

Lesson Plan

Writing from Experience

Book: *Shawn Mendes*

Series: Biggest Names in Music

Level: Navigator

Objective

To help students practice crafting songs based on personal experiences.

Supplies

- *Shawn Mendes* book
- Access to the lyrics of Shawn Mendes’s song “In My Blood,” which can be found here: <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/shawnmendes/inmyblood.html>
- Paper and pencils

Before the Activity

Read through the *Shawn Mendes* book, or assign it to students to read on their own. Pull up the lyrics for “In My Blood” on your computer.

Activity

Shawn Mendes often draws on his personal experiences when he writes music. For example, page 24 describes the song “In My Blood.” Mendes wrote this song based on his experiences with anxiety. This song has two verses and a repeating chorus. Choose a volunteer to read the lyrics aloud. Work as a class to identify the song’s form: chorus, verse 1, chorus, verse 2, chorus, bridge, chorus, bridge/chorus mixed together. Then discuss the following questions:

- Why do you think Mendes chose to start with the chorus instead of with verse 1? (Sample Answer: Repeating the chorus over and over emphasizes how Mendes keeps choosing not to give up.)
- Why do you think Mendes chose to mix the bridge and chorus together at the end? (Sample Answer: It helps add new interest and meaning to words that have already repeated several times.)

Ask students to think about an important moment in their life. Give students ten to fifteen minutes to journal about this topic. They should describe what happened as well as how it made them feel. Then, students should draft a short song based on these ideas. The song should have two verses and a chorus. The song can rhyme, but it doesn’t necessarily have to. Instead, encourage students to focus on the story and emotions. Invite a few volunteers to read their song lyrics aloud to the class.

Evaluation

Were students able to journal about an experience from their own life? Could they construct verses and a chorus for a song about this experience?

Standards

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' reading standards for informational texts, grade 7 (RI 7.5).