

Unit VI: Remembrance & Memory

Grade Levels: 6+

Time: Two 45-minute class sessions

Lesson MVI-15 The Boss and the New Jersey Connection

Objective:

- Students will be able to analyze the lyrics of songs written in the aftermath of 9/11.
- Students will be able to conceptualize how music can memorialize people lost through tragedy.

Key Terms:

Figurative language Lyrics Miracle Ruins

Spirituality

Materials:

Bruce Springsteen's The Rising album Access to lyrics:

- http://www.lyricsfreak.com/b/bruce+springsteen/the+rising_20025196.html
- http://www.lyricsfreak.com/b/bruce+springsteen/into+the+fire_20025188.html
- http://www.lyricsfreak.com/b/bruce+springsteen/youre+missing_20025199.html
- http://www.lyricsfreak.com/b/bruce+springsteen/my+city+of+ruins_20025192.html
- http://www.lyricsfreak.com/b/bruce+springsteen/countin+on+a+miracle_20025185.html

Activities/Procedures:

1. Explain that Bruce Springsteen's album was distributed in 2002 as a response to 9/11. It contains fifteen songs; almost all were written after 9/11. One song, "My City of Ruins," was written by Springsteen as an expression of his feelings for his hometown, Asbury Park. The song can also be analyzed in view of 9/11.
2. Divide the class into groups using any of the following four songs from the album: "Into the Fire," "My City of Ruins," "The Rising," and "You're Missing." [Groups are determined by teacher according to class size. Note: For each song, at least two students will be analyzing the same song.]
3. In groups, students will read and analyze their song and answer the following questions:
 - Explain the figurative language used in the lyrics.
 - How can these lyrics refer to 9/11?
 - Whose voice is Springsteen using (victim, loved one of victim, etc.)?
4. Suggestions and hints for the teacher
 - "Into the Fire" - the plight of firefighters that day
 - a. "up the stairs"
 - b. "love & duty"
 - c. How might "strength give us strength," "faith give us faith," "hope give us hope," and "love bring us love?"
 - "My City of Ruins" – symbol of NYC
 - a. What images do the lyrics convey?
 - b. How might this be NYC after the tragedy?
 - c. Explain the spirituality in this song.
 - d. Why do people turn to religion in the midst of crisis?
 - e. Explain the symbolic significance of this place. Is it just a location?
 - "The Rising" – victim rising beyond the fire
 - a. The song progresses from the person feeling a great burden to one reaching the sky.
 - b. At the end of the song, the image of the sky is frequently repeated... from "blackness and sorrow" to "sky of blessed life." What might each line/stage represent?
 - "The Missing" – the loved one praying for the victim's return
 - a. Explain the scene at home.
 - b. How do you

know the victim has a family? c. What is the significance of the last two lines, "God's drifting in heaven, devil's in the mailbox/ I got dust on my shoes, nothing but teardrops?" d. After student analyses, ask students to find any word or line in the songs that show hope.

5. Have all students examine the lyrics to "Countin' on a Miracle."

- Find the lines that show sadness.
- Find the lines that show hope.
- How is remembrance a strong emotion in this song?
What message is Springsteen giving to those who lost loved ones?
- How do we make our own miracles?
- Listen to the audio of the songs. Continue discussion.
- Does the musical artist stress any feelings in each song?
- How does his singing style bring emotions to the songs?
- After loss, how can music give hope?
- Could these songs also be applied to other sad situations in life?
- How does music help us heal?

Evidence for Understanding:

1. Response to questions as a journal entry or as an essay:

- How can music respond to a tragedy?
- How does music affect remembrance & memory?
- How can the musical artist convey his/her own feelings of grief while echoing the feelings of so many others?
- Does the musician have the right to speak for those lost? Can music heal?
- What other forms of art can express feelings and preserve memory?

Extension Activities: Taking Action and Giving Service

1. Students could write their own poem/lyrics as a memorial to 9/11 or any other tragedy. This exercise could be extended to include the music teacher and/or art teacher as students discover other ways to memorialize events and those who serve in the aftermath of a community disaster.
2. Students can write their own songs to honor those who volunteered after 9/11.
3. Students could hold a concert as a fundraiser or memorial.