

LESSONS IN SOUND & POETRY

AUTHOR

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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

This lesson introduces students to the art of listening to their surroundings. The series of readings and activities can serve as a springboard to introduce imagery in writing, to introduce poetry, to introduce the concept of geography through mapping sound instead of boundaries or this lesson can be used to emphasize place based learning (which is my intent as a teacher). Place based learning starts with students connecting with the spaces that they are community members in but ultimately, place based learners also become global learners. In educating students about their personal and community history, they develop an educational foundation and confidence to also explore and accept the place based space of other learners throughout the world.

Over the years in teaching and traveling much of my data and experience gathering have fit into my Spanish classes. Although, I also teach writing and reading most of my travel academics easily fit into the foreign language classroom. Once in awhile on a trip, I would feel motivated to include academic reflections into writing activities or classroom discussions. In thinking about my activity and goals to excite students about Turkey, it all revolved around sound and writing- even from the start. Here is a short excerpt from my application essay before the trip: “The air settles around me. It smells fresh and wet and heavy at the same time; a wave of strong coffee hits my senses. My ears hear languages being spoken. Is that Arabic? Turkish? Greek? How many languages are being spoken in the open street? Dusk settles and I hear the Call to Evening Prayer. A soothing voice comes over the speaker system and his words echo across the sky.” These short introduction sentences were already on my lips and finger tips prior to my acceptance into the TCF program. I was already thinking about the importance of sound prior to this trip.

The reason for my fascination with sound in the classroom stems from the lack of diversity in sound. Often times, the only sound that a student can learn from is the lecture voice of a teacher or once in awhile a YouTube video or film. Students are often expected to infer lecture information in the form of functionary notes that lead to some great test grades or not so great dependant on the student. However, I am interested in the notion of using sound to teach about culture and place. I would define sound in the classroom as any noise that is not regurgitated from the teacher. With this lesson, I want students to use their minds to decipher and decode cultural understandings. I think this is the easy part of the lesson. The hard part? The most difficult task of this lesson will be to not only support student understanding of geographic sound and literature but through their understandings, students should develop a greater appreciation of their own communities and come to the end result that underneath it all... we are all not that different.

I have a strong inkling that this lesson is not just a drop in a slot machine for the allotted time for success. It could be, but as I have been revising this lesson and reflecting on my experience in Turkey, I know that this lesson can be developed more not only for the Language Arts classroom but for the Foreign Language classroom, the Social Science classroom, the Art classroom, the Science classroom and dare I say it: the Math classroom. What did it sound like when the Hagia Sophia was being built? Do angles make sounds?

The heart of this lesson comes from two places. The first half of the heart comes from wanting to not just share photos in a Prezi or PowerPoint but the desire to put students as close as possible to the noise and images of Turkey, with particular intention paid to Istanbul. The second half of the heart comes from a corner of my heart where I fell in love with the poets Nazim Hikmet and Orhan Veli Kanik’s writings. I was reading the right books at the right time. Both of these poets can be found in the TCF document of suggested resources for educators. I want my students to be able to write with as much imagery technique and desire for the places that they live. Because ultimately, if they learn to love the places they live, then students will embrace themselves and others. I don’t want to teach tolerance of foreign cultures. I want students to leave my classroom ready to adjust their moral compass to travel and fully immerse their paths

into the beautiful and challenging elements that await outside the bricked walls of academia. I want students to feel the same way that the great poet Richard Hugo described the sound of understanding poetry after taking classes with Theodore Roethke: “a love of the sound of language. His classes were clinics. He performed art therapy on the ear” (28).

In closing, I think what you, the reader, and perhaps what TCF desired in this background is a closer academic examination of my methods. So to fulfill both sides of the coin, I would convey that I examined the University of North Carolina’s coursework page on poetry and sound, with particular attention to an article entitled “Using Sound in the Classroom” that acted as a mentor lesson plan. I also critically read an excerpt from Paula Gunn Allen’s *Off the Reservation* to include an indigenous viewpoint into this lesson and a parallel for students to consider the Kootenai Tribal perspective of place in their community and landscapes. Additionally, I reviewed a book from my graduate work from Shira Woloksy’s *The Art of Poetry*. The classroom space should be a place based community where student creativity is encouraged. One way creativity is encouraged is to develop safe risks in the classroom. I do believe that this lesson is outside the norm for most students and enough so that I hope I can support students as they take a chance in listening to Turkey and Turkish poets so that in turn, students will envision their voices and communities with new imaginations.

LEVEL

This lesson can be adapted for grade levels 7-12 and the content areas of Language Arts and/or Social Sciences.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to respond in discussions and in writing, using personal, literal, interpretative, and evaluative stances, to works of fiction and/or non-fiction. Students will be able to identify and explain the significance of the essential elements of the writer’s craft in given poems and excerpts. Students will be demonstrate an understanding of place through analysis of materials and creating their own constructs of place with writing and sound.

CONNECTIONS TO STANDARDS

Montana has adopted the Common Core and this lesson connects to the following standards: *Reading for Text Complexity* (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10), *Writing Text Types*, (2, 3, 4, 5,6 ,8), *Speaking and Listening* (1-6), and finally *Language Conventions* (1-6). In addition, Montana is a unique place in that the state values IEFA (Indian Education for All) and those Essential Understandings are also integrated into this lesson (Essential Understandings 2 and 6).

TIME

This lesson can be completed in four 90 minute block lessons or in twelve 50 minute period lessons.

MATERIALS

Students will need their Writer’s Notebooks and access to the following resources:

Orhan Pamuk’s *Memories of Istanbul* excerpt (pages 3-8; 121-127)

Orhan Veli Kanik’s “I Listen to Istanbul”

Nazim Hikmet’s “Thinking of You”

Rumi’s “Don’t Try to Steer...”

Turkey and the Turks pdf

*IEFA element Peter Blue Cloud “Hawk Nailed to a Barn Door”

Collection of Turkish spices: Cumin, Red Pepper flakes, Oregano, Mint, Sumac, Paprika, Cinnamon

Vestal’s photos of Istanbul printed out on glossy print paper (15-20 photos for small groups)

Sound clips of the Call to Prayer https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ww9jGeJIK_M

Sound clips of Street Vendors <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2f09JgbZW4>

Sound clips of Istanbul street noises <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ehjfDaCqHqk>

Sound clips from the group *Orient Expressions* “Istanbul” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7YvElpIcCO>

Trip to Troy's Roosevelt Park to read the Kootenai Tribe sign and listen to the Kootenai River (could be substituted with indigenous locale of educator or history element of community)

Download of the free program Audacity

PROCEDURES

Day 1

1. Allow students at least 7 minutes to answer Writer Notebook (WN) question: What is sound?
2. Read Rumi poem:
 "Don't try to steer the boat.
 Don't open shop for yourself. Listen. Keep silent.
 You are not God's mouthpiece. Try to be an ear,
 And if you do speak, ask for explanations."
3. Briefly discuss the theme behind the poem with students and remind students that this job of listening will be an important one over the next weeks and yes probably their lifetimes.
4. Then ask students to list the different sounds that they hear throughout their day. Students can pair share and ask each pair to come up with signifier for sounds. What is their cultural relevance?
5. Play a list of 5-8 sounds and have students write a response to them. These sounds can be place based. For example, in Troy, I would choose a train, a river, a riff from a local hip hop musician, etc. Students can write about what they imagine when they hear these sounds or what they feel or perhaps they will be inspired to think of the sounds as a film sound track. What type of film does the sound conjure up? Who does the sound make you think of?
6. Utilize a program called Sounds of Troy (recorded 4 years ago) to have students listen to past "sounds" of Troy students. This can be found on my Soundcloud site at:
<https://soundcloud.com/nia-vestal/troy-sounds-1>
7. For the next class, each student needs to bring in a sound or be ready to appropriately "show" the class a sound.

Day 2

1. Allow students at least 7 minutes to answer Writer Notebook (WN) question: Describe a sound that you love.
2. Read Hikmet poem:
Thinking of you is pretty, hopeful,
It is like listening to the most beautiful song
From the most beautiful voice on earth...
But hope is not enough for me any more,
I don't want to listen to songs any more,
I want to sing."
3. Remind students that again they are discovering the art of listening but soon, like Hikmet, they will also have a voice and begin to use sounds to write. Ask students to share their sounds.
4. After sharing sounds, work with students to develop a working definition of sound. Ask students why sound would be important in poetry?
5. Read Peter Blue Cloud's poem "Hawk Nailed to a Barn Door" as class and students will analyze using attention to five senses. Additionally this would be a place to introduce figurative language so that students can use terms in discussion later (ie simile, metaphor, personification, tone).
6. Ask students to take a line from the poem for a walk in their journal. This means choosing a favorite line or a line that popped out from the poem and utilizing it as a lead in. Have students share their writings before the end of class.

Day 3

1. Allow students at least 7 minutes to answer Writer Notebook (WN) question: What is a sound that you'd like to hear?
2. Revisit working definition of sound. Ask students if yawns sound the same. Discuss differences and similarities. Do these exist in other states? Other countries?
3. Hand out a blank map of Turkey but have large world map on Smart Board or use a globe to show context of Turkey. Explain where Istanbul is and ask students to write their reactions to various sounds on the blank map of Turkey. Remind students that they just completed this activity with the sounds from Troy earlier. Invite students to fill the map up with their thoughts and reactions and questions. Use the sound clip links found in the sources for students; students may need to hear clips more than once. I would advise not showing the visual images yet.
4. Next, break students into small groups. Give each group photos of Istanbul to look at. These should be glossy photos because the end product makes it real for students. Ask students to continue writing their observations and sharing their observations.
5. Give each group a set of spices unlabeled and ask students to record their observations again.
6. Each group will then receive a short excerpt of Orhan Veli Kanik's poem. Ask each group to read the poem and write down observations, annotate figurative language or words that they may not know. Ask each group to find similarities between the poem and the sound clips that they listened to.

Day 4

1. Allow students at least 7 minutes to answer Writer Notebook (WN) question: What did you hear today?
2. Briefly review literary devices with students. Read excerpt from Pamuk 3-8 and discuss what effect sounds can have on where you grow up.
3. Pass out "I Hear Istanbul" to class and read out loud.
4. Now show some of the sound clips with visual images. Ask students to return to their maps for observations and write down anything new or cross out anything that doesn't seem to match.
5. Students will then return to their small groups with their maps and poems. Ask students to work as a group to complete the following: find figurative language, identify similarities between poem and sounds, identify differences between sounds and poem, and finally ask students what can they infer about Istanbul based on the poem, the visuals and sound. Student groups should record their answers.
6. For a more scripted base, teachers can also use Turkey and the Turks lesson on "I Hear Istanbul." The lesson in the book contains a graphic organizer which may help developing students and/or teachers.

Day 5

1. Allow students at least 7 minutes to answer Writer Notebook (WN) question: Throughout the year, what noises do you hear in Troy?
2. Begin in small groups and revisit answers from group work. Ask each student in each small group to answer one of the group tasks and present to the larger group. Allow students five to seven minutes of preparation.
3. Students will return to their seats to work alone using "I Hear Istanbul" as a mentor text. Students will begin to write their own poems about Troy. Before writing, ask students to refer to their journal entries for ideas.
4. The rest of the period will be used for workshop writing and the teacher will check in with each student to help with writing progression.

Day 6

Writing Marathon at Roosevelt Park near Kootenai River

A writing marathon involves taking a group of students to a specific location and writing for set amount of times in small groups. Students choose the amount of time but I suggest to do some short writes and some longer writes. After each time cycle is up, students share their work without any commentary or disclaimer. They simply read what is in their notebook. Writing Marathons can be open or directed. This marathon will focus on sound of course, and focus on what sounds the Kootenai Tribe may have heard when they first came through this valley to hunt. This process of writing marathons is adopted from the New Orleans Writing Project.

Day 7

1. Begin with sharing excerpts with the larger group from the Writing Marathon.
2. Ask students to then return to their mentor write poem "I Hear Troy" and students will spend time using their notes from yesterday to make revisions. At this point, students will produce final revisions in which another student and the instructor should read and revise. Final versions of this poem will be collected at the unit's end.
3. Students will return to their small group to share their progress of their poem.
4. Students will then decide on a particular location in Troy to record at least 30 seconds of noise for a group collaboration poem (ie football or soccer field, cafeteria, the market, the bank, the church, the hallways). Student groups need to propose their choice to the instructor for approval and nominate an individual to record.

Day 8-9

1. Students will work collaboratively to listen and write a group poem with the same mentor text.
2. Groups will first listen to their recording. Listen again and take notes on observations. Students will share with group members. Groups will then begin to craft their structure. The instructor can suggest several writing processes (individual and then bring together, facilitator writer, partners and then bring together).
3. Group will create a final product and read out loud to instructor. When group is ready, they will record their voices on Audacity and then add in sounds to the poem (lots of space for creativity here).

Day 10-11

1. Workshop Revision students revisit their individual poem. Students will finalize edits and publish. Additionally, students will be paired with a peer editor in which the team will complete the following tasks:
 - Writer reads work out loud and makes any needed revisions.
 - Reader gives positive and constructive feedback verbally.
 - Both writers exchange papers and will evaluate each other's poem with a written summary, ask students to revisit Veli's work before analyzing their classmate's poem: What did the writer do well? Did the writer use any figurative language? How does the writer use sound in the poem? What suggestions do you have for the writer?
2. Student writers will publish their summaries and give to the writer upon completion.

Day 12-13

1. Self-Evaluation and begin class with reading Pamuk excerpt 121- 127 and discuss the importance of education in deciphering sounds.
2. Students will write a reflection about the process of listening to sound over the past few weeks. Brainstorm on the board all the activities and conversation from the last two weeks. Ask students to think about noises that are similar and noises that are different over the last weeks. Ask students to

- also consider sounds that they should hear that they don't (ie the sound of a working mine, or the sound of the felling of a tree from a family logging outfit).
3. Each student will share an excerpt from their Notebook or from a polished piece (just a sentence at the very least).
 4. Students will spend the rest of the class time writing a reflection about the concept of using sound to learn and how it has changed or not changed their learning scopes.

ASSESSMENT

Students will track their observations through the use of their Writer's Notebooks.

Students will create a written piece of narrative text to encapsulate their observations of place.

Students will create a peer analysis of another student's text narrative to demonstrate evaluation skills and reflective re-vision.

Students will create a group audio poem text and collaborate to use sound and text.

Students will write a reflection analysis about the creative process and if sound does encourage new frameworks for viewing the individual, society and culture.

EXTENSION IDEAS

1. Discussion of the sound of prayer in culture
2. Discussion of the role sounds play in society, institutions and personal lives. Students record an example for each and write a reflection.
3. Use of this lesson to promote further exploration in other cities such as Amman, Dubai, Paris, Madrid where students explore other geographic locations through sound and poetry (perhaps places of potential travel)
4. Use of activity recording sounds to promote year round observations of seasonal change and institutional change within the school.
5. Use of sound recording and ask students to record the reflection of other's in community after hearing sounds. For instance, play the call to prayer for a community member and have students interview community member about their reaction to the sound. These results can be published on the Face book page "Humans of Troy, Montana" (yes this does really exist)
6. Continued poetry unit on Nazim Hikmet with sharing my poem reflection "On Seeing a Stork in Bursa" with students. This poem could further be used with the notion of place based learning and sound. Students would pick a significant landmark or geographic point to use as a focal point for writing enticements or capitalize on interacting with a historic event and analyzing voice to write a history viewed poem such as Hikmet's *Human Landscape* examples.
7. Work with students to produce and coordinate another Sounds of Troy segment using Audacity.

SOURCES

Allen, Paula Gunn. *Off the Reservation: Reflections on Boundary-Busting, Border-Crossing and Loose-Canons*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1999. Electronic.

Calkins, Lucy. *The Art of Teaching Writing*. First Ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc, 1986. Print.

Hugo, Richard. *The Triggering Town*. New York: WW Norton and Company, 1979. Print.

University of North Carolina's "Using Sound in the Classroom"

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/5524?ref=search>

Woloksy, Shira. *The Art of Poetry: How to Read a Poem*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.

HANDOUTS

Most copies of print material are included with the exception of Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul: Memories and the City*. This source will have to be purchased or copied. I would also suggest that teachers write a sample text for students to understand the writing prompts:

I am listening to Istanbul, intent, my eyes closed;
At first there blows a gentle breeze
And the leaves on the trees
Softly flutter or sway;
Out there, far away,
The bells of water carriers incessantly ring;
I am listening to Istanbul, intent, my eyes closed.

I am listening to Istanbul, intent, my eyes closed;
Then suddenly birds fly by,
Flocks of birds, high up, in a hue and cry
While nets are drawn in the fishing grounds
And a woman's feet begin to dabble in the water.
I am listening to Istanbul, intent, my eyes closed.

I am listening to Istanbul, intent, my eyes closed.
The Grand Bazaar is serene and cool,
A hubbub at the hub of the market,
Mosque yards are brimful of pigeons,
At the docks while hammers bang and clang
Spring winds bear the smell of sweat;
I am listening to Istanbul, intent, my eyes closed.

I am listening to Istanbul, intent, my eyes closed;
Still giddy since bygone bacchanals,
A seaside mansion with dingy boathouses is fast asleep,
Amid the din and drone of southern winds, reposed,
I am listening to Istanbul, intent, my eyes closed.

I am listening to Istanbul, intent, my eyes closed.
Now a dainty girl walks by on the sidewalk:
Cusswords, tunes and songs, malapert remarks;
Something falls on the ground out of her hand,
It's a rose I guess.
I am listening to Istanbul, intent, my eyes closed.

I am listening to Istanbul, intent, my eyes closed;
A bird flutters round your skirt;
I know your brow is moist with sweat
And your lips are wet.
A silver moon rises beyond the pine trees:
I can sense it all in your heart's throbbing.
I am listening to Istanbul, intent, my eyes closed.

-Orhan Veli Kanik

Sample for Mentor Text

I am listening to Troy, intent, my eyes closed;
The cedars whisper winds on their tips above Ross Creek
My boots thump and stomp with dust up and up the mountain and then
 down to meet the falls
Osita's tags jingle while she pants to wag her tail
I hear you in the silence of Grambauer Peak
Before the 56 junction- Libby or Spokane- you make a sound to let me know you are there

I am listening to Troy, intently
until gently I open my ears and awaken to the Pacific Railroad and the rolling of tires over
 Roosevelt bridge
Chickadees remind me of the fall harvesting yet to come
Or Palmer's voice lurks in the football fed moist air
Soon the Hot Club's music will be muffled like a scarf against your mouth, icicle forming on window lips
Or chainsaw throttles hot and engines that can't quite turn over, swearing early with hunter's orange

Then intently I still hear you floating on a sea of teenage whirling waves with gadgets and gossip
Playground echoes swing into the almost frigid air
Or the buzzer just after three seconds of getting that last shot off
Pond frozen and breathing with creaks, the river barely there
Or boots sliding or crunching in the white
The sun whispers, "Where are you?"
I call back, "I don't know, it is still February and I can't see you."
But Troy I still hear you.

Even with a blindfold on I hear you.
Because you are here.
The ice clinking in my glass. A guitar filling the house.
Or the sizzle of pork chops on the stove with knives gnashing potatoes and garlic.
I hear you light your cigarette and I always, always listen for you to say, "I love you."

I sit with eyes intent Troy and deep inside of me I will always hear you:
 in the heavy apples dropping from the tree
 in the shattered glass hearts on bar street
 in the deep bark of the dogs on chains
 in the fireworks echoing off the canyon wall
 in the Osprey above on a steel nest
 in screen doors and windows without windows
 in stories of bar room fishes

Even after I leave this place, Troy, you will be like the river in my heart.
Silent, flowing whispers I hear that tell me always you are here.

- Mrs. Vestal