

## **Storytelling with Swift by Roxanne Ha**

**Time:** 60 minutes

**Number of Students:** 32

**Overview:** Join a class that explores the different techniques Taylor Swift, one of the greatest songwriters today, uses to create plots and characters within her songwriting.

### **Objectives:**

- Learn about different ways you can create storyline and characters with poetry or songs.
- Explore themes present in Swift's lyrics and how they continue to resonate to audiences today.

### **Materials:**

- Slideshow presentation
- Printed lyric sheets
- Pencils/pens

### **Class Outline:**

1. Introduction – slideshow (15 mins)
  - a. Quick self-introduction
  - b. Quick background on Taylor: themes in her writing and narrative writing style
  - c. Different writing techniques to create plot and character development
    - i. Ask students what ways they notice authors/writers developing their plot or characters
    - ii. Go over brief overview of techniques
      1. Themes
        - a. Feminism, taking chances, misunderstandings
      2. Imagery/descriptions (show not tell)
      3. Foreshadowing
      4. Tone/mood
      5. Point of view: 1st person, 2nd person, 3rd person
      6. Dialogue or internal thoughts
      7. Figurative language: similes/metaphors
  - d. Bigger overarching questions: themes of her songs and relevance? What does this reveal about Taylor's pov or personality?
2. 1st song: The Last Great American Dynasty (12-15 minutes total)
  - a. Pass out lyric sheets
  - b. Solo Annotations (2-3 mins): students will write down any questions they have about the characters or story and any techniques discussed previously that are used in the song. Think about larger themes or what the song reveals about characters, the author, or society.
  - c. Class discussion (10-12 mins)
    - i. Synopsis of song
    - ii. Different writing techniques Swift employs to create plots/characters and how they help tell her story

- iii. Themes and social relevance of this song? What does this reveal about the writer's pov?
3. August v Betty v Cardigan group discussion (22-25 minutes total)
  - a. 2-3 minutes: Provide brief synopsis of the storyline within these 3 songs.
  - b. Split class up into groups A, B, and C and assign each group a character to analyze, using all 3 songs as reference. If each group has more than 5 people, have 2 groups work on 1 character.
  - c. 10 minutes: Each group will brainstorm a list of character traits they would use to describe their assigned character and describe the different techniques Swift uses to develop the storyline and characters. They will also share how these characters make them feel and how they think the storyline ends.
  - d. 10-12 minutes: Each group will share their interpretations to the class. Students in groups assigned to a different character are welcome to share their input into interpretations of each character as well.
4. Closing Remarks (2-5 minutes)
  - a. Discuss how and why the themes in Swift's lyrics continue to resonate with large audiences today.
  - b. Student feedback on the discussions and solo/group activities