

LESSON M-UVI-L3

The Boss and the New Jersey Connection

Unit VI: Remembrance and the Creation of Memory

Grade Levels: 8+

Time: 90 minutes



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Objectives

- Analyze the lyrics of songs written in the aftermath of 9/11.
- Conceptualize how music can memorialize people lost through tragedy.

Key Terms

- figurative language
- miracle
- spirituality
- lyrics
- ruins

Lesson Materials

- lyrics to “The Rising” by Bruce Springsteen (found at http://www.lyricsfreak.com/b/bruce+springsteen/the+rising_20025196.html)
- lyrics to “Into the Fire” by Bruce Springsteen (found at http://www.lyricsfreak.com/b/bruce+springsteen/into+the+fire_20025188.html)
- lyrics to “You’re Missing” by Bruce Springsteen (found at http://www.lyricsfreak.com/b/bruce+springsteen/youre+missing_20025199.html)
- lyrics to “My City of Ruins” by Bruce Springsteen (found at http://www.lyricsfreak.com/b/bruce+springsteen/my+city+of+ruins_20025192.html)
- lyrics to “Countin’ On A Miracle” by Bruce Springsteen (found at http://www.lyricsfreak.com/b/bruce+springsteen/countin+on+a+miracle_20025185.html)

Lesson Background

Explain that Bruce Springsteen’s album *The Rising* 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 terms of 9/11.

Lesson Plan

- Divide the class into groups to analyze one of the following songs from Springsteen’s album:
 - “Into the Fire”
 - “My City of Ruins
 - “The Rising”
 - “You’re Missing”
- Organize the groups based on class size, but be sure that at least two students analyze the same song.

- Have the groups 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.)?
- Note to Teacher: You might use these suggestions and lyrics to explore the meaning of each song:
 - “Into the Fire”
 - Discuss the plight of firefighters that day
 - What do “up the stairs” and “love & duty” suggest to the listener?
 - How might “strength give us strength,” “faith give us faith,” “hope give us hope,” and “love bring us love”?
 - “My City of Ruins”
 - How is this song a symbol of New York City?
 - What images do the lyrics convey?
 - How might this be NYC after the tragedy?
 - Explain the spirituality in this song.
 - Why do people turn to religion in the midst of crisis?
 - Explain the symbolic significance of this place. Is it just a location?
 - “The Rising”
 - Does this song suggest a person or victim rising beyond or above the fire?
 - What are your thoughts as the song progresses from the person feeling a great burden to one who is reaching the sky?
 - At the end of the song, the image of the sky is frequently repeated (e.g., “blackness and sorrow,” “sky of blessed life”). What does each line/stage represent?
 - “The Missing”
 - This song portrays how a loved one prays for a victim’s return.
 - Describe the scene at home.
 - How do you know the victim has a family?
 - 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”?
- After the students analyze the songs, ask them to find words or lines in the songs that signify or illustrate the presence of hope.
- Then have all the students examine the lyrics to “Countin’ on a Miracle.” Guide the class through the following steps and questions:
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?

- Finally, listen to the audio of the songs. Continue the discussion with the following questions:
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 of Understanding

Have the students respond to these questions in a journal entry or an essay:

How can music respond to a tragedy?

How does music affect remembrance and memory?

How can a musical artist convey his/her own feelings of grief while echoing the feelings of so many others?

Does a musician have the right to speak for those lost?

Can music heal?

What other forms of art can express feelings and preserve memory?

Taking Action and Giving Service

- Have the students write their own poem or song lyrics as a memorial to 9/11 or any other event that has caused hardship among people in their community, state, or the nation. (Note to Teacher: 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.)
- Have students write their own songs to honor those who volunteered after 9/11.
- Have the class hold a concert as a fundraiser or memorial.
- Encourage the students to write to a musician to tell how the musician’s songs have made an impression on them. (Note to Teacher: The exercise of “finding” the correct address will provide valuable insight into the process of reaching out to high profile individuals who can help give greater visibility to a project or cause.)