



# SOUND IDEAS



## ELEMENTARY: Representation — A Whole New World

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The following pages are resources provided by the author in extension of this November 2023 SOUTHWESTERN MUSICIAN issue Sound Ideas article.

# Reflection

As the article sets up, this is **not** a checklist. This is **not** a list of sources. This is a list of questions that leads you through a reflective practice of noticing what *is*. The “*is*” in this case are the songs and materials you chose for a rotation.

This is **not** a permanent document. The questions that follow is a path to reflect on what is, influences that drive what is, our relationship to culture and power, and why we extracted this music for a lesson. This document **does not** evaluate and **will not** grant permission. The way we approach reflection, what we gain from reflection, often depends on our capacity for the answers we may receive (*welcomed and revealing*). Our level of *criticality*[1], a practice that holds meaningful information as students of equity, depends on what questions we ask. This document serves as a humble model for the types of questions to ask as you determine how representation matters in music classrooms while stretching our capacity to take in information that enables growth in our understanding of equity. (Growth is not always comfortable.)

Content is **WHAT** we teach. Pedagogy is **HOW** we teach. As we reflect mostly on content here, we shouldn’t forget that pedagogy also requires reflection, and that is not the focus at the moment plus another conversation altogether.

Complete the table below using songs/activities used this rotation, adding more space as needed. Note, I call it *this rotation’s list* because each time you plan is an opportunity. Over time, you will have repertoire data that can be analyzed for trends and patterns. Data is a good place to start. If we do not know what is, we won’t know how to move forward. But data is in conversation. These data represent a human experience and that is not encompassed solely by numbers. That should be remembered.

Song	Origin	Source	Recording	Recording Artist

[1] Criticality is the ability and practice of naming, researching, understanding, interrogating, and ultimately disrupting oppression (hurt, pain, or harm) in the world. Muhammad, G. (2023). On Criticality. *Voices From the Middle*, 30(4), 12-14.

What perspectives/experiences  
are represented  
this rotation?

What is the dominant  
perspective/experience  
represented in this rotation?

## What external factors coincided with planning this rotation?

I recently engaged in a  
discussion about  
diversified experiences

Life outside of school  
diverted my attention  
and energy

It's a heritage and/or  
history month

I attended a recent  
PD that reminded me about  
diversified experiences

School events required  
my attention and energy

I did not have the bandwidth  
to learn a new song or activity  
that is outside my training  
and/or experience

## What internal factors influenced planning this rotation?

I pulled from on my  
own training and how  
I was taught

I pulled from on my  
own lived experience  
and what I know

I pulled from someone  
else's experience,  
different from what I know

Which songs required more time and  
energy to understand its  
historical context?

**Research | Positionality | Power**

Which songs required more time to understand  
the relationship between how you experience  
the world and the culture of the songs?

Which songs required more time and energy  
when considering the power dynamics  
in using the songs for class?

## What is the WHY for the materials and songs used this rotation?

I am offering perspectives  
of others' experiences through music

I am acknowledging students'  
experiences through music



Is the attention directed towards  
students by acknowledging their  
experience welcomed or  
unwanted (othering)?

Should the first experience of a  
song outside students' lived  
experience be from someone who  
is from the culture or someone  
who is not from the culture?

Is the main theme of the  
experience rooted  
in joy or trauma?

How much time and depth  
are students able to experience  
and examine the culture of songs  
outside their lived experience?

Is the example an accurate  
example of the song and the  
culture?

Does this song need to be  
performed in a concert in order  
for a student to gain a deeper  
understanding of someone's  
experience?



## Tell a story

After completing the reflection, tell the story of how the song list was created this rotation.

- What do you notice about the story?
- What questions do you have about the story?
- What realizations about influences are revealed after reflection?
- What do you like about this story?
- What would you change about the story?
- How does this story affect students in your class?



## Temperature Check

- Are you invested in continuing to reflect? Why?
- Are you wanting to disengage with reflection? Why?
- What about this reflection was difficult?
- Are you able to hold what this reflection revealed non-defensively?
- Do you note any conflicting feelings about this reflection or the practice of reflection?
- Where do you need to be emotionally and *cognitively*<sup>[2]</sup> to affirm all students in your classroom?



Diversified representation in song lists is a choice we make each time we plan. When we sit down to plan, we choose to include multiple perspectives and we choose the depth at which we experience those perspectives. External factors will not always remind us about that choice, and sustained equitable behavior is not always automatically engaged after the completion of a training or reading an article. Equity is a choice we consistently make.

Over time, through repetition, and with consistent, positive feedback, incorporating diversified and representative songs may develop into a natural practice we do without extensive thinking. But we must remember that this learned behavior struggles to replace behavior we have internalized since we were students ourselves.

Equitable behavior is unlearning as much as it is learning. Equitable outcomes are intentionally and deliberately designed.

[2] *Cognition*. Of, relating to, being, or involving conscious intellectual activity (such as thinking, reasoning, or remembering). Merriam Webster Dictionary.