



Lesson Plan- - ESOL -English for Speakers of Other Languages

Teacher: Shirley Burns

Subject area: Reading

Level: ESOL Low Intermediate Level

Lesson Title: Music Lyrics and Reading

Barbara Allen is a lovely English folk ballad that tells the story of unrequited love between Barbara Allen and Sweet Henry. The words are expressive and the phrasing is beautiful. I first heard this ballad performed by Emmy Lou Harris in the song lyrics to the movie *The Song Catcher*. I immediately thought of my ESOL students. Song Lyrics are wonderful tools for figurative language. Recently, I have also started to show the movie *The Song Catcher* as an additional part of the lesson. The movie contains other folk ballads that sing of birth, death, etc.

I usually open the lesson by simply playing the song twice while they follow the simple but beautiful lyrics. Almost immediately, the students begin humming along with the music. Then I hand out the lyrics and we walk thru them line by line learning the story though the figurative language. Other topics for discussion are definition of folk ballad, song's rhyme scheme, idioms, quotation marks, verb tenses, etc. Then I play the song again and they listen without written lyrics and try to capture the words without seeing the words. Once we have the full meaning of the song and all the nuances of the figurative language, the students usually want to hear the song again and again and sing along with the lyrics.

The lyrics are easy to find on the internet. I recommend Emmylou Harris's version or any similar version where the words are sung in a clear voice.