

Music Is Fun!.....and Educational?:  
Integrating Songwriting Into the Curriculum.

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*Music gives a soul to the universe,  
Wings to the mind,  
Flight to the imagination...  
And life to everything.  
- Plato*

## **INTRODUCTION**

I am a musician. I have been surrounded by music since I was a child. My father and grandfather were frequently singing and playing piano or guitar or blowing on a mouth organ while our dogs howled out their own songs. I began learning how to play various instruments when I was in grade school. Throughout elementary school though, music was not something that was very prevalent. Once a week, we went to music class and sang traditional songs. Like most subjects at that time, music was its own entity and was very disjointed from the rest of the day. In spite of my schooling though, I was exposed to a great deal of music and an appreciation of it because of my family

background. In late elementary school, I fell in love with music, and the affair continues to this day.

I always knew I would use music as a form of entertainment in the classroom. It is fun for me and fun for the students. Since the beginning of my internship, I have kept one of my guitars in my classroom and frequently play and sing with the students.

Early in the year, the first and second grade students in my classroom listened to a book that was written as a song about a woman named, Catalina Magdalena Hoopensteiner Wallendiner Hogan Logan Bogan. The students really got a kick out of this book and for the next few days, I heard a few different students singing or humming the tune. Not needing a formal request for our next song, I learned how to play it, and we began singing it as a class. After a few times, I was impressed at how well students could remember her name and the funny characteristics about her that were completely meaningless. Over time, I realized that if students could remember a name like hers and ridiculous things about her just because it was in a song, then they would be able to remember information we wanted them to learn- content from the curriculum- if it were in a song. I began to see the potential of music as a means for instruction.

## **WONDERINGS**

I entered this inquiry project with the overarching goal of finding a way to incorporate music into the curriculum because I know how excited my students get whenever they see me start to take out my guitar. They LOVE singing. I wondered if I could get students more actively involved in our Prehistoric Life unit if we were to use songs. Initially, I assumed that I would write songs or change the words to familiar songs and insert information I wished for them to learn. My research though, began pointing me down a new avenue. I eventually came to the realization that I wanted the

*students* to write the songs, or rather write new words to songs they already know. Slowly, the foundation for my project and my wonderings began to take shape: I wondered if having students write songs using content from the curriculum will (1) get them more excited about learning, (2) get them to engage more deeply in what they are learning, and (3) help them remember and retain the information they are learning.

## **CLASSROOM CONTEXT**

I am an intern in a first and second grade split classroom at Park Forest Elementary. My class is home to fourteen boys and nine girls of varying personalities, backgrounds and ethnicities. Three students qualify for Title I, one student receives Emotional Support, and four students receive ESL services. Two of those ESL students moved into the area from Europe since January and had little prior experience with the English language.

Because it is a first and second grade split classroom, there is obviously a large cross-section of ability levels due to the differences of age. Throughout the year, my mentor and I have had to accommodate these differences quite regularly by differentiating the curriculum to meet the ability-levels of the students.

## **THE CURRICULUM**

This inquiry project correlated directly with the State College Area School District's Prehistoric Life unit. In this unit, the students are divided into six groups, and each group receives letters from different paleontologists from around the world. In the first letter, the paleontologist welcomes the students as a part of his paleontology team. As the team uncovers a dinosaur fossil and other information about it, the paleontologist

sends letters to the students about each new discovery of their mystery dinosaur. The students record and keep track of the incoming information in their Paleontology Journal and learn about what each piece of evidence could tell them about that particular dinosaur fossil.

## LITERATURE

All educators know that every child is unique. They have different backgrounds, different personalities and different talents, all of which play a role in their ability to learn and process information in the classroom setting. As a result, a teacher must provide a wide range of approaches to teaching and learning in an attempt to give each child the best opportunity to learn.

Howard Gardener (1983) echoes this concept with his research on Multiple Intelligences. In his book, Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences, he responds to the fact that IQ tests only measure verbal, mathematical and spatial intelligence. He believes that there are other kinds of intelligence that are just as important, including visual/ spatial, bodily/ kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. Gardner believes musical learners are aware of nonverbal sounds and, as a result, understand tone, pitch and timbre. Using songs and music with these types of learners will increase attention and motivation to learn.

In The Mozart Effect for Children: Awakening Your Child's Mind, Health and Creativity with Music, Don Campbell (2000) goes into more depth about the benefits of music intertwined with education. He believes music itself speaks a language that children understand instinctively. Children are naturally drawn into the orbit of music by its lyrics, pitches and beat. While this occurs, he says, "[Music's] physical vibrations, organized patterns, engaging rhythms, and subtle variations interact with the mind and

body in manifold ways, naturally altering the brain in a manner that one-dimensional rote learning cannot.” As a result, more meaningful learning and increased retention occur.

While researching and building the foundation for my inquiry exploration, I already knew how I would implement music in my classroom. Earlier in the year, my mother had given me a book by Gary Dulabaum about the use of songwriting in the classroom. She saw him give a presentation at a Keystone State Reading Association conference and called me directly after, telling me she found the perfect book for me.

In his book, My Teacher Rides a Harley: Enhancing K-5 Literacy Through Songwriting, Dulabaum (2003) details his process for teaching songwriting to students. Though I didn't follow his process exclusively, his work formed the basis for my exploration into the world of teaching songwriting to students.

Dulabaum begins his book with an overview of his personal classroom utopia, in which music is integrated into all aspects of the curriculum. Music, he explains, “will interest, inspire, and motivate students to learn, express, and create.” He believes one excellent way for a teacher to assess student knowledge is to have the students write songs about what they're learning. This statement, in particular, really piqued my interest and motivated me to attempt teaching songwriting to my students to go along with our paleontology and dinosaur lessons.

Even though he advocates the use of songwriting in the curriculum, Dulabaum believes that by doing so, a teacher actually teaches much more than how to write a song. The true power of songwriting extends beyond the classroom because what the students are really learning is *how to be creative*. Creativity, he believes, “is a tool that...everyone- young, old, teacher, student- should have in their arsenal of ways to deal with the world.”

## **EXPERTS**

After reading this book and others, I spoke with two different teachers that very much helped me focus and clarify my thoughts. First, I spoke with Randall Reynolds, my father and a fourth grade teacher at Redbank Valley Elementary. As an introduction to songwriting, he suggested that I utilize poetry, and in particular, Dr. Seuss, as a way to engage students and teach the rhythm of the words and the beat of the lines.

I also met with Patti Begg, the music and choir teacher at Park Forest Elementary. She was very supportive and excited about the direction of my inquiry project. She suggested that I focus less on the rhythm of the words and more on the beat of the lines. The rhythm of the words, or the syllables, is much more confining for a writer. To write to the rhythm, one must have the same number of syllables in each line. Writing to a beat, however, provides more flexibility as students only have to maintain the steady beat and not write with the same number of syllables.

## **PRE-SURVEY**

To begin, I created a survey for my students to complete about their thoughts concerning music and poetry and its potential as a teaching and learning tool (see Appendix A). Seventeen of the twenty-one students surveyed believed music could be used to help them learn, and fifteen wanted to use songs with our Prehistoric Life unit. As I expected, a vast majority- eighteen- of the students were able to remember Catalina's entire name and a few different characteristics about her.

## **THE PROCESS**

### ***I. MY THOUGHTS***

I believe songs and poems are essentially the same, with one major exception—the melody. Without the melody, a song is just a poem, and a poem can just as easily become a song by putting it to a melody.

My penultimate goal was for my students to write songs. However, I had to consider how I would get them to that point. If you strip a song down to its basics and take away the melody, you have a poem and a beat. For example, read the following slowly and tap the beat (the beat is delineated by the slash):

/        /        /        /  
 Twinkle, twinkle little star.  
 /        /        /        /  
 How I wonder what you are.

And now the following from The Cat in the Hat, with a slightly different beat:

/                    /                    /                    /  
 Now look what you did, said the fish to the cat.  
 /                    /                    /                    /  
 Now look at this house. Look at this. Look at that.

Both examples can be tapped out with the beat. In order to get students to recognize and write lyrics to the beat in a song, I decided I would begin my exploration by focusing on the beat in poetry and writing words to the beat. Most children know at least one poet: His name is Dr. Seuss.

## **II. POETRY**

After reading The Cat in the Hat a few days before Dr. Seuss day, I chose a particular section from the story and made it into a poster (see Appendix B). As a class, we read the selection and discussed observations of the poem. Students offered myriad observations, including the two important elements I intended to teach: beat and rhyme. We reread the selection a number of times as students tapped the beat on their legs. Students noticed that there were two beats per line. Then, we located and

marked the rhymes so we could see *where* the rhymes occur. Students noticed the pattern of a rhyme every other line.

Now that the students were familiar with beats per line and placement of rhymes, we wrote our own poem in the style of Dr. Seuss. I told the students that we would keep Dr. Seuss' first four lines and last four lines, and we would write the middle of the poem where the fish yells at The Cat about everything that was broken in the house.

We began by brainstorming a list of items in a house and a list of rhyming words for each. Then, we brainstormed a list of bad things The Cat could do in a house (see Appendix C, D). Using our lists, the students slowly began piecing together lines of rhymes. The students in my class had little trouble making up and putting together rhymes; however, the majority were similar to 'The soccer ball busted the wall.' or 'I hit my head on the bed.' etc. I had to model speaking the rhymes while keeping the beat to ensure that we had the same two elements of Dr. Seuss: two beats per line and a rhyme every other line. I clapped the beat while saying:

```

/      /
da da da
/          /
the soccer ball
/      /
da da da
/          /
busted the wall.
```

Gradually, students picked up on this idea. Most times, one student would come up with the original line, like 'The soccer ball busted the wall'. I would tap the line, like above, and another student would fill in the rest. Other times, one student would give a complete verse. Fifteen minutes after starting our writing, we had four verses to place in the middle of Dr. Seuss' first and last stanzas (see Appendix E).

We did another poetry lesson at the beginning of the next week. During read aloud the day before, I read a book called Can I Have a Stegosaurus Mom? Can I?

Please!? In the story, a boy begs his mom to let him keep the Stegosaurus that will soon hatch out of the dinosaur egg he found. The plea changes to “Can I have a Tyrannosaurus, Mom?” at the end of the story after the dinosaur hatches. I referred to the story and told the students we would write a poem about the boy’s pet Tyrannosaurus and what it would do in the house. We used the same brainstormed list from the previous day of things in our house and their rhymes.

This lesson progressed in a much similar manner as the previous one as students were eager to share their thoughts and ideas. Do to the nature of the lesson where students were offering bits of lines and other students were building off of what was already said, this lesson was at times chaotic and required me to be a mediator. I had to maintain the management of the classroom, while at the same time encourage responses and active listening to others. Within half an hour, we had a poem entitled, *If a Tyrannosaurus....* (see Appendix F).

These lessons were especially fun and rewarding for me, though also exhausting. It was obvious from the beginning that most students were excited and engaged and really understood the dynamics of Dr. Seuss’ poems. I have always enjoyed teaching lessons like these because the students are very much leading the lesson, including the direction, content and pace. I served more as a mediator and a steady beat to accompany lines for the poem.

At the end of the lesson, the students were obviously thrilled at what they had accomplished. One boy exclaimed, “I can’t believe it! We made this up from nothing!” This statement meant a great deal to me because I know the feeling. Being creative accomplishes exactly that feat: One produces something that didn’t even exist a few minutes before. The feeling is empowering, and I was thrilled that at least that one boy felt it.

### **III. MORE POETRY...**

After reflecting on these two lessons and discussing them with my mentor and PDA, I decided to extend this poetry section of my investigation beyond what I had originally planned. It was quite apparent that the leaders during the first two poetry lessons were mostly the second graders in my room, with the exception of a few first graders. I was confident that all my students could succeed at this type of poetry writing if given the opportunity. Therefore, I divided the class for our next lesson. I created different lessons for the two groups. I worked with the primarily first grade group, while my mentor worked with the second grade group.

After reviewing beat and rhyme patterns and having students tap and recite our poems, I gave my group of students a worksheet with the first two lines of a stanza in the style of Dr. Seuss. In partners, their task was to write the last two lines to complete the stanza, keeping two beats in each line and rhymes in the second and fourth lines (see Appendix G). I circulated among the groups and offered help, encouragement and praise as needed. As I expected, each group of students was able to complete the stanzas with their own rhymes (see Appendix H).

I created a poetry extension for the mainly second grade group of students. My mentor read a poem of Shel Silverstein (1974) entitled "What a Day" (see Appendix I). She referred to the poem that she had written on chart paper, and the students made observations about it. Silverstein's poem repeats the phrase "Oh, what a day" twice to begin and end the poem, and then has three lines that rhyme in the middle about the character's bad day. Students were told to keep this form of "Oh, what a day" repetitions to begin and end the poem and write their own lines in the middle.

This group of students had more trouble than I had expected. I believe the trouble arose for a few different reasons. This poem was written in a different form than the poems we had been writing, and its beat was different as well. One student was able to keep a similar form to the original poem with three rhyming lines between repetitions of "Oh what a day." The rest of the students were able to rhyme lines in the

middle but did not adhere to Silverstein's form of two lines, three lines, two lines. Regardless, the students were able to create from this prompt, and the lesson served its purpose as an extension for these students (see Appendix J).

Overall, I was pleased with how these poetry lessons progressed. I believe they definitely served their intended purpose as an introduction to beat and rhyme patterns. At that point, I was definitely excited to begin working with songs.

#### ***IV. WHOLE-CLASS SONGWRITING***

I began our songwriting lessons by introducing the idea that melodies can be reused by writing different words to them. I told my students that I knew lots of songs and wanted to sing some of them for them, and they could join in if they knew the words. I sang Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star, Baa Baa Black Sheep, and the Alphabet Song, all of which have the same melody that was written by Mozart when he was a child (Campbell, 2000). Right away, most students picked up on this fact. To prove it to any possible disbelievers, I divided the class in thirds and assigned one of the songs to each third. All at once, we hummed our assigned song and all hummed the same melody.

Then, I told the students that we were going to write our own song to the same melody and asked for ideas of what our topic should be. The first student suggested we write about Stegosaurus, to which no one objected.

By this time, the students had begun to realize our routine for writing, as we immediately began brainstorming a list of what we knew about Stegosaurus (see Appendix K). One student even went and got a dinosaur dictionary and named other facts about Stegosaurus.

Once we had our list, we pieced together lines the same way as we did with our whole-class poetry writing. One student would come up with a line, and I would tap the beat and hum the tune as they sang it. Students quickly joined in with tapping and

humming or helped the student sing his or her line. Students built upon their peers' responses. The lesson was a mirror image of the poetry lessons in its structure and form, with one notable exception. Students *sang* lines rather than speaking them.

We returned to this song a day or two later. During our writing workshops throughout the year, we had discussed what it means to revise a piece of writing and the process one follows to do so. We briefly reviewed this idea. Then, I asked the students how it would be different to revise a song, and we brainstormed a list of options (see Appendix L).

To begin, I chose four or five students to sing the song to the class and told the others to listen to the words to see if they fit the melody and made sense. The students agreed that the words all fit with the beat and the melody, but one student thought we should change the last verse because she thought it sounded like the eyes stuck out from the head. We talked about this idea, and I prompted the students by referring back to our brainstormed list and why Stegosaurus and other herbivores have eyes on the sides of their heads rather than the front. One student said that we should say that it had eyes on the side and then tell why. We quickly brainstormed a list of rhyming words for *side*. One student came up with *hide*, and it became the rhyme in our last line (see Appendix M).

After the students were satisfied with the lyrics, we practiced singing the song a few times, and then added percussion instruments that I had borrowed from the music room as accompaniment. We practiced a few times, then recorded the song four different times, alternating who got to play the instruments.

By this point in my quest to use songwriting in the classroom, I was undoubtedly thrilled! Students were obviously excited and enjoyed the process, but more importantly, they enjoyed the end result. During the lesson, one student exclaimed with a smile on his face, "This is the hardest thing ever!" I laughed and told him that it really

is hard, but it is still fun. From student engagement, responses and interest, I could tell the majority of my students agreed.

#### ***V. REAL WRITER'S REALLY DO THIS?***

One day during this week, I read/ sang the book *I'm Still Here in the Bathtub* by Alan Katz (2003) during read aloud time to reinforce the concept that melodies can be reused in other songs by writing different words to them. This book is a collection of familiar songs for children that have silly lyrics about a character's crazy experiences. My students loved this book, and we have since began singing the songs more regularly.

#### ***VI. SONGWRITING IN THREE GROUPS***

At this point in my inquiry, all of our writing had been done as a whole class. I decided to break the class into three groups to write our next songs. During Morning Meeting at the beginning of the next week, we discussed the fact that we only need to know the melody of a song to write our own words to it. It does not even matter if we know the real words. Therefore, I asked the students to tell me some songs that we all would know how to hum. The students came up with an impressive and extensive list of songs, some of which I did not even know. To keep things as simple as possible, I revised the list before our next lesson and only chose the easiest songs (see Appendix N).

We began our next lesson by thinking up a few different ideas that we could write about in a song. Students had quite a few ideas, but I cut our sharing short and told the students that when I put them in groups they would have to decide what they wanted to write about and what song they wanted to use.

Like usual, these writing sessions lasted for two days. The first day the groups decided on the song and topic, brainstormed information, and began writing. The

second day they revised their writing, practiced singing with instruments, and performed the songs for the rest of the class. Undoubtedly, the groups worked at different paces and required different amounts of teacher support and attention. One group even wrote their entire song the first day and had time to practice singing it. All groups succeeded at writing their own songs. Two groups chose to write about dinosaurs, and one song even contained all factual information about their dinosaur, just like I had planned for our last session (see Appendix O).

### ***VII. WE ARE SONGWRITERS!***

At this point in our Prehistoric Life unit, students have learned the geographic location and layer of the earth of the fossil discovery; made a life-size model of the footprint; used a ratio to approximate the size of their mystery dinosaur; used clues about the dinosaur's stride to decide if it was walking, trotting or running; discussed eye placement and vision; and used clues to decide if their dinosaur was an herbivore or a carnivore. Then, students analyzed all this information to infer about the identity of their mystery dinosaur.

The day after the groups discovered the identity of their dinosaur, I told them that now I wanted them to write a song about their own dinosaur. First, I referred to the previous songs we had written and discussed how some of them were factual, while others were more humorous. I told students that for this round of songs, we wanted to write factual songs. I instructed students to refer to their Paleontology Journals for help in recalling information they had learned about their dinosaur.

Like our usual writing sessions, this project lasted two days. These songwriting sessions proved to be a little more difficult for some groups of students since they were writing with only three or four people in each group. Three of the groups had little trouble, and I circulated among the other three to help them brainstorm ideas and get

started with a few lines. By the end of the second day, each group was able to write and revise a factual song about their dinosaur (see Appendix P).

We practiced and performed our songs with rhythm accompaniment at the beginning of the following week. Students obviously enjoyed performing, but I was especially impressed by the reactions of the rest of the class when they were in the audience. The students were not only excited about singing *their* songs, they were excited about hearing the other songs as well.

The next week, I invited each group individually into my 'recording studio' in a conference room down the hall where I had set up a lyric stand and a video camera. Students chose the instruments they wanted to play, and then performed their songs while I recorded. The students enjoyed this extra opportunity. One boy even told me later, "Mr. R, I felt like I was a famous singer."

## **POST-SURVEY**

I again surveyed my students about their thoughts of music and poetry after our investigation. Twenty-one of the twenty-three students reported enjoying using songs and poems to learn about dinosaurs. Eighteen students said they like music, and nineteen said they like poetry. Prior to this inquiry project, those numbers were fifteen and eleven respectively.

I did get a good laugh out of the results to one question in particular. On the first student survey, four students said they didn't think music could be used to help them learn information in school. Those same four students still didn't think music could help them learn after my investigation. I am fine with that though. I know they did learn facts about their dinosaur from writing and singing the songs. I guess it does not really matter if they *know* they were learning.

## DO YOU REMEMBER?

During parent/ student/ teacher conferences last week, I asked each student to name a few things about their mystery dinosaur that they wrote into their song. Every student was able to tell me a few facts about their dinosaur. I was surprised because most students did not tell easy facts like whether it was a carnivore or an herbivore. Instead, they reported the weight and length of the dinosaur or what period it lived in. It is possible some of the students would have remembered those things just from our class lessons. However, I am certain that not all of them would have.

Two weeks after singing our songs for the final time, I created a four or five question assessment for each group about their particular dinosaur. I took the questions directly from the lyrics in their song, so I only assessed what they wrote (see Appendix Q).

Twenty students got all of the questions about their dinosaur correct. The three students who did not missed one question each. One student missed the weight of his dinosaur, one missed the period, and one missed the family name of his dinosaur.

I was amazed!! I assumed that some students would have no trouble recalling the information, but twenty students answering all the questions correctly is outstanding! Even as I was writing the assessment the night before, I doubted how much the students would actually remember.

## WHAT I LEARNED....

Claim A: *Singing songs with content from the curriculum facilitates retention.*

This fact is the main finding that I will take away from this project. I was not certain how much my students would remember from their songs prior to giving them

their assessments. Their performance on those assessments though speaks for itself. Twenty of my twenty-three students recalled all the information from their songs. I even observed a handful of students writing out the lyrics to their songs on scrap paper while they were answering the questions. They exceeded my expectations with their retention of the material.

*Claim B: Having students write their own songs with information they are learning is an effective assessment strategy.*

Gary Dulabaum discussed the use of songs as an assessment strategy in his book My Teacher Rides a Harley. If a student is able to write a song about something, then they must know something about it. Even though my students used their Paleontology Journals to write their songs, they proved that they knew the information on the subsequent assessment that I gave them.

*Claim C: Using songs to go along with the curriculum is an effective teaching strategy that engages and actively involves students.*

All of my research prior to this inquiry project highlighted how music and songs engage students and get them excited about learning. The ability of music to do so is natural as it creates an environment that is conducive to learning. I had no doubt the same would be true in my classroom, and I found my assumption to be correct. From the very first poetry lesson to the very last recording of our songs, my students were undoubtedly excited and engaged by our lessons. At times, their excitement level created some difficulty; however, I would much rather have to reign students in and calm them down than have them sit and not respond.

In addition, the students told me so themselves. On the final assessments I gave to my students, I asked them to tell me what they thought about using music with our dinosaur unit. Twenty-one of my twenty-three students responded with something along the lines of “I liked it” or “It was fun.”

I know they learned and retained information because of their responses on the post-surveys. The fact that they also had fun is evidence enough for me to prove that using songs is an effective teaching strategy.

### **FURTHER WONDERINGS**

The process of creating, implementing and reflecting on this inquiry project has produced two further wonderings. First, I wonder how the results of my project would have differed if I had written the songs. Since students wrote their own songs, they took ownership over them. We probably only sang our songs six or eight times after writing them, and then two weeks later, the students still knew the material. If I taught songs that I had previously written to students, I wonder if they would retain the information to the same extent.

Second, I wonder how long students will retain this information. Like I stated, their retention exceeded my expectations. Now, I want to take it further. During the last week of school, I will give my students the same assessment form about their mystery dinosaur. I wonder if the results will be comparable to the initial assessment results.

### **CONCLUSION**

I am thrilled with the success of this inquiry project for quite a few different reasons. I have discovered a way to use music and songwriting in the classroom and

will, without a doubt, continue to do so in the future. I am proud of myself for devising and implementing a method for teaching songwriting because writing songs is one of my favorite hobbies. I have found a way for me to be creative as a teacher and teach something that is meaningful to me, while at the same time, enhancing the curriculum in other areas. That fact excites me.

By being creative with this inquiry project, I have discovered one way to teach my students *how* to be creative. If I could choose one thing that I want every student to leave my classroom with, it would be the ability to be creative. But that creates a problem in itself because creativity is not something that can be taught. It is something that one is: It is a state of being and living. Everyone has the potential to be creative, but not everyone is. While some people are more apt to creative thought, the ability to be creative is something everyone- from student to teacher- can develop, but the only way to develop it, is by doing it. As a teacher, I can help my students develop the ability to be creative by giving them a variety of opportunities that require creative thinking. This inquiry project has shown me one way to do so.

I am a teacher, and I like the thought of that. I would like to believe my students learn more from me than just the content I teach. I would like to believe my excitement in the classroom and excitement for learning is contagious. I would like to believe that students learn something just from being around me, something that I did not even teach to them. I am an idealist, I know.

The day before this inquiry project was due, a student left a card on my desk that blew me away. The front of the card said *INSPIRING* in crooked block letters above a staff with music notes. The inside of the card said, *This is what you are to me about music! Your inspired student, Alex.* After I read this card, I realized that I teach for this reason: At least that one student caught my love of music. And I am thrilled because of it.

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yes

no

**B: The Cat in the Hat by Dr. Seuss**

“Now look what you did!”  
 said the fish to the cat.  
 “Now look at this house!  
 Look at this! Look at that!

You sank our toy ship,  
 sank it deep in the cake.  
 You shook up our house  
 And bent our new rake.

You SHOULD NOT be here  
 when our mother is not.  
 You get out of this house.”  
 said the fish in the pot.

copyright Dr. Seuss 1957

**C: Brainstormed list of items in our house and their rhymes**

WALL - hall ball doll call Paul mall tall fall

COUCH - slouch pouch ouch!

CHAIR - hair care pear stair fair bear

TABLE - label

BED - said dead head

MICROWAVE -

KITCHEN - itchin'

LIGHTS - heights nights

COMPUTER - tutor

CLOTHES - toes

FLOOR - door pour

TV - CD PE

STAIRS - pears tears chairs

SINK - pink think blink

**D: Brainstormed list of bad things The Cat could do in our house**

- break a vase
- fall down stairs
- break some chairs
- have a bear
- break the TV
- break the table
- scratch the CD
- jam the computer
- jump on the bed
- break his head
- break the bed
- throw the ball
- dent the wall
- draw on the wall
- mess it up
- chase everyone
- eat everyone
- squish everyone
- eat my dog

- make my mom scream
- eat the refrigerator

## **E: Student Work**

### **Cat in the Hat by Dr. Seuss and B8**

Now look what you did!"  
said the fish to the cat.  
"Now look at this house!  
Look at this! Look at that!

Now I can't listen  
you scratched the cd.  
Before we could watch it  
you broke the TV.

You silly old cat!  
You broke the computer.  
I think we might need  
to call the cat tutor.

I watched as you did it.  
You tripped on the ball  
crashed to the floor  
and dented the wall.

You bumped and you thumped  
as you fell down the stairs.  
You fell on a table  
and then broke some chairs.

You SHOULD NOT be here  
when our mother is not.

You get out of this house.”  
said the fish in the pot.

## **F: Student Work**

### **IF A TYRANNOSAURUS.....**

If a Tyrannosaurus  
got into my house.  
I'd slide down its tail  
like I was a mouse.

When my bum hit the ground,  
I'd scream like a baby.  
I'd run up the stairs  
to warn my sis Katie.

Then Katie would scream  
cause she's scared of the Rex.  
She'd grab her toy doll  
that has seven necks.

With the doll with the necks,  
she would walk down the stairs.  
She'd scare him so much  
that he'd fall on some chairs.

To his surprise,  
he'd get stabbed by a nail.  
He'd run outside  
and make a mess of the mail.

## **G: Review Worksheet**

## Rhyming Practice

Directions: Write two more lines to each group and complete the rhyme.

I'm sorry that I  
spilled paint on the floor.

---

---

"GO TO YOUR ROOM!!!"  
my mother said.

---

---

I ran into my room  
and flicked on the lights.

---

---

**H: Three examples of students' Rhyming Practice work**  
(students' lines in italics.)

I'm sorry that I  
spilled paint on the floor.

*my little sister  
knocked me with the door. (by Alex L)*

“GO TO YOUR ROOM!!!”  
my mother said.  
*or I’ll chop off  
your little head. (by Alex H and Ali)*  
I ran into my room  
and flicked on the lights.  
*I sleep in my bedroom.  
I sleep in the night. (by Lyndon)*

**I: *What A Day* by Shel Silverstein**

What a day,  
Oh what a day.  
My baby brother ran away,  
And now my tuba will not play.  
I’m eight years old and turning grey,  
Oh what a day,  
Oh what a day.

**J: Three examples of student work**

What a day,  
Oh what a day.  
My grandfather slipped  
in the middle of the trip  
and now my zipper will not zip.

Oh what a day,  
Oh what a day. (by Frances)

What a day,  
Oh what a day.  
Mom forgot to pay  
for my cake  
on my birthday.  
Oh what a day,  
Oh what a day. (by Brady and Nina)

What a day,  
Oh what a day.  
My mom got a bill  
and forgot to pay.  
Some candy would  
come in handy.  
Oh what a day,  
Oh what a day. (by Isabel)

**K: Brainstormed list of information we knew and read about Stegosaurus**

- has spikes- 4 or 5 on end of tail
- fat
- swings his tail
- scratches with claws
- eats plants and leaves

- herbivore
- has plates for protection and warmth
- has a small brain that is the size of a walnut
- walks on 4 legs
- name means “plated lizard”
- eyes on side of its head so it can see meat eaters

### **L: Students’ plan for revision**

- add more words
- change words
- add movement
- add instruments (*They noticed all the percussion instruments by my desk.*)
- practice playing and singing

### **M: Whole-Class Songwriting**

*Written to the tune of Twinkle Little Star.*

*first draft*

Stegosaurus had some spikes.  
He used them to stop the fights.

Stega was an herbivore.  
He tried to escape the carnivores.

Stegosaurus had some eyes  
that stuck out on the side.

*second draft*

Stegosaurus had some spikes.  
He used them to stop the fights.

Stega was an herbivore.  
He tried to escape the carnivores.

Stegosaurus had eyes on the side  
so his skin won't be a hide.

### **N: Brainstormed lists of songs**

#### Easy Songs We Can Hum

Twinkle, Twinkle

Row Your Boat

3 Blind Mice

Yankee Doodle

Mary Had a Little Lamb

This Old Man

Wheels on the Bus

If You're Happy and You Know It

Brother John

London Bridge

### **O: Student Work in 3 groups**

Albertosaurus Went to Town

- written to the tune of Yankee Doodle.

Albertosaurus went to town  
eating all the people  
whacked his tail  
and went crazy  
and then he wasn't hungry.

Then, midnight he ate a snack  
after eating all the people  
kicked himself  
and ate Brady  
and then he ran away.

B8: The Noisy Class

- written to the tune of Yankee Doodle.

B8 is a noisy class.  
We just like to talk.  
Every time the teacher talks  
Our brains go flipity, flop flop.

B8 is a noisy class.  
We never listen.  
All we do is interrupt  
and make our tongues go blah blah.

---

The Sauropod's Worst Nightmare

- written to the tune of Three Blind Mice

Giganotosaurus, Giganotosaurus  
had no fears and no tears.  
It's length was 40 feet

and he had sharp teeth.  
 He ate dino meat.  
 The Giganotosaurus. ROAR!!

**P: Student work in 6 groups**

Twinkle, Twinkle Seismosaurus

*- written to the tune of Twinkle Little Star*

Seismosaurus had 4 legs.  
 He ate plants, everyday.  
 He was the longest dinosaur.  
 He was the king of the herbivores.

Seismosaurus lived in the Jurassic.  
 Right after the Triassic.  
 Twinkle Twinkle Seismosaurus  
 New Mexico was his home state.

His feet were 4 feet long  
 and they were 2 feet wide.  
 Twinkle, Twinkle Seismosaurus  
 He was 160 feet long.

Eoraptor Was A Carnivore (and he was crazy)

*- written to the tune of Brother John*

Eoraptor, Eoraptor  
 had sharp teeth  
 had sharp claws.  
 He was a carnivore.  
 He was a carnivore.  
 He loved meat.

He loved meat.

Eoraptor, Eoraptor

was 3 feet.

was 3 feet.

He was a bipedal.

He was a bipedal

lived in the Triassic,

lived in the Triassic.

---

### Good Mother Lizard

*- written to the tune of Row Your Boat*

Maiasaura ate lots of leaves.

She used her teeth

to chomp the leaves

right off the trees.

Maiasaura was a "Mother Lizard"

She was a duckbilled dinosaur

who might be under your floor.

### The Syntarsus Song

*- written to the tune of London Bridge*

Syntarsus had sharp claws

to slash his prey, everyday.

Syntarsus used his sharp teeth

to eat his meat.

Syntarsus was a carnivore

carnivore and predator.

Syntarsus was 10 feet tall

and found in Zimbabwe.

### Scary Dude

*- written to the tune of Brother John*

Deinonychus, Deinonychus.

It ran fast. It ran fast.

It had one long claw.

It tore up flesh.

Scary dude. Scary dude.

Deinonychus, Deinonychus

weighed 250, was ten feet long.

was found in Montana

was found in Montana

Scary dude. Scary dude.

### The Giant Beast

*- written to the tune of Three Blind Mice*

Giganotosaurus, Giganotosaurus

44 feet long, 44 feet long.

He lived in Argentina

during the Cretaceous Period.

He had really sharp teeth.

He ate lots of meat. He ate lots of meat.

Giganotosaurus, Giganotosaurus

had big feet, had big feet.

He weighted 13,000 pounds.

was bigger than T- Rex.

Giganotosaurus, Giganotosaurus.

## **Q: Student assessments for each group**

Twinkle, Twinkle Seismosaurus

1. Was Seismosaurus a herbivore or a carnivore? circle one
2. Seismosaurus lived in what period?
3. Where was Seismosaurus found?
4. How long was Seismosaurus?
5. On the back of this paper, write two sentences telling me what you thought about writing your own dinosaur songs.

#### Eoraptor Was a Carnivore

1. Was Eoraptor a carnivore or an herbivore? circle one.
2. Was Eoraptor a bipedal or a quadripedal? circle one.
3. How tall was Eoraptor?
4. What period did Eoraptor live in?
5. On the back of this paper, write two sentences telling me what you thought about writing your own dinosaur songs.

#### Good Mother Lizard

1. What did Maiasaura eat?
2. What does Maiasaura's name mean?
3. What kind of dinosaur was Maiasaura?
4. On the back of this paper, write two sentences telling me what you thought about writing your own dinosaur songs.

### The Syntarsus Song

1. Was Syntarsus a herbivore or a carnivore? circle one.
2. How tall was Syntarsus?
3. Where was Syntarsus found?
4. On the back of this paper, write two sentences telling me what you thought about writing your own dinosaur songs.

### SCARY DUDE

1. How much did Deinonychus weigh?
2. How long was Deinonychus?
3. Where was Deinonychus found?
4. On the back of this paper, write two sentences telling me what you thought about writing your own dinosaur songs.

### The Giant Beast

1. How much did Giganotosaurus weigh?
2. How long was Giganotosaurus?
3. Where did Giganotosaurus live?
4. What period did Giganotosaurus live in?

5. On the back of this paper, write two sentences telling me what you thought about writing your own dinosaur songs.