

STUDY GUIDE: Lalah Hathaway

This study guide is to support virtual and in-person classes for students and teachers inspired by the movie *Respect* about the life of Aretha Franklin.

Overview

Lalah Hathaway gives a master class that is both insightful and candid. In this discussion, Lalah talks about what makes a good musician great, and how she focused her efforts on music education and training at an early age. She dispels myths held by some about training; that serious study hinders your voice, removing your edge. “Nothing could be further from the truth,” she emphasized. Students can learn many other avenues about being in the music business other than “standing at the mic.” This is an informative talk for arts students, choirs, and young musicians.

Learning Objectives

This lesson will explore how Lalah Hathaway learned the steps to forge a career in the entertainment industry with her love for music and music education. Students can learn the following:

1. The role of education.
2. Finding your own voice.
3. What is tone?
4. How to optimize your sound.
5. Choosing a career path.
6. Aspects of the entertainment industry for non-performers.
7. The importance of owning your ideas.
8. Building community with your peers.
9. Advanced: Skill-building in intercultural maturity.

Essential Questions for Reflection Critical Thinking

1. What was Lalah’s most important talent?
2. What do you think: Why would people think untrained talent is better than trained talent?
3. What are some pros and cons to having famous parents?

Suggested Student Activities

Activity 1a: What Do You Know?

Before viewing the master class, brainstorm with your students everything they already know about Lalah’s father Donny Hathaway.

Activity 1b: What Do You Want to Know?

Now, generate a list of at least ten questions that reflect what your students would like to know about the songs recorded by both Lalah and her dad.

Activity 1c: What Did You Learn?

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After viewing the master class, discuss with students what was learned and review from the list of ten or more questions any answers gleaned from Lalah's discussion.

Activity 2: Active Listening

Prior to viewing the master class have student's brainstorm any associations they have for each of the program's key terms. Ask them to listen carefully for these terms during the master class. Ask students how they would define the words after the viewing.

- Discography
- Music Producer
- Voice Lessons
- Singer
- Musician
- Composer
- Record Label
- Engineers
- Publicists

Connect to the Curriculum: English Language Arts

Journal Prompts:

- What surprised you about Lalah's background?
- What skills do you use from Language Arts as a Musician? As a songwriter? As a music producer?

Reflection:

- Discuss what students learned and what they still would like to know. These questions may inspire further investigation projects.

Connect to the Curriculum: Social Studies

A community is a group of people connected by something they share. Are people of all gender, abilities and ethnicities represented well in the music community? Support your answer.

'What If' Questions:

1. What community does Lalah speak of and what roles do people play in the community(ies) she describes?
2. What if Lalah ignored her parents' influence and chose another career patch?
3. Lalah talks about musicians being [alchemists](#)? What is the meaning of that word as she uses it?

Connect to the Curriculum: Science/Acoustics of Music

Your students will hear Lalah Hathaway mention a unique ability she has called [polyphonic singing](#) where she can sing a chord while singing one note. What does polyphonic mean?

Research and discuss sound, acoustics, pitch, and overtones. Is singing polyphonically something that you can be taught or learned?

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Connect to the Curriculum: The Arts (Music, Theatre, Dance, Visual Arts)

Improvisation is, in a [musical setting](#), the collective or individual music created by [making up new melodies](#) to fit the structure of a song is known as improvisation. It is a vehicle by which a performer demonstrates his/her mastery, most common in African-based music, like Jazz, R&B, Hip-Hop, Gospel. Improvisation is also used in some Classical art forms. Identify improvisation in songs you know.

Lalah uses improvisation in her singing, and she is well known for highly creative improvisation. The name used to describe the improvisation in her [style of singing](#) is called melismas or “riffs” or “runs.”

People can also work in their careers using the concept of improvisation.

Discuss how improvisation can be a [way of thinking about your life](#), and what it looks like if one creates from a mindset of using improvisation as a modality of learning, doing and manifesting opportunities.

Developing Your Voice and Your Ear:

1. Lalah talks about how to listen to various types of music to develop your musical tastes and knowledge.
2. Name 3 styles of music you never listen to. Why?
3. Name 3 instruments she recommends learning about. Do you recognize these instrument names?
4. How does Lalah say she prepares her voice for a concert?

Sample Lesson Plan

Produce a Compilation “Best of Lalah Hathaway” Record or Playlist

Objectives:

1. **Listen** as a class, to songs selected from Lalah’s discography. Choose songs that might help to create a theme for a record or playlist, (e.g., Love, Family, Friends, Global Warming, Cars).
2. **Discuss** the possible name of her record. What is the story or idea being expressed by the title chosen?
3. **Write** individually, your interpretation of the song lyrics and/or song titles chosen.
4. **Discuss** roles students can take on to create the record. What are the tasks? What are the names of the jobs for people taking on those tasks, e.g., Writer, Cameraman, Producer, Talent?
5. **Write** the list of tasks, the timeline, the materials needed (props, supplies), the list of songs, the concept and possible name for record.
6. **Create** the record or playlist. Develop your chosen songs into a playlist on a social media platform like Spotify or Apple Music. If you have student musicians in the class, or in a school program, ask them to volunteer to play the songs for the record, record them on a voice record app or Garage Band app, and share the finished product as “the Lalah Hathaway compilation record.”

Materials Needed:

- CD Player and Speakers
- Recordings of Music
- Black board or dry erase board with markers

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- Loose leaf paper or journal for journal writing

Process:

Listen as a class to the possible songs to gather a big idea or concert and title for the recording

Use these listen and respond questions:

1. How can you choose a title from everyone's song ideas?
2. What is the story behind the song lyrics and how do they connect to the record you want to create?
3. How do you make decisions on putting it all together? Who is best at what task(s)?

Discuss the steps to create the record or playlist from start to finish.

Write about a story or idea you want to express with the final product.

Share your ideas with another class.

Ideas for future activities:

- Put on a presentation or CD Release, or Playlist Reveal party
- Visit Lalah's website

Advanced Discussions: Intercultural maturity is the ability to communicate and behave with people who are different from you. How would an artist demonstrate and promote the ability to get along with people who are different from you in gender, ethnicity, or country of origin?

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