session</p>	<p>Warm-up: Discuss each groups' practice and progress since last session. Outline aims for this session</p> <p>Practice: Aim for a polished performance of songs</p> <p>Perform: Public Showcase to invited audience</p>

Programme notes template

Band name:	
Band members:	
Song title:	
What is the song about?	
How did you start writing the piece?	
What inspired you to write it?	
Musical influences?	

7. Moving On

(Liz Hunter, bass, Pixel and Krishna Thiruchelvam, guitar, Pixel)

Introducing genre to song writing

During phase 2 of Writers Unblocked the team focused on style and genre.

The aim was to:

- 1 introduce the students to different genres through creating pastiche songs;
- 2 build social and group skills through playing together in bands; and
- 3 set tasks which both challenged and broadened songwriting and playing skills.

Clear, achievable targets, designed to maximise the students' attention were set for each two hour workshop.

By way of example we've included here our plan for session 1:

Monday 26 September 2005:

5.30: Introduction - brief explanation of the session.

5.40: Resumé of phase 1 - note what they enjoyed most for incorporation in future sessions.

6.00: Brief introduction to Hip Hop, its origins and related styles. Explain the concept of pastiche.

6.10: Teach the whole group a Hip Hop song. Split the group by instruments with guitarists and singers working with Kris, and Liz taking the bass players and drummers.

7.20: Pack up instruments. Make sure everyone has got the song parts written down. Set the task of creating their own pastiche Hip Hop by the next session. Answer any weird and wonderful questions they throw at us.

The art of pastiche...tips for students

Pastiche in art, music or literature, either intentionally copies the style of someone else's work, or sets out to combine themes and styles from a variety of sources in an obviously derivative way.

Imitation is critical for improving composition skills, but to imitate without directly copying is harder than it sounds. It's important to listen to, and try out, other styles and musical forms that you might usually ignore. Just because you don't like, or aren't comfortable in, a particular musical genre, doesn't mean you shouldn't explore it.

When we introduce a new style of music, it's hard to get to grips with it by just listening and talking about the genre. That's why we asked you to learn a song with us. Tackling it head on and comparing it to the usual music you might play and write at home is a really important part of the process. Remember this whenever you are writing whether it's the beat, the lyrics, melody, chord structure, bass line or song structure.

Once you've identified the key elements in any song or genre you can use pastiche as your tool. For example, in Hip Hop a solid, uncomplicated beat from the kit player supports a dynamic rapper/DJ. The DJ plays with the words. Syllables are paced or emphasised to manipulate their meaning and interact with the bass line, guitar melodies and chords.

Objective opinions, constructive criticism, and useful suggestions will really open your eyes and give you insight into your work. Upload your efforts to the Musical Futures / NuMu website and find mentors to review your work and seek advice from recognized experts.

Hip Hop...a beginner's guide

Hip Hop is a good genre to start using pastiche with because it uses simple elements. Most young people are familiar with it and have access to several examples. It's a varied and interesting genre which is well worth a closer look.

This is a little introduction to the roots of Hip Hop based on personal knowledge, with gaps filled in from the internet and text books.

Hip Hop emerged as an underground urban folk style, with its popularity spreading through parties. Since the late seventies this particular Black American urban youth sub-culture has been associated with 'break dancing' and graffiti art as well as the musical genres of Hip Hop, rapping and MCing.

Like much Black American music, Hip Hop's origins lie in the African tradition of the griot or story teller. Such a person holds great importance in many societies as being someone who preserves the truth and expresses the feelings of the times and culture.

In the early 1970s, a Jamaican DJ known as Kool Herc (Hercules) moved from Kingston to New York's West Bronx, bringing with him his Jamaican style of MCing (toasting) which involved reciting improvised rhymes over the dub versions of his reggae records.

Unfortunately, New Yorkers weren't really into reggae at the time, so Kool adapted his style and began chanting over the instrumental and percussion sections of popular songs instead. Because these breaks were relatively short, he extended them indefinitely by using an audio mixer and two identical records in which he continuously replaced the desired segment.

Raps (rhymes) also incorporated elements from party shout-outs - the culture of these battles emerging from the rivalry of Jamaican sound systems, which relied on verbal skill and the ability to impress. Originally called MCing, raps were 'chanted' over DJing - beats, repetitive phases, melodies and hooks being mixed, bounced and played together.

So, Hip Hop is modern day rap music. Its trademark creative (and often abusive) use of the spoken word, combined with DJ's turntables, has its immediate roots in Jamaican reggae and dub, and incorporates elements of soul and funk.

Hip Hop and rapping are about true expression. There are no set rules. Cool is the word and urban connection the source.

Many of Hip Hop's early artists were incredibly controversial. To a large extent they still are, but that is its point. Rapping about sex, drugs and the politics of the time will always provoke a response.

Why not check out some of the greats and see for yourself: Grand Master Flash, Public Enemy ('It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back' 1988), Sugar Hill Gang, Afrika Bambaataa (African Muslim Rapper), Salt 'n' Pepa, Chuck D, Dr Dre, Snoop Doggy Dog and Ice Cube.

Recommendations

When running our workshops we always try to encourage participants to listen to as much music as they can between sessions, particularly stuff that is new to them.

Students often struggle to know what to try so we tend to give them a helping hand by producing a 'highlights' handout of what's on the radio and when.

We've included our template from Autumn 2005 as a starter for you.

Recommended radio listening

	Radio 1	Radio 2	Radio 3	Classic FM
Monday	7pm Zane Lowe plays the latest music			9pm Evening Concert with Nick Bailey. A wide range of music to hear
Tuesday	7pm Zane Lowe plays the latest music	9pm Inside improvisation Richard Niles explores the art of improvisation through different genres	12pm Composer of the week. In depth information on classical composers	
Wednesday	7pm Zane Lowe plays the latest music	7pm New Country 8pm Folk Roots 9pm Gospel 10pm The Al Green Story		

	Radio 1	Radio 2	Radio 3	Classic FM
Thursday	7pm Zane Lowe plays the latest music	7pm Bob Harris Country 8pm Classic R&B from Paul Jones		
Friday				11pm Late night Lisa. Classical hits by young artists
Saturday	6pm America's greatest hits, from the weeks charts		3pm World Routes. Music from around the world	
Sunday		3.30pm Lu Lu discusses popular songwriters of the century		

Writers Unblocked: Phase 2

Session 1 (2hrs)	Session 2 (2hrs)	Session 3 (2hrs)	Session 4 (2hrs)	Session 5 (2hrs)	Session 6 (2hrs)	Session 7 (2hrs)	Finale Evening
<p>Phase 1 resumé.</p> <p>Phase 2 outline and aims.</p> <p>Warm-up: Pulse, rhythm exercises.</p> <p>1st genre: Discussion about key features, musicians and instrumentation within it.</p> <p>Learn: A song that is typical of the genre and which incorporates some of the key features.</p> <p>Set task: To write a pastiche of the genre. (Explain & supply notes).</p>	<p>Warm-up: Pulse, rhythm exercises. Share work in progress on set task.</p> <p>2nd genre: Discussion about key features, musicians and instrumentation within it. How is it different from the first?</p> <p>Learn: A song that is typical of the genre and which incorporates some of the key features.</p> <p>Set task: To write a pastiche of this genre.</p>	<p>Warm-up: Quick recap of main features of both genres.</p> <p>Creating session: In bands work on each members' 2 Pastiche songs.</p> <p>Perform: Work in progress (aim to have one song nearly done).</p>	<p>Warm-up: Focus game/ group playing.</p> <p>New task: To write a pastiche song in a genre of their choosing. Must have key elements of that genre.</p> <p>Creating: Continue with other pastiches.</p>	<p>Warm-up: Perform what they have written so far - group feedback and discuss aims for session.</p> <p>Creating: Continue work on other pastiches.</p> <p>Extension: Write a song with 3 choruses, 2 verses, melodic hook and possibly a key change (depending on expertise).</p>	<p>Warm-up: Choose exercise that is relevant to groups' needs - usually playing in time together is a problem.</p> <p>Creating: Finish all songs.</p> <p>Perform: Perform all the songs. Group feedback for next session.</p>	<p>Warm-up: Discuss each groups' practice and progress since the last session and outline aims for this. Finish all songs.</p> <p>Practice: Aim for a polished performance of songs.</p>	<p>Perform: Rehearsal and public showcase to invited audience.</p>

8. Fuzit

(Krishna Thiruchelvam, guitar, Pixel)

The background

Musical Futures Leeds' 'Fuzit' pathway was another initiative designed to give participants an insight into various genres of music. We're including a description of the process in this guide since the material could easily fit into an extended 'Writers Unblocked' programme.

Fuzit was designed to appeal to both competent musicians and those with little experience but who were keen to learn. As with Writers Unblocked, students who weren't already taking part in extra curricular activities were targeted.

The sessions took place weekly after school, lasting 90 minutes and running for the best part of a whole term. In term two, Fuzit became a self-programming club supported by older, more musically advanced students at the school (Guiseley School Technology College), and with occasional visits from the two practitioners.

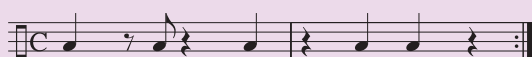
Throughout the pathway we deliberately decided not to provide the students with any sheet music, as we wanted to concentrate on developing aural and kinaesthetic skills. This approach suited the material we explored, kept the participants' attention and, we're pretty convinced, increased the rate of progress that the students made.

Stage one

The key to playing any music in a group is to have the confidence and ability to play together - in time! This is particularly important when you're fusing different styles of music with one another.

One way of instilling this from the start is to use clapping and body rhythm exercises. We used this exercise as our starter warm up:

- Gather the group together in a circle.
- Ask them to watch you and copy what you do. This way they will subconsciously follow your instructions.
- Start a beat off by stepping from left to right, at a slow pace! Counting 1-2-3-4 can help the participants get a grasp of the timing.
- Keep moving on your feet and clap on every 1st beat of the sequence.
- Divide the group into three sections whilst still clapping and stomping. Try not to stop too often to explain the next part of the exercise as this can disrupt the flow.
- Choose one section to carry on clapping on every 1st beat. All should still be stomping with just one of the three groups clapping.
- Ask group two to overlap the other group by clapping quavers over the top. When explaining this to the group you can talk about quavers but it is more important for the group to watch and copy you doing the action.
- Finally, the third group must clap a 3/2 Son Clave rhythm over the top!



What you will find is that you'll eventually create a really effective syncopated rhythm just using hands and feet.

This warm up is a really good ice breaker since it can be quite challenging to grasp, yet very satisfying to accomplish!

Stage two

Worn out yet? Right this is where the fun begins.

We wanted to start Fuzit with material the participants could relate to rather than using a piece they'd never heard or had little enthusiasm to learn.

The young people told us they mainly listened to pop, rock and punk. However, all were familiar with certain 'classic' songs, the most well known (thanks to recent films) being 'Smoke On The Water' by Deep Purple.

This was ideal for our purposes since the song is really quite simple.

The group we were working with comprised 15 instrumentally inexperienced Year 8 students and a couple of older peer mentors, who'd taken part in a previous pathway we'd run.

We asked them which instruments they'd like to have a go at. Most of them wanted a mixture of guitar, bass, woodwind, brass, percussion (including drums), keyboard/piano and also a few were very enthusiastic vocalists.

So we had our band!

Fusing...how it's done

1. Teach the melody instruments the parts to 'Smoke on the Water', which in its simplest form goes like this:

E G A
E G Bb A
E G A G E

Of course you may want to transpose these notes to an alternative key depending on the instrumentation available. In the case of Fuzit we were heavily guitar dominated so this key suited best.

2. Get all the group playing the melody together. This step relies heavily on band discipline: all have to watch one another whilst playing as a group and try to stay in time.

The effectiveness of your warm up activity will undoubtedly be tested here! Help the group by joining in yourself.

3. As the song progresses and the students' confidence grows, nominate someone to direct the dynamics eg. move arms up to get louder and down to get softer, clench fists to stop etc.
4. Sort out a couple of drummers and get them going with a basic rock pattern.

5. Add in a simple bass line.

By this stage the group should have a 'work in progress' version of the song.

6. Revisit clapping the syncopated rhythms from the warm up exercise, but have instruments/voices at the ready.

7. Now play 'Smoke on the Water' using these rhythms eg. by playing one note from the sequence to every beat of the 3/2 clave pattern.

The resulting piece will sound much slower than the original from a melodic point of view, but the rhythm sounds really interesting. Again try inviting conductors to add dynamics to the piece. We applied the same process to help the group explore a variety of genres. Other material we experimented with included 'Seven Nation Army' by the White Stripes fused with Dub, 'Smells like Teen Spirit' by Nirvana fused with Country, 'Save Tonight' by Eagle Eye Cherry fused with reggae and 'Hall of the Mountain King' by Grieg fused with heavy metal.

Fusing is great fun and participants learn to explore melody, rhythm and genre in a completely hands on and natural way.

9. Practitioner Checklist

We couldn't finish this guide without leaving you with a quick checklist of things that are essential to running a smooth workshop. Some are more easily organised than others, but all should be given due consideration before you start.

Space: The space you work in will really affect how much you and the participants can achieve. Make sure it is big enough for you to work in and that you have enough rooms if you want to do small group work. Space is often difficult to negotiate, especially in schools, but be very clear at the planning stage of your project what kind of space you ideally want and expect. This will help you and the organisers to find a close match.

Resources: Access to resources is very important. Who is providing the equipment? Will it be you, the school/venue or the participants themselves? Bear in mind the set up time will be longer if everyone brings their own gear, especially drummers. Again make it clear at the planning stage what you are willing to provide and what you want others to bring.

Communication: This is very obvious but essential to the smooth running of a project. Being able to contact people you need to speak to and being willing to be flexible is a necessity. Do the participants know exactly what is expected of them? Can they contact you between workshops? If not have you provided them with resources to help them continue their work? Is there a person within the group or organisational team apart from yourself that they can ask for help or information?

Time: The most popular time for workshops is after school. This can be a tiring time of day for all involved, especially if the participants are coming straight from lessons to you. Food is often a useful incentive for completing tasks but also really boosts energy half way through a session.

Preparation: You must have a clear idea of what you want to achieve in the project, even if it is as broad as getting young people to play together in time. Getting the balance between preparation and flexibility is the skill. You need to have a plan of activities, both long and short term, but also be ready to adapt them. If somebody starts to develop ideas not originally in your plan, but you feel it's helping them develop as musicians, then respond. You will find a way to make it fit within the general aims of the project. How prepared you want to be is a very personal issue. You need to find what works best for you, but our advice is that you have a long term plan for the project which you review, adjust and adapt after each session.

Faith: There are always low points in a project as well as the highs. You as the practitioner must keep positive and be as constructive as possible through these harder times. Frustration (the participants' and yours) will rear its ugly head as new skills are tackled, but keep encouraging and they will come through in the end.

10. Resources

Here is a list of resources that we used during Writers Unblocked. There are loads more so this is just a starting point for you.

Books

We recommend these as quick guides for composing a song or for inspiration when you feel a little stuck. Certain books have chapter/pages references for you to dive into and some are so good you should read them from beginning to end!

Songwriters on Song Writing by Paul Zollo

Da Capo press 2nd Edition 2003

Available from Leeds library and all good record shops.

This book contains a collection of interviews by Paul Zollo with songwriters such as Paul Simon, Frank Zappa, Madonna and R.E.M amongst others. Use this book to explore the process songwriters use when creating their own melodies and lyrics and the co-writing relationship between two artists.

Listen, Compose, Perform by Geoffrey Winters

Longman 1987

This book is a useful tool for your songwriting as it breaks down the guidelines into bite-sized chunks. It's easy to use and offers sensible advice on how to develop an initial idea into a full song. P4-P27

There is also a helpful and interesting section on chords on P27.

Walk on By (sound track of the century) by Alan Lewens

Harper Collins publishers 2001

This book covers many of the most popular charting songs of the 20th century. Full of facts, one of the most interesting things this book provides is a per decade overview of different genres, who wrote what, how, and sometimes why. It's also interesting to look at the songs that have lasted over the years. As Burt Bacharach says in the first few pages of the book, a good composition has the ability to last the test of time.

Websites

www.musicalfutures.org and www.numu.org

The meeting place for students and musical experts online.

www.bbc.co.uk/music

Your link to many artists, TV and radio programming.

www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/soldonsong

This site has key songwriting tools and experiences of other musicians

www.fireandwater.com

A website linked to music books

www.countrymusichalloffame.com

A brilliant resource for information on styles and artists of the country music genre.

We do hope you've found this short guide to songwriting useful.

Continue to have fun making music wherever and whenever young people tell you they want to.

We are Pixel

Sophie Jennings	vocals
Krishna Thiruchelvam	guitar
Liz Hunter	bass
Gary Moore	drums/tech