

Midnight Oil - *One Country* (Topic: Popular Music, ELECTIVE) Lesson plan ideas by Rachel Hocking

About: *One Country*, from Midnight Oil's Blue Sky Mining album, is an Australian rock song that calls the listener to think about self-identity and choices. The song uses standard guitar chords, a small guitar riff, simple to complex texture, all at a steady, achievable tempo. The song begins with a standard verse/chorus structure that builds into a more elaborate ending. Midnight Oil is a long-standing Australian rock band whose songs generally explore social justice and environmental issues.

Musical Elements: *Pitch*

This song is ideal for teaching/reinforcing standard Western music chord progressions. The piece is in G major, ideal for guitar accompaniment, and chords I IV V vi are regularly used in a non-complex way. Analysis of the guitar solo and additional chords in the final section are worth analysing. There is a small guitar riff between the verses that provides a contrast to the chords. Vocal melodies, counter-melodies, and major/minor chord choices help the emotion of the lyrics.

Musical Elements: *Texture*

Throughout *One Country*, the texture is dramatically varied from a monophonic guitar riff to a dense rock band with strings and layered vocal parts. Amongst these layers, the roles of instruments change from section to section, and instrumental combinations shift. Any textural analysis of this piece would also include an analysis of the structure and tone colour because of the ways these are linked.

Teaching Activity: *Creativity/Composition - Interweaving Melodies*

Using the chord progression from the song's verse, create an original melody in simple quadruple time, in G major, for an instrument of their choice. Begin the composition first by writing out the notes that belong to each chord in the progression. Discuss and give examples of non-harmonic tones which can add interest. If students need help, guide them through standard rhythmical combinations. Ask students to notate these melodies using traditional Western notation. After the melodies have been written, experiment partnering melodies together in a polyphonic way. Have students swap and play each other's melody. Experiment layering the melodies in pairs, small groups, and all of class.

Teaching Activity: *Aural - Emotion through Texture*

Listen to the song and analyse the textural changes. On first listening, ask students for basic information about the piece e.g. tonality, time, tempo, type of song, lyrics and meaning. Give the students a table that outlines the structure of the song which can frame their analysis. Ask students to name each type of texture, identify the instruments within each textural layer, and also discuss each instrument's role. Finally, ask students to critique how these textural changes affect the emotion of the piece, and any changes they would make if they were to perform or arrange the piece.

Teaching Activity: *Musicology - Create a Film Clip*

Ask students to choose an Australian pop piece that explores social justice and prepare a summary that outlines their song choice, the musicians involved, musical elements that reinforce the emotion of the song, basic structure. From this, ask students to create a film clip that would serve as a 'visual analysis' of the piece. This can be made from photostock/videostock or own photos/videos and should further project the musical meaning and structure that they have observed. Post the film clips to a class YouTube channel and ask fellow students to peer review the success of these.

Teaching Activity: *Performance - Become a Rock Star*

Using the lyric sheet of *One Country*, teach the class how to sing and play the piece on the guitar. First, listen and learn the song, so that it is easily sung. When adding guitar, begin by securing the verse chords and the guitar riff. As each section becomes secure, practise it with the recording.

Once the class can play the piece on guitar and sing with it, decide how to add complexity to the performance in a similar way to the recording. Ask musically-skilled students to add their instruments (eg keyboard, drums, bass, backing vocals) to the performance. Finish by performing the piece as a class, without the recording.