



Creating and performing a new song with other people

Artist Approach

Introduction

- This presentation goes hand in hand with the handbook and other resources for the Artist Approach project. The handbook takes you through some steps to create your own song as a group. You can decide the theme of your song and style of the music or draw ideas from Zak's story about Lockdown Life, like the song written by our artists.
- You will be listening to their song Lockdown Life, watching the film of Zak's story and meet the team of young and professional Artists that created them both.
- Simply follow the steps in each Unit and Module and enjoy the journey!

Module 1a

First Step – Introducing you to our new song



Listen to the song
Lockdown Life
and then discuss
the following
questions, in
small or larger
groups
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCNvRg4VLn8>



1. What words do you remember from your first listening?
2. What do you think is the theme, or topic of the song?
3. What is the mood of the music?

1b Reflection questions

Listen to the song again and decide the following about the **STRUCTURE**:

1. Which part of the song do you think is the **Chorus**?
2. Which parts of the song would you call the **Verses**?
3. How can you tell?

1c Song Lyrics

Follow the song lyrics on the next page and in pairs, or small groups, discuss:

- What is the role of the **Verse** lyrics? For example, story telling? Sharing an aspect of the theme?
- What is the role of the **Chorus** lyrics? For example, spelling out the main theme? Giving the listener a 'hook' to hold onto, or sing along to?
- What is the role of the **Middle 8**, or contrasting section? For example giving a different perspective on the theme, or offering a musical distraction before returning to the end choruses? This could be instrumental, or a rap for example.

Lockdown Life. By A.Asante, R.Ekila, A.Gichinga, M Goodey, S.Pithia. With contributions from mentees: M.Frederick, E.A.Mathius, P.Mawangi, B.Mckenzie, D.Ngodi & M.Sterne.

Verse 1a

You've made me smile so many times
Now it's time for me to help you shine
Needing things to be alright
Take the year and make it mine
So that we can live and just take flight alright

Verse 1b

Behind your mask I see your eyes
Can't see your face but I know your smile
Can we just sit down a while?
Reminisce on what we liked
So that we laugh and just be (light)

Chorus

Lock down life
We been living that lock down life
We been living that
We been living that lock down life

Verse 2a

Nothing can hold us back
Like a phoenix we will rise
We will surely rise
and take to the skies

Verse 2b

Nothing can hold us down
Hold on tight to your crown
You have come this far
so show it out
don't be afraid to show
show it out

Chorus

We been living that lock down life
We been living that lock down life ect...

Middle 8 (4)

Let's fill our days with joy good laughter
and be hopeful..... and be hopeful.

Verse 3a

Let us Zoom through the night
Not through the streets but through
wifi
Search your soul and self reflect
Don't spend long on past regret
Dream the dreams that you can get
It feels so right

Verse 3b

I see the flame in your eyes
Behind the screen I can see your smile
Yeh we got a lot of say
All the cards we had to play
You'll be singing this one day
And you won't be...

Chorus

We been living that lock down life
We been living that lock down life

How pop songs are often structured

- **Chorus** – the chorus has a general sense of the theme and a ‘hooky’, catchy musical and lyrical ideas. It’s memorable and gives the listener the overall meaning of the song. It’s often more lively, sometimes higher in pitch and ‘hooks’ into your brain so that you might remember this part of the song first after only a few listens. In the *song Lockdown Life*, the chorus is just that, **Lockdown Life**. It is what the song is about, and it gives you the title.
- **Verse** – verses usually develop the main theme, perhaps by telling a story on the theme, or bringing out more detail. It usually comes between choruses, which are repeated in between each verse. It can be lower in pitch in order to give energy and rise to the musical feeling when you sing the next chorus. In the *song Lockdown Life* the verses say more about how someone in lockdown might be feeling and how they manage to find a positive, hopeful outlook, just like Zak does in his story.
- **Middle 8** – this is a short section that some modern pop songs have. It’s called the Middle 8, because it’s often 8 measures, or bars’ long (8 x count of 4). It can add a different aspect, or reflection lyrically, and sounds different to the main verses and chorus. It can be an instrumental section, a rap, or a contrasting musical and lyrical idea. It usually gives the listener a moment to reflect on the different aspect of the (a) song, before the return ‘home’ to the chorus, which by then is familiar and singable.

2a and b Meet the team of song writers

Film 1 Meet the Artists

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xHiWiW9O42w>

As a whole group: What qualities may have helped the artists work as a team?

In pairs, or small groups: discuss your thoughts about the film. Here are some questions to guide your discussion:

1. What surprised you about the film?
2. What inspired you?
3. What skills and qualities do you think the team needed to write the song together?
4. What challenges did they face?
5. How did they overcome these?

2c Improvisation

Film 2 Improvising

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QhGigzKNjUI>

- What was the phrase, or idea Amina created to improvise to?
- Think about the quality of the musical mood. Was it lively and upbeat, or slow and soulful, or something else?
- Would you like to have a go and making up a tune to some phrases, on the spot?
- You could even have a sung conversation with a partner!



Unit 2: Module 3a Zak's Story

Film 3 Zak's Story For this song writing activity, we're going to focus on Zak's Story for inspiration. Watch and listen to this 9-minute story then discuss the questions below.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxuv_-4DzhU

Discuss, like you did when you met the Artists. Here are some questions to guide you:

- What happened to him?
 - How did he feel through the story?
 - Make your own notes if you like.
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3b Extended Vocabulary

Some NEEDS we all have...

Respect, understanding, fun, communication, trust, order, appreciation, cooperation, honesty, support, creativity, inspiration, learning, belonging, acceptance, compassion, freedom, safety, play, variety, imagination, collaboration, reassurance, adventure....

Some FEELINGS we all have sometimes...

When needs are NOT met: angry, sad, fear, unsure, surprised, hurt, confused, upset, tired, fed-up, bored, disappointed....

When needs ARE met: calm, friendly, interested, positive, motivated, confident, trusting, involved, happy, energized, generous...



3b Extended Vocabulary continued... Metaphors and Similes

Metaphors

Rise like a phoenix... classical mythology, a phoenix rising from the ashes as a symbol of rebirth and eternal life

All the world is a stage... taken from a Shakespeare's play ***As You Like It***, meaning we all have our part to play in this life.

My sky is torn ... from a Natalie Imbruglia song ***Torn***, meaning that she feels devastated about something that has happened.

Similes

As brave as a lion....

As cold as ice...

As sweet as honey...

As lonely as a cloud...

3c Example list of ideas

Based on Zak's story, go back to the questions in 3a and collect some of the ideas you've been discussing, on a white board or flip chart.

For example, in the writing process of *Lockdown Life*, the first ideas looked like this:

"Lockdown in the spring going into summer...

Why not in the winter when it's cold for us.

Even just a small hi, makes my days just go by that much smoother

Oh, you got me mesmerise - I see a lot in, in your eyes

You've made me smile so many times, now it's time for me to help you shine.

Needing things to be alright, take the year and make it mine

Behind the mask still see your eyes, can't see your face but I know your smile

Welcome to the city. Where the art flows, and night falls."

Module 4a Refined words and phrases and beginning of song structure

Here's an example based on the previous list from early workings of *Lockdown Life*

Verse 1

You've made me smile so many times,
Now it's time for me to help you shine.
Needing things to be alright,
Take the year and make it mine,
So that we can be alright!

Pre-chorus

you got me mesmerise - I see a lot in your eyes
you've come this far so make it right - don't be afraid to show, show it out

Chorus

Nothing can hold us back
Like a phoenix we will rise
We will surely rise
And save many lives

4b Finding the rhythm

Watch **film 4 Finding the rhythm** on
Youtube Link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4C8-EoWMaU>

Now work as a group to chant your
emerging lyrics to a steady beat. You
may even begin to hear a tune at
the same time!

4c Compiling and shaping lyrics

Watch **film 5 Compiling and Shaping Lyrics** on Youtube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_afMpMY-kw

Observe how the artists discuss the structure of their song

Revise the role of a verse, chorus and Middle 8 in a pop song (Unit 1c page 5)

- Decide your chorus lyrics, which will probably give you your title
- Decide the verse lyrics, aiming to balance the length of each verse
- Keep all unused text for now, in case you find a Middle 8 section to add

You can work to give small groups one of these jobs each, or work all together, possibly using a voting system to agree final decisions on each lyric!

Module 5a
Choosing or
creating the
music
Using a backing
track or creating
your own music

Backing Track of *Lockdown Life*

Listen to the given Backing Track in the Artist Approach folder and decide:

- Does it 'feel' like the music for your lyrics?
- When you listen while reading your words, do you begin to get ideas about how your song goes?
- Watch the short film of the artists

NB – You don't have to use a backing track. You can create your own accompaniment.

5b Find the melody, or tune for your song

Watch Film 6 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwGjz5DX8Bw>

Now, try to find a melody, or tune for your chorus in the following ways:

1. As a group, chant the lyrics of the chorus line by line, adding a note, or a tune, without a backing track.
2. Invite individuals to improvise a tune one or two phrase at a time.
3. Record the process. As a whole group repeat back any idea's you like.
4. Repeat the process until you're happy with the tune. (It can be edited further later)

Now repeat the process for the verses. Each verse should have the same melody, but different words.

For your first collaboration, we recommend no more than 2 verses.

6a Arranging for performance

This is where you decide who will sing the verses, the Chorus, the middle 8.

1. You might have soloists who'd enjoy singing a line or two, or a verse on their own.
2. You might have a large group who could work in smaller groups to sing the verses
3. Usually, the chorus is effectively communicated with everyone singing together.
4. There maybe a few lines that can overlap like in the original song, ***Lockdown Life***
5. You might like to add some body beats, and claps, chest slaps, finger clicks, or stamps.

6c Polishing your song performance

Before you perform your song for an audience, or event, make some final decisions and check the following:

- Does everyone know what they are singing really well, so that nerves don't get in the way of success?
- Do you have movements, or simple choreography to practice as well as the song?
- Do you have a space and time to run through in the place you are planning to sing your song?
- Have you thought about recording / filming your performance for later reflection, evaluation, learning and celebration?
- Our young artists have put together a short warm up in preparation for singing. Here is the link **Film 7 Singing Warm Up** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vYlnGhZ8JHE>



Well done!

We hope you enjoyed writing a song collaboratively, as much as we did. We encourage you to keep writing... and thanks for spending time with us.



Thank you to Arts Council England for funding

Artist Approach

We hope readers will enjoy creating with this resource pack.

Lockdown Life BSL signed

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCNvRg4VLn8>



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