

## English Literature Hip-Hop Lesson Plan

### Love

#### **Learning Objectives (to be given to students):**

- To be able to identify varying representations of love within a text.
- To be able to compare and contrast at least two different representations of love.

#### **Lesson Outline:**

The topic for this literature lesson is love. The lesson will examine the varied representations of love through the lens of hip-hop literature. The lyrics to Biz Markie's "Just a friend"<sup>1</sup> and Mary J. Blige's "Be without you"<sup>2</sup> will be the primary texts for analysis. Two texts have been chosen in order for students to compare and contrast different representations of love. Biz Markie portrays unrequited love in his song, whereas Mary J Blige presents unconditional love. These texts have been chosen as they are 'classroom safe'. This is following in the path of Marc Lamont Hill who "eliminated texts that were found to be primarily racist, misogynistic, or homophobic and heterosexist" from his hip-hop lessons at Howard High School in the United States.<sup>3</sup>

Before the lesson begins, the classroom desks will be configured into a circle to encourage discussion and face to face interaction. Prior to announcing the texts, students will be asked to:

- Write down all the people and things they love (family, pets, idols etc.)
- Try and come up with a term to identify what type of love this is (Unrequited, Romantic, forbidden, mutual etc.)

With this in mind students will then be given a copy of Biz Markie's "Just a friend". As a class we will read the lyrics one line at a time, around the circle until it is complete. Students will then be asked to:

- Try and categorise which type of love Biz Markie is representing in his song.
- Identify which words, phrases or literary devices are deployed to depict this.

Next a copy of Blige's lyrics will be handed out and read in the same fashion as before. Students will be asked the same questions. All responses will be shared as a group so students are able to identify a range of interpretations.

After this brief analysis students will then be given the following task to complete for the remainder of the class:

Compare and contrast the representations of love within "Be without you" and "just a friend"  
In your answer you must consider how each author uses structure, form and language to present their thoughts and feelings.

<sup>1</sup> Biz Markie, *Just A Friend* (New York: Cold Chillin', 1989).

<sup>2</sup> Mary J. Blige, *Be Without You* (New York: Geffen, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Marc Lamont Hill, *Beats, Rhymes, And Classroom Life: Hip-Hop Pedagogy And The Politicsof Identity*, 1st edn (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009), p. 20.

You must quote at least two words or lines to support your analysis.

**Aims for the lesson:**

- Students to be able to identify the varied representations of love within texts.
- Students to be able to demonstrate detailed critical understanding in analysing the ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings in texts.
- Students to be able to explore connections between texts and develop ideas through comparison and contrast.
- Students to develop their group discussion and sharing off ideas

Woks cited

Blige, Mary J., *Be Without You* (New York: Geffen, 2005)

Hill, Marc Lamont, *Beats, Rhymes, And Classroom Life: Hip-Hop Pedagogy And The Politics of Identity*, 1st edn (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009), p. 20

Markie, Biz, *Just A Friend* (New York: Cold Chillin', 1989)

Biz Markie, *Just A Friend* (New York: Cold Chillin', 1989).

**[Intro]**

**Have you ever met a girl that you tried to date**

**But a year to make love she wanted you to wait**

**Let me tell ya a story of my situation**

**I was talkin' to this girl from the U.S. nation**

**[Verse 1]**

**The way that I met her was on tour at a concert**

**She had long hair and a short miniskirt**

**I just got onstage drippin', pourin' with sweat**

**I was walkin' through the crowd and guess who I met**

**I whispered in her ear, "Come to the picture booth**

**So I can ask you some questions to see if you are a hundred proof"**

**I asked her her name, she said blah-blah-blah**

She had 9/10 pants and a very big bra

I took a couple of flicks and she was enthused

I said, "How do you like the show?"

She said, "I was very amused"

I started throwin' bass, she started throwin' back mid-range

But when I sprung the question, she acted kind of strange

Then when I asked, "Do ya have a man," she tried to pretend

She said, "No I don't, I only have a friend"

Come on, I'm not even goin' for it

This is what I'm goin' sing

[Hook]

You, you got what I need but you say he's just a friend

And you say he's just a friend, oh baby

You got what I need but you say he's just a friend

But you say he's just a friend, oh baby

You got what I need but you say he's just a friend

But you say he's just a friend

[Verse 2]

So I took blah-blah's word for it at this time

I thought just havin' a friend couldn't be no crime

Cause I have friends and that's a fact

Like Agnes, Agatha, Germaine, and Jack

Forget about that, let's go into the story

About a girl named blah-blah-blah that adored me

So we started talkin', getttin' familiar

████████████████████

Spendin' a lot of time so we can build up  
A relationship or some understanding  
How it's gonna be in the future we was plannin'  
Everything sounded so dandy and sweet  
I had no idea I was in for a treat  
After this was established, everything was cool  
The tour was over and she went back to school  
I called every day to see how she was doin'  
Everytime that I called her it seemed somethin' was brewin'  
I called her on my dime, picked up, and then I called again  
I said, "Yo, who was that?" "Oh, he's just a friend"  
Don't gimme that, don't ever gimme that  
Jus' bust this

[Hook]

You, you got what I need but you say he's just a friend  
And you say he's just a friend, oh baby  
You got what I need but you say he's just a friend  
But you say he's just a friend, oh baby  
You got what I need but you say he's just a friend  
But you say he's just a friend

[Verse 3]

So I came to her college on a surprise visit  
To see my girl that was so exquisite  
It was a school day, I knew she was there  
The first semester of the school year

I went to a gate to ask where was her dorm  
This guy made me fill out a visitor's form  
He told me where it was and I was on my way  
To see my baby doll, I was happy to say  
I arrived in front of the dormitory  
"Yo, could you tell me where is door three?"  
They showed me where it was for the moment  
I didn't know I was in for such an event  
So I came to her room and opened the door  
Oh, snap! Guess what I saw?  
A fella tongue-kissin' my girl in her mouth  
I was so in shock my heart went down south  
So please listen to the message that I send  
Don't ever talk to a girl who says she just has a friend

Mary J. Blige, *Be Without You* (New York: Geffen, 2005).

[Intro]

I wanna be with you  
Gotta be with you  
Need to be with you  
(Oh, oh, oh, oh)  
I wanna be with you  
Gotta be with you  
Need to be with you  
(Oh, oh, oh, oh)  
Oooo (oh, oh, oh, oh)

[Verse 1]

Chemistry was crazy from the get go  
And neither one of us knew why  
We didn't build nothin' overnight  
Cause a love like this takes some time

████████████████████  
People swore it off as a phase, said we can't see that  
Now from top to bottom, they see that we did that

(Yes) it's so true that  
(Yes) we been through it  
(Yes) we got real shit  
(Yes) see baby we've been...

[Chorus]

Too strong for too long  
And I can't be without you baby  
And I'll be waitin' up until you get home  
Cause I can't sleep without you baby  
If anybody who's out there know just what I feel  
Too hard to fake it, nothin' can replace it  
Call the radio if you just can't be without your baby

[Verse 2]

I got a question for ya (see I already know the answer)  
Still I wanna ask you will you lie? (No)  
Make me cry? (No)  
Do somethin' behind my back and then try to cover it up  
Well neither would I, baby  
My love is only your love  
(Yes) I'll be faithful  
(Yes) I'm for real  
And with us you'll always know the deal  
We've been...

[Chorus]

Too strong for too long  
And I can't be without you baby  
And I'll be waitin' up until you get home  
Cause I can't sleep without you baby  
If anybody who's out there know just what I feel  
Too hard to fake it, nothin' can replace it  
Call the radio if you just can't be without your baby

[Bridge]

See this is real talk, I'mma always stay no matter what

Good or bad (thick or thin)  
Right or wrong (all day, every day)  
Now if you're down on love or don't believe this ain't for you (no, this ain't  
for you)  
And if you got it deep in your heart  
And deep down you know that it's true (c'mon, c'mon, c'mon)  
Well let me see you put your hands up (hands up)  
Fellas tell your lady she's the one  
Put your hands up (hands up)  
Ladies let him he's got you locked  
Look him right in his eyes and tell him  
We've been...

[Chorus]

Too strong for too long  
And I can't be without you baby  
And I'll be waitin' up until you get home  
Cause I can't sleep without you baby  
If anybody who's out there know just what I feel  
Too hard to fake it, nothin' can replace it  
Call the radio if you just can't be without your baby

[Intro]

I wanna be with you, gotta be with you, need to be with you  
I wanna be with you, gotta be with you, need to be with you  
I wanna be with you, gotta be with you, need to be with you  
I wanna be with you, gotta be with you, need to be with you  
I wanna be with you, gotta be with you, need to be with you