

# Songwriting Workshop

By Thaddeus Rex

This workshop is designed to get kids excited about their own creativity. Students will learn specific skills for overcoming the intimidating writers block that can overwhelm beginners. Students will leave with a completed song they created as a group.

## **I Intro**

Introduce myself (Thaddeus Rex)

A Short Discussion on Songwriting

Play a song they know (*ie - TWINKLE TWINKLE LITTLE STAR*)

What was author of this song was doing when he wrote it?

Why do you think he/she wrote this song?

Play *This Land is My Land* (inquire about this one also)

Explain that songs don't need complicated concepts to be good

Twinkle Twinkle Little Star is a very simple song that became very famous

This Land is My Land is also a simple song that people really enjoy

## **I Write our own song**

Simplify the concept of starting

We needn't plan the whole song at the start (in the residency version of this workshop, kids do develop a song concept first, then work toward supporting that concept with each set of additional lyrics.)

Start with a single word of the song

This makes it simple to get started

Kids are not daunted by the task of finding a single word

The whole group brainstorms together on what that single word could be

All the options are written down

There are no bad ideas

We now democratically select which word to use

Kids vote on which word they want to use

If it's close, we vote again

If there's a tie, we use both chosen words

Brainstorm for ideas and democratically turn that single word into a phrase

Same process used for the 1<sup>st</sup> word is used here

If the single word they've picked is a noun, kids are asked what's it doing, if it's a verb, kids are asked what thing is doing the action (*ie - is it a person place or thing, what type of person place or thing is it, etc.*)

Phrase is then added onto to make a 4 line stanza (continuing to use the brainstorming method to develop each additional line which fleshes out the actions we started in line 1)

We now have some decisions to make for this song

Should the song to rhyme or not, kids vote to decide

Should the song be fast or slow, kids vote to decide

Should the song be happy or sad

Difference between major and minor keys is explained

Kids vote for their preference

The phrase is sung to a simple melody based on their decisions

Kids vote to decide if this 1<sup>st</sup> stanza should be the chorus or the 1<sup>st</sup> verse of the song (the difference between a chorus and verse is explained)

The same process is used to create additional verses and a chorus as needed.

## **III The daunting task of writing a song is finished**

The song is sung through twice by the kids

Revisions are now allowed, so long as the group agrees on them

The song is written onto paper and photocopied so each child can take his/her new song home with them.

## **IV The song is sung one last time and workshop is brought to a close**

These kids are now the proud authors of a new piece of art

A short discussion closes the workshop. Kids are reminded if they ever have trouble being creative to break the project up into small pieces and start with just the 1<sup>st</sup> word, then build on it.