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# Target Audience Remix

Lesson Plan, Grades 4-6

Aligns with ISTE NETS-S Standards:  
1a, 1b, 5b

Teaching time:  
45 minutes

## LESSON DESCRIPTION

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In this lesson, students learn about the structure of popular songs to create their own *remix* over an instrumental track. Students target their new songs to new audiences and for new purposes while using the style and “feel” of the original song.

## OBJECTIVES

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Students will:

- Understand how songs are structured (verse/bridge/chorus) and how rappers and singers use rhyme, rhythm, and theme.
- Create a new song that is different from its original, targeted to a specific audience.

## RESOURCES & MATERIALS

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- An instrumental track or karaoke version of a popular song.
- If applicable, the original song with a printed copy of its lyrics.
- A computer or device with built-in recording capability.

## ACTIVITY

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### Explore

- Engagement question: What is a remix? When we remix media, we transform elements of it to create a new work.
- How do we remix? We need to first understand the *structure* of songs, and then we need to think about what our new song will do—who is it for, and what purpose does it serve?

### Analyze

- Listen to a popular song or excerpt from a popular song *preferably selected in advance*. Do not let yourself be “surprised” by what you discover in music that you have not yet listened to!
- Identify the following components of the song: Verse, chorus, bridge, techniques to attract attention (humor, sounds, rhymes, performance), and other elements.
- Identify the *purpose* of the song. Does it want us to do something? Does it want to tell us something about the world? Use the lyrics sheet if necessary to clarify the song’s lyrical messages. How does reading the lyrics on paper compare to what we hear when we listen to the song?

### Create

- Introduce students to the instrumental version of the song they have just analyzed.
- Consider using a *creative constraint*—a word, phrase, or idea that students will work with.
- Have students choose a *target audience*—and be specific! Will their new song be for doctors? For pet owners? For young children? For classroom teachers?
- Ask students to write new lyrics to the parts of the song that you have identified. In small groups, children might write different verses and then collaborate on the chorus.
- Practice! Play the instrumental and have students sing, rap, or perform along.
- Record: Play the instrumental and record the class singing, either from an external microphone or the built-in microphone of your recording device.

### Reflect

- Listen to the song and have students provide *warm and cool feedback*. What was strong about the piece, and what could be done to further strengthen or improve it?
- If possible, *re-record*. Compare the re-recorded version to the new version.
- Have students write an artist’s statement or a review of the song for someone who has never heard it before.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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*Q: Wait a minute—is it legal for me to use a popular song in the classroom? Isn't that copyright infringement?*

**Yes, it is legal if it is fair use.** The Fair Use section of the Copyright Act of 1976 gives educators wide-ranging and flexible powers to use copyrighted material in their classroom instruction. Experts have written a Code of Best Practices in Fair Use for Media Literacy Education that is widely shared by professional teaching and learning associations, including the National Council of Teachers of English and the National Association for Media Literacy Education. For more information about your rights as an educator to use copyrighted materials for instruction, student work, and curriculum, read the Code of Best Practices here:

[http://mediaeducationlab.com/sites/mediaeducationlab.com/files/CodeofBestPracticesinFairUse\\_0.pdf](http://mediaeducationlab.com/sites/mediaeducationlab.com/files/CodeofBestPracticesinFairUse_0.pdf)

*Q: So if I downloaded an instrumental, it's not illegal?*

**As long as the download itself was legal.** Many artists provide instrumental tracks for download on services like iTunes. More commonly, companies create near-identical “karaoke versions” of songs that can be downloaded legally. Do a search for the name of the song with “karaoke version.”

*Q: I don't know anything about music my students like. I don't want to seem hopelessly uncool!*

**No one can be an expert in children's popular culture**, because pop culture is not just about *what* kids like; it's about *how* they use it. That means the only way to learn more is to ask good questions first. Consider having an open conversation about music with your students. You might be surprised that students share some of your tastes—shows like *Glee* and video games like *Rock Band* have made many 60's, 70's, 80's, and 90's songs popular with young people. When it comes to more contemporary music, make sure to screen it privately first, and have students actively set boundaries for appropriateness. Most students know when a song they like is inappropriate for the classroom.

*Q: I'm not a musical person. Shouldn't they do this with the music teacher?*

The benefit of using existing instrumentals of popular songs is that **instrumentals do much of the musical work for you**. The real learning goals in this assignment are related to form, creativity, critical thinking, and critique. That said, in our experience music teachers sometimes want to contribute to projects like this by devoting part of their class time to helping students produce a *new* instrumental backing track. But this is optional, not required.