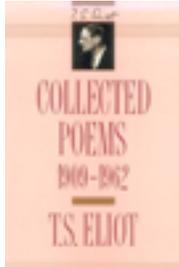


“Hunger” inspired by T.S. Eliot’s poem “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”



SONG BY ANA PORTER

SONG WRITER’S STATEMENT

Prufrock is a middle-aged man who fears that he lacks agency in his own destiny. Dreading rejection, he retreats from the world and lives his life with disconnected passivity – a “patient etherized upon a table.” As a songwriter, I too fear rejection. I get mired in my own creative habits and lulled by complacency. “Hunger” is a call to resist this gravitational pull of inertia. It’s a prayer for the passion and courage needed to reach escape velocity.”

LYRICS

I'm tired of holding out for it, tired of waiting around for it,
Weighing in pound for pound with it, face down humping the
ground for it.

I'm tired of whoring the little I got like a blind old beggar in a
parking lot,
Like a joke machine that cranks and smokes and every day tells
the same bad joke.

What I need is a little bit of hunger
That I can dig myself out from under,
A hard rain and a roll of thunder,
A little greed, a little bit of hunger.

I'm sick of holding the door for it, forever wanting more from it,
Never get to the core of it, always a tug of war with it.
I'm sick of running round the same old track, sitting here spinning
like a beetle on its back,
Tired of pouring buckets of sand and then counting the grains left
in my hand.

What I need is a little bit of hunger
That I can dig myself out from under,
A hard rain and a roll of thunder,
A little greed, a little bit of hunger.

My lover's arms are warm,
Why would I want to leave my bed this morning no matter day is
dawning?
Gimme one good reason why,
I should try and try and try and write line after flaccid little line...

SOURCE

But I'm scared of holding out for it, scared of coming
face to face with it
But I cannot bear the lack of it, so I am stuck here back
to back with it.

What I need is a little bit of hunger
That I can dig myself out from under,
A hard rain and a roll of thunder,
A little greed, a little bit of hunger.

T.S. Eliot was born in St. Louis and educated at Harvard University, but most of his adult life was passed in London. In the vanguard of the artistic movement known as Modernism, Eliot was a unique innovator in poetry and *The Waste Land* (1922) stands as one of the most original and influential poems of the twentieth century. As a young man he suffered a religious crisis and a nervous breakdown before regaining his emotional equilibrium and Christian faith. His early poetry, including "Prufrock," deals with spiritually exhausted people who exist in the impersonal modern city. Prufrock is a representative character who cannot reconcile his thoughts and understanding with his feelings and will. The poem displays several levels of irony, the most important of which grows out of the vain, weak man's insights into his sterile life and his lack of will to change that life. The poem is replete with images of enervation and paralysis, such as the evening described as "etherized," immobile. Prufrock understands that he and his associates lack authenticity. One part of himself would like to startle them out of their meaningless lives, but to accomplish this he would have to risk disturbing his "universe," being rejected. The latter part of the poem captures his sense of defeat for failing to act courageously. Eliot helped to set the modernist fashion for blending references to the classics with the most sordid type of realism, then expressing the blend in majestic language that seems to mock the subject.

MUSIC

Sparse guitar immediately sets us along a barren musical landscape. But Porter has such a rich voice – it contrasts with this emptiness as soon as she sings her first word. Her urgent tone pulls us in and we’re left waiting to exhale with some relief, which ultimately comes with the help of drums and harmony placed in the release of the first chorus. Porter’s musical intention is very clear – she sings of a hunger and keeps even the song from evolving into a fully realized arrangement. The bridge is melodically more lilting and soft, and gives a glimpse into a more vulnerable side of Porter’s character, a side that has been forced to yield to the edginess that pervades the rest of the song. “Hunger” has intense lyrics, but the melody on its own is equally gripping. By the end of the song, the two tracks of guitars are busy playing off of each other’s notes, creating a mixing of dissonance and harmony. They are as unresolved as the lyrics. (Notes by Deborah Pades)

SUITABILITY

Teach this complex poem if you know and love it. Otherwise, concentrate on the lyrics of the song and refer to the songwriter’s statement, particularly about lacking agency. The struggle to overcome impediments and take one’s life in one’s own hands is a theme that resonates for many adult literacy learners.

Lesson Plan “Hunger”

FORMULATE & DESCRIBE • BY JOHN DARTER

LEVEL	This lesson is designed for adult literacy learners performing at the intermediate to advanced Adult Basic Education level. It may also be adapted for high school students.
PARTICIPANTS	Tutor with a single, pair, or small group of learners.
LENGTH	2 to 3 x 1 1/2 hour sessions .
MATERIALS	CD player and Songs Inspired by Literacy, Chapter Two CD Two copies of the poem “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” by T.S. Eliot, which can be found at: http://www.bartleby.com/198/ Two copies of lyrics of the song “Hunger” by Ana Porter
OBJECTIVES	Learners will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• write a descriptive composition using concrete details of perspective along with features such as images, change in perspective, sensory details, and factual descriptions of appearance• formulate and ask questions as a way to broaden and enrich personal knowledge and discussion
VOCABULARY	etherized: made numb as if by anesthetizing insidious: treacherous or harmful digress: turn aside, especially from the main subject of attention or course of argument obtuse: lacking sharpness or quickness of sensibility or intellect. Difficult to comprehend; not clear or precise in thought or expression. Review vocabulary before and after reading the poem. Be sure that learners comprehend the meaning of the words before reading the poem. Check by having them use each word in a complete sentence.

PRE-READING

Discuss the learner's prior knowledge and opinions about poetry. Relate poetry to music that the learner may enjoy. On a piece of chart or binder paper write "What I (We) Already Know About Poetry and Music." In note fashion, write down their answers to the questions below. Save this sheet for the end of the lesson in order to contrast it with what the student has learned after the lesson is completed. The title of the final review paper should be "What I (We) Learned About Poetry and Music." Ask the learner some of the following questions:

What is your opinion of poetry?

Do you read it often?

Can you think of examples of poetry?

Would you consider the lyrics of songs poetry?

Can you cite an example?

When you listen to the words of a song, what makes them appeal to you or gets your attention?

Why do writers use poetry to reach the reader?

How is this different from writing songs?

ACTIVITIES

MEANING

If you know and love T.S. Eliot's poem, follow all the steps below. Alternatively, begin with step 7, and refer to the songwriter's statement above.

1. Read *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* to the learner/s.

The reading will have the most effect if you are familiar with the poem before reading it out loud. Pay particular attention to the cadence.

2. Then take turns with the learner reading alternative stanzas (partner reading). Take time to pause and answer clarifying questions that the learner has about the vocabulary or meaning of the poem.

3. Ask learners for their responses to the poem. What do they think it's about? Ask learners to reference the lines that inform their perceptions. Invite them to write notes next to the stanzas that are of most interest to them.

4. Through partner dialogue, come up with a one or two key themes in the poem.

5. If internet access is available, research what others think about the meaning of Eliot's poem. One of many T.S. Eliot web sites is: <http://www.missouri.edu/~tselist/>

6. Pass out the lyrics to the song "Hunger" by Ana Porter. Partner read the lyrics and have the learner predict what type of song this will be (Rock, Pop, Jazz, Blues, etc.)

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7. Play the song. Then ask:
 - Is it what you expected?
 - How does it relate to the poem?
 - How would you describe the song?
 - Who is the main character of the song, and how do they feel about their life?
 - What is the “it” that she refers to?
 8. Write down the learner’s responses in note form.

DESCRIPTION

1. Referring back to the notes from the pre-reading and reading exercises, have the learner choose whether they want to write a song or a poem.
2. Help the learner choose a topic for their poem/song. Let them know that poems, songs, and stories are written in draft form. That is, it takes an author several revisions before he/she has a final product that is worthy of publishing.
3. Let the learner work on a first draft of the poem or song.
4. Edit the first draft focusing on meaning. Help the learner clarify their thoughts by giving them suggestions. Have the learner rewrite the poem or song.
5. Edit the second draft of the poem for spelling errors (this will probably take place during two separate sessions, so you can have the learner take the poem/song home and work on it).
6. Have the learner rewrite the poem or song one more time for the final draft. Have them combine the poem or song with their illustrations.

POST-READING

To make the connection between poetry and music, have the learner bring in the CD and lyrics of a song they find particularly meaningful. Read the lyrics, listen to the song, and discuss interpretations.

EXTENSION

1. Have learners find out more about T.S. Eliot. The following websites are great resources:
<http://www.missouri.edu/~tseelist>
<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/eliot.html>
2. While Eliot wrote free verse, have learners explore other kinds of poetry that are more structured in terms of rhyme and meter. Examples are Haiku, limericks, sonnets, cinquain. The following web site gives good definitions and examples:
<http://www.promotega.org/msc00010/types.htm>
3. Screen all or portions of the film "The Dead Poet's Society." Introduce some of your favorite poems and elicit visual responses.

ASSESSMENT

1. Was the learner able to write a descriptive composition that contained both major and supporting details? How confident were they in this writing process?
2. Did they ask clarifying questions that deepened their knowledge of the poem and song?
3. Comparing the chart of what they learned with what they knew before the lesson, did you see significant progress?