

College Composition and English IV
**“Hello, Turn Your Radio On. Is There Anybody Out There? Help Me Sing My Song”:
Music, Invention, and Storytelling.**

Adapted from a teaching demonstration by Josh Call, Ph.D., Grand View University

Music shapes students’ identity growth. It provides language and metaphors with which students make sense of their experience and leads to outstanding writing...songs can help students create and understand their personalities and personae. They provide titles, questions, and central metaphors for introspection, presentation, and discussion. –Brock Dethier, from *Dylan to Donne: Bridging English*

Rationale: As we ponder the first unit question, “Who Am I,” I thought about Josh Call’s invention assignment. Josh writes, “My difficulty has been finding invention exercises that are both useful and engaging in ways that ultimately benefit the writing my students do.” Like Dr. Call, I wanted you to find a way to “get at” your best writing but also to “get at” answering that question, “who am I?” I believe music can define us all and through music we do find a way to express ourselves. So, through your “Life Soundtrack,” I hope you begin to answer this vitally important question.

Step 1: Listen to U2’s “Sometimes You Can’t Make it On Your Own.” Mrs. English shares Life Soundtrack and why she chose this song.

Step 2: Please think of a list of ten songs that may represent your life. These songs should matter to you in some capacity. You should feel some connection to the songs for whatever reasons, and you should be willing to explain or articulate that connection. From the list of ten songs, bring **ONE** chosen song and its lyrics (along with the list of the other nine songs) to class.

Step 3: We’ll take fifteen minutes to write about our choices and why they matter to us. This is similar to free writing. I call this “Brain Dumping.” I will use my song choices as a means to model or demonstrate how I would like you to use your small group time. As we meet in small groups and peers ask questions about our choices and the writing we did, please keep track of what your small group members said. This will help you continue writing your essays. You should each ask at least one question of each other.

Step 4: Please consider what kind of essays you could write out of this “Life Soundtrack.” Many of you will probably write a narrative essay. You can write about the one song or any of the other songs on your list or a combination of them. The songs should spark some memories or feelings worth writing about.

Questions to think about: How does this activity with music help you with ‘form’ in essay writing? With ‘content’ in essay writing? How does this help you frame your content? How does this help you think about your audience? Who is your audience?