

Pirkei Avot to Pop Song

A curriculum appropriate for grades 5 – 12

Challenge: Transform timeless wisdom of *mishnayot* into contemporary popular songs.

Site to visit for finished products:

<http://pirkeiavotpopsong.blogspot.com>

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The RAVSAK Journal



הילד לעוון

HaYidion

קיץ תשס"ח • Summer 2008

The

ARTS

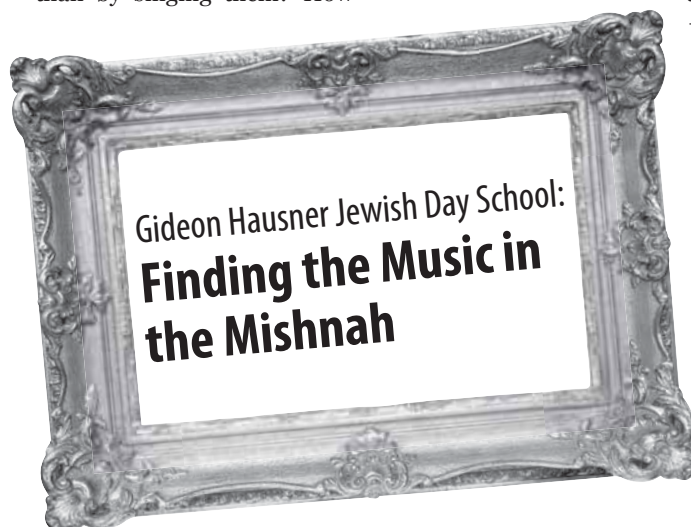
in

Jewish
Education

Mishnah was made to be sung. Well, if not sung, then certainly repeated (coming from the root *shannah*). How better to get our students to repeat—and through repetition, remember—the mishnayot of Pirkei Avot than by singing them? How

students and the enchanting power of music to transform ancient texts to modern meaning-making hits.

Every Monday, during their scheduled Jewish Studies period, our 7th graders set aside their weekly work to focus on this project. With two teachers in the classroom, students begin the year with an introduction to the text based on a Pirkei Avot textbook by Rabbi Henry Schreibman; spend several sessions working in chevru-
ta translating and analyzing selected mishnayot, with a focus on mak-



better to get our students to sing sections of Pirkei Avot than by having them write the songs and the music? Can't hear it in your mind's ear? Point your web browser to www.hausner.com/avot for audio examples of what Gideon Hausner Jewish Day School has called our "Pirkei Avot to Pop Song Project." (Note: Listen to these audio samples on a computer with good speakers for full effect.)

ing text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections; listening to and discussing successful elements of classic American folk, R&B, and rock & roll songs; listening to and discussing successful elements of modern Jewish songs composed with traditional texts at their heart; and finally, in pairs, writing songs in English inspired by a mishnah of their choosing from Pirkei Avot. To receive full credit for their written lyrics, students must meet two criteria. (1) The song must be clearly related to the chosen mishnah text: there must be either an obvious or cleverly concealed text-to-text, text-to-self, or text-to-world connection between the lyrics and the mishnah; and (2) Hebrew from the Mishnah must be included in the song and must fit the rhyme scheme. We energetically discourage students from writing rap lyrics, a challenge that often stymies groups at the start but yields rich final products that stretch students beyond their ken of comfort.

Three years ago Hausner was fortunate to bring on Rabbi Josh Zweiback (from Congregation Beth Am in Los Altos, California) as a part-time faculty member. Josh, along with his prodigious talents as a teacher and pulpit rabbi, is a professional musician, a member of the well known Jewish music band Mah Tovv. Upon joining the faculty he shared with us his past experiences of writing modern Jewish songs based on traditional texts during summer camp sessions with older campers. With his help we designed a Pirkei Avot curriculum that culminates in student-written and -performed songs, professionally produced in-house and distributed through CD and web portals, dramatically demonstrating both the enduring understandings of our 7th grade

Following the completion of several student drafts of each song, reviewed and edited by Rabbi Zweiback and a writing teacher, three to five (of the approximately eighteen) songs are chosen to be taken to stage two in which instrumentation is added. For some songs, students

provide their own music and instrumentation; for others, Rabbi Zweiback provides music and instrumentation. For our three strongest pieces we employ the talents of Gordon Lustig, a professional musician in Los Angeles (and musical associate of Rabbi Zweiback). Sent the lyrics and digitally recorded tracks of students singing their songs, sans instruments, as they imagine it performed, Gordon works his magic for several weeks, returning to us digital files of multi-instrument orchestrations that require us only to lay down the vocal track to complete the piece.



With a few simple tools we purchased several years ago, Hausner has created the ability to set up a mobile recording studio in any classroom. We begin with a Mac laptop, an inexpensive but

professional-grade microphone, headphones, Digidesign's Mbox (to translate analog to digital sound), and software including Garage Band and Pro Tools. Setting up the recording station in a variety of rooms (depending on availability and proper acoustics), we first record individual students singing several lyrics, then small groups for sections of harmony, and finally entire classes for "We Are The World" big chorus effects.

Students think the work is done now, but teachers know the heart of success is in the editing process. We are fortunate to have Rabbi Zweiback spend many hours mixing, smoothing, remixing, and re-smoothing the tracks until we are left with three to five songs to be played with great fanfare before all our students and parents.

Date 9/17/07 Name 7A 7B 7C

Pirkei Avot 5:11

there are four different kinds of personalities or dispositions:

Quick to anger and quick to forgive - His reward is cancelled out by his loss.

difficult to anger and difficult to forgive - His loss is cancelled out by his reward.

difficult to anger and quick to forgive = pious.

quick to anger and difficult to forgive = evil

ארבע מדות בדעות:
 נוח לכעוס ונוח לרצות - יצא שכרו בהפסדו.
 קשה לכעוס וקשה לרצות - יצא הפסדו בשכרו.
 קשה לכעוס ונוח לרצות - חסיד.
 נוח לכעוס וקשה לרצות - רשע.

Questions: Why does the mishna only talk about anger and forgiveness and not other aspects of personality? What if a person is quick to anger and easy to forgive, but is still a nice person, is he considered evil? What if a person is slow to anger but quick to forgive, but is not a nice person, or has other bad personality traits, is he still considered pious?	Topics & Images: Topics - anger, forgiveness, good person, bad person, personality, images equal ✓ A child that has promised not to eat treats, so throws a tantrum. A kindergarten teacher who, no matter what chaos potential. A fight between me and my siblings where we fight, and then a second later we are best friends again. Mathematical graph, balancing on a scale.	Connections (T-S, T-T, T-W): T-S - A lot of times we and my siblings fight, and sometimes we fight even after a second later, but sometimes we stay mad at each other. T-T - In the Torah it continually states that we forgive us easily and usually doesn't get angry. T-W - In wars a lot of times they start because of old feuds and so on, and usually it is very hard to fix the hands they hold.
Interpretation(s): This Mishna shows the different kind of people. This Mishna might tell us to rethink our personalities and become the person we want to be.	Structure: There is a word in the beginning then the first word of the next sentence is the first word of the last sentence, then the first word of the 3rd line is the last of the 5th line, and the first word of the 4th line is the first word in the 6th line.	

To facilitate sharing the work of our students with a broader community, we created a website with audio samples and explanations. We hope in the future to add a component of video production to the project as well. A song like "Action Every Day" (based on Pirkei Avot 1:15), with its call to conscience on the subject of Darfur, is ready-made for a video to be shared on YouTube.

With the success of this project and the audio recording equipment on hand, Hausner staff members have recently reached into the realm of podcast production as well. To hear some of our work in this area, point your browser to www.hausner.com/podcasts. Both the Pirkei Avot songs and student centered podcasts allow us to share the ongoing work of our students with our entire school community, with our local Jewish community, and hopefully soon with the wide world beyond our state and country.

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Step 1: Introduction

Duration: 1 class period

Teacher can utilize introduction pages provided below or their own resources to help place *Pirkei Avot* in the Jewish literature cannon in the minds of students.

The introduction below is taken from a still-in-development *Pirkei Avot* text-book by Rabbi Henry Schreibman.



Pirkei Avot: An Introduction

What is it?

Avot or *Pirkei Avot* (*Fathers* or *Chapters of the Fathers*) is a small powerful tractate (section of *Mishnah*). It is basically a collection of short and thought provoking wisdom phrases or aphorisms of the Rabbis.

Who wrote it?

Approximately 144 Rabbis are quoted and referred to in *Pirkei Avot*. We do not know if each Rabbi “wrote” the section attributed to him, since these pieces of wisdom were passed down orally and memorized for many generations before they were written down. There are approximately 119 pieces of wisdom presented in *Pirkei Avot* and they were collected orally from the earliest Rabbis (around 300 B.C.E.) until the Talmud was edited and finalized as a document (around 200 C.E.).

Where is Pirkei Avot found in Jewish literature?

Pirkei Avot is found in the *Mishnah*. *Mishnayot* (plural of *mishnah*) are quotes and secondary teachings built off of the *Torah*, *Nevi'im*, and *Ketuvim*. They are comments and questions posed by the early generations of Rabbis. *Mishnayot* are the foundation upon which the *Talmud* is built.

Where is Pirkei Avot in the Mishnah?

Pirkei Avot is found in *Nezikim*, the 4th Order of the *Mishnah*. It is the 9th tractate within the Order *Nezikim*. In chapters 1 – 4 the Rabbis followed good academic form by quoting and giving credit to the teacher of the piece of wisdom. Chapter 5 is unique because the wisdom is all anonymous. Chapter 6 appears to be quite different from the earlier chapters and most scholars agree it was added to the text later. It is called a *Baraita* – a piece of literature that did not make it into the original, but was added for important commentary.

How was Pirkei Avot taught before it was written down?

The early Rabbis seemed to believe that “less is more.” For several hundred years most of what they taught stayed in oral form. What they taught needed to be memorized by each student if the ideas were going to live on through history. “Keeping it short,” was one

method the Rabbis utilized to help students memorize the many sayings. But there were other devices the Rabbis used, including:

Mnemonics – The Rabbis loved to use words that sounded alike or rhymed. They also used words that sounded like the ideas they were speaking about (onomatopoetic).

Gematria – The Rabbis used *Gematria* – the Aramaic transliteration of the Greek word for Geometry – to help students memorize. All ancient cultures (as well as *Tanach* literature) used numbers for emphasis and ease of memorizing. Three, seven, ten, and twelve are all among the most ancient and powerful numbers. Each carries its own symbolism and imagery.

Lists in groups of three and seven were prized by Greek philosophers for their ease in memorizing. The Rabbis even worked to carefully compose the number of words per line so that a list of three lines might contain three words in each line. With this assistance, the best students could memorize thousands of direct quotations of the Rabbis, easily mastering the entire *Avot* section of *Mishnah*.

Visualization – Sometimes the Rabbis teach with images and metaphors that model positive conduct and behavior. They use observations and humorous ideas from their own lives – including images of animals, work life, and Roman soldiers – to help the student connect with the wisdom.

Negative Imagery – Sometimes the Rabbis teach using images that are threatening and negative. Greek and Roman scientists believed it was sometimes easier to describe a difficult idea or observation by describing “what it is not”. As the Rabbis made attempts to share the importance of doing the right thing, they sometimes chose to show the wrong action and its consequence.

What was happening to the Jewish people when the Rabbis began creating these wisdom pieces?

During the period of the creation of *Pirkei Avot*, the land and people of Israel were living under Greek and Roman rule. For the most part the Greeks and Romans were respectful of the religion, culture, and practices of the peoples they conquered. The conquered people were often eager to imitate and integrate aspects of Greco-Roman language, science, culture, and religion into their own lives. Some groups within Israel wanted to be more like the conquerors and others rebelled.

How did being occupied by foreign powers influence their thinking?

Many beliefs and ideas the Jews held as true and sacred were slowly changed during this time period and this change can be seen in sections of *Pirkei Avot*. Here are some to look for:

Reward and Punishment – For hundreds of years the Jewish people understood the ideas from the *Torah* about reward and punishment in a literal way. If in the *Torah* (and the second paragraph of the *Shema*) it says: “Do all these commandments and you will have good crops,” the Jews believed this to be true. This kind of understanding – of an orderly and just world – meant that good people got rewarded for their good deeds and bad people got punished for their evil deeds and words.

But the Greek and Roman occupations were long and painful, and the occupiers did not seem to get punished by God for their evil deeds. At first the hope and prayer of the Jews was for the Greeks and then the Romans to be cursed and punished for their evil actions against the Jewish state. Over the years the occupiers seemed to prosper instead of suffer, and then Jewish hope and prayer shifted. . . toward rewarding the Jewish people in a different way – a reward in the next life, in the World-to-Come. If good people suffer in this world, they will be rewarded in the World-to-Come.

Rabbi – A new kind of leader-teacher was developed during this time: Rabbi. These teachers worked like the rest of the people at simple jobs. Some were rich, most were poor, but they were almost all exceptional teachers and interpreters of *Torah* and *Torah* law. Some of these Rabbis had dealings with the Greeks and later the Romans. Some of these Rabbis were part of the resistance movement. Sometimes they taught out in the open and sometimes they taught in code how to survive (if not overthrow) the Roman occupation.

Free Will – For over 1,500 years the Jewish people seemed to believe in predestination (everything is planned by God; God controls humans and natural events). Under Greek and Roman rule Jews began discussing the idea of free will: each of us has the freedom to choose on our own what we will do and what will happen to us (but God knows what your choices will be). Rabbis were reluctant to let go of the belief in predestination, so many of their sayings touch upon this subject.

Step 2: Text Interpretation

Duration: 1 class period per mishnah

2a: Translation

I believe it is vitally important for students to enter the texts through the Hebrew first. The more they struggle and wrestle with translation, the deeper their understanding of the nuances. Students can work alone, with a *chevrutah* partner, or in small groups. Then we gather as a class to share our differing translations and create an agreed upon group translation that everyone must copy down on the page.

2b: Asking Questions

Before students begin trying to make sense of any text, they should ask questions that are not answered directly by the text. The more questions they ask (and write) the more details they will notice about the text. These questions are shared aloud during class discussion.

2c: Visualization

Students should attempt to put in pictures what they see in their minds as they read and question. Visualizing parts of the text helps us fill in spaces left by the words and spring us into new territory and imaginative trails. Drawing should be a part of any text encounter.

2d: Making Connections

Meaning is made when we connect pieces of information. Students should make as many text-to-text (this line reminds me of a line from another poem or book I read), text-to-self (when I read this I'm reminded of something that happened to me, or something my parents always say to me), and text-to-world (this section reminds me of what's happening in Syria now) connections as they can. These connections lead to possible topics for later song-writing and help deepen the students' personal attachment to the texts. Connections are shared aloud.

2e: Interpretation

Having completed steps 2a through 2e, students can begin to find a meaning that ties the entire text together or shed light on a section of the text that appears, at first glance, to be confusing. I push students to tie every part of the *mishnah* together, even if it appears on first reading that the text is a list of disparate statements. Interpretations are shared aloud.

Date _____

Name _____ 7A / 7B / 7C

Pirkei Avot 1:1

פְּרָקֵי אָבוֹת א:א
 מֹשֶׁה קִבֵּל תּוֹרָה מִסִּינַי
 וּמִסָּרָה לִיהוֹשֻׁעַ
 וִיהוֹשֻׁעַ לזִקְנִים
 וזִקְנִים לנְבִיאִים
 ונְבִיאִים מִסָּרָה לְאַנְשֵׁי כְנֶסֶת הַגְּדוּלָּה.
 הֵם אָמְרוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים:
 הוּוּ מִתּוֹנִים בְּדִין
 וְהֶעֱמִידוּ תַלְמִידִים הֶרְבֵּה
 וַעֲשׂוּ סֵיג לַתּוֹרָה:

<u>Questions:</u>	<u>Topics & Images:</u>	<u>Connections (T-S, T-T, T-W):</u>
<u>Interpretation(s):</u>		<u>Structure:</u>

Date _____

Name _____ 7A / 7B / 7C

Pirkei Avot 1:2

פְּרִקֵי אָבוֹת א:ב

שְׁמַעוֹן הַצַּדִּיק הָיָה מְשִׁיבֵי כְּנָסֶת הַגְּדוּלָּה.

הוא הָיָה אוֹמֵר :

עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד

עַל הַתּוֹרָה

וְעַל הָעֲבוּדָה

וְעַל גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים :

Questions:

Topics & Images:

Connections (T-S, T-T, T-W):

Interpretation(s):

Structure:

Date _____

Name _____ 7A / 7B / 7C

Pirkei Avot 1:6

פִּרְקֵי אָבוֹת א:ו

יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן פְּרִיָּחָה

וְנִתְּאֵי הָאֲרֵבֵּלִי קִבְּלוּ מֵהֶם.

יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן פְּרִיָּחָה אוֹמֵר:

עֲשֵׂה לָךְ רֵב

וְקִנְיָה לָךְ חֵבֵר

וְהוֹיָדוּ אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לְכַף זְכוּת

Questions:

Topics & Images:

Connections (T-S, T-T, T-W):

Interpretation(s):

Structure:

Date _____

Name _____ 7A / 7B / 7C

Pirkei Avot 1:7

פְּרִקֵי אָבוֹת א:ז

נִתְּאִי הָאֲרֵבֶּלִי אוֹמֵר:

הִרְחַק מִשְׁכּוֹן רָע

וְאַל תִּתְחַבֵּר לְרָשָׁע

וְאַל תִּתְנַאֵשׁ מִן הַפּוֹרְעָנוֹת

<u>Questions:</u>	<u>Topics & Images:</u>	<u>Connections (T-S, T-T, T-W):</u>
<u>Interpretation(s):</u>	<u>Structure:</u>	

Date _____

Name Ariella

7A / 7B / 7C

Pirkei Avot 1:1

Moses got the torah from Sinai
and passed it to Joshua
and Joshua to the elders
and the elders to the prophets
the prophets passed it down to
the men of great assembly
they said 3 things
be moderate in judgement
and raised many students
and make a fence for the torah

פְּרָקֵי אֲבוֹת א:א
מֹשֶׁה קִבֵּל תּוֹרָה מִסִּינַי
וּמִסָּרָה לִיהוֹשֻׁעַ
וִיהוֹשֻׁעַ לְזִקְנִים
וְזִקְנִים לְנָבִיאִים
וְנָבִיאִים מִסֵּרוּהָ לְאַנְשֵׁי כְנֶסֶת הַגְּדוֹלָה
הֵם אָמְרוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים:
הוּא מְתוּנִים בְּדִין
וְהֶעֱמִידוּ תַלְמִידִים הֶרְבֵּה
וַעֲשׂוּ סִיג לַתּוֹרָה:

Questions:

Why did he give it to Joshua?
Why did Joshua give to the
elders? Why did the elders
give it to the prophets?
Why did they say 3 things?
Why be moderate in judgement?
Why did the students get raised?
Why make a fence?
What were the students
rising for? Did Joshua
respect the elders? How
old were the old? Why did he
pass it on to so many?

Topics & Images:



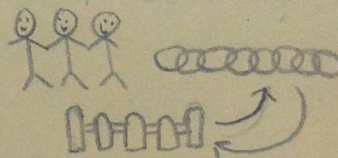
Joshua - humble
- diligent
- wisdom

- spiritually
aware
- laws

Connections (T-S, T-T, T-W):

rising students = being
prepared, school

moderate in judgement
raise many students



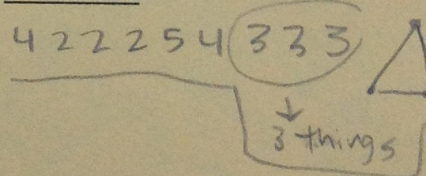
Interpretation(s): people?

What happened to the
to the torah?

How old were the old?

How does a mountain give a torah
Why that order?

Structure:



MOSES → JOSHUA → OLD → PROPHETS - LAW-MAKERS

Pirkei Avot 1:2

פִּרְקֵי אָבוֹת א:ב

Simon the righteous was a survivor of the
great assembly.

שִׁמְעוֹן הַצַּדִּיק הָיָה מְשִׁירֵי כְּנֶסֶת הַגְּדוֹלָה.

הוא היה אומר:

He would say:

On 3 things the world stands

on the torah

and on the work

and on kind deeds:

עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד

על התורה

ועל העבודה

ועל גְּמִילוּת חֶסֶדִים:

Questions:

Why are these 3 things
so important?

Why was Simon a survivor?

Why didn't he mention
other important resources
that we need to survive?
Why in that order?

Did the rest of the members
of the great assembly die?

Topics & Images:



Connections (T-S, T-T, T-W):

camp Newman - Avodah
session (T-S)

Interpretation(s):

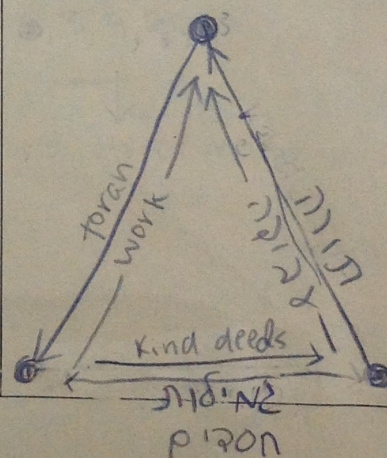
Without torah, work, and kind deeds, the
world would fall apart and god would go
down with it.

(humanity/society depends on these 3
things to strive)

torah, work, kindness = MOST
(in order that we got them?) { IMPORTANT
OF THEM ALL

→ = discipline and kindness

Structure:





Pirkei Avot 1:7

פִּרְקֵי אָבוֹת א:ז

Nittai of Arbel says
distance yourself from a bad neighbor
and don't attach yourself to an evil person
and don't be discouraged from the consequences

נִתַּי הָאֲרֵבֶּלִי אוֹמֵר:

הִרְחַק מִשָּׁכֵן רָע

וְאַל תִּתְחַבֵּר לָרָשָׁע

וְאַל תִּתְיַאֵשׁ מִן הַפּוֹרְעָנוֹת

Song

good-bye best friend, you are not good
you are not good for me

Questions
Topics & Images
Connections
(T-T, T-S, T-W)
Interpretations
Structure

you are aware of the evil ^{not aware} of bad neighbors ^{people}

don't talk to strangers
and if you do, don't be
upset about the consequences

don't associate
yourself with bad
people, and don't be
sad about consequences
that you deserve.

why is it
a neighbor?
why neighbor that
vs. person?

Do evil plants
and animals count?

talk to stranger

feel upset from consequences

bad thing happens

neighbor, someone close
to you like
friends and family

Harry Potter

he is associated
with Voldemort (evil)
and people he
cares about die
because of that

if you obey all
the rules, you miss
all the fun

don't is said 3 times.

Date 10/12/14

Name Ian

7A / 7B / 7C

Pirkei Avot 2:7

He saw a skull -
one that floated on the
surface of the water -
and told her:

Because you drowned
someone - you were drowned

And in the end those
who you drowned
you will be drowned

פְּרִקֵי אָבוֹת ב:ז

אָף הוּא רָאָה גִלְגֻלֶת

אַחַת שְׂצָפָה עַל פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם

אָמַר לָהּ

עַל דְּאַטְפַּת אֶטְפוּךְ

וְסוֹף מְטִיפִיךְ יְטוּפוֹן

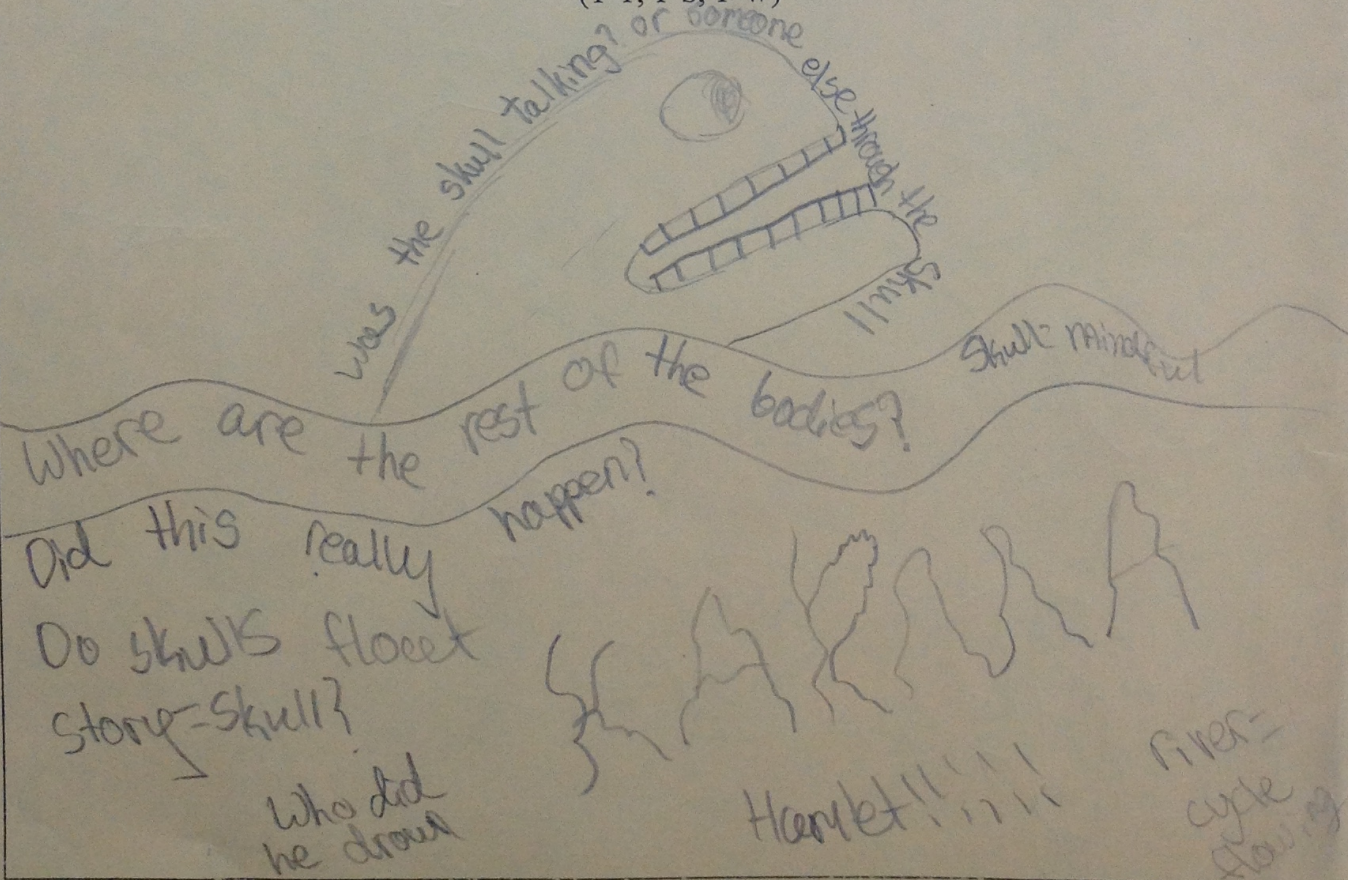
Questions

Topics & Images

Connections
(T-T, T-S, T-W)

Interpretations

Structure



Pirkei Avot 5:11

there are Four different kinds of personalities
or dispositions:
Quick to anger and quick to forgive -
His reward is cancelled out by his loss.
difficult to anger and difficult to forgive -
His loss is cancelled out by his reward.
difficult to anger and quick to forgive - pious
quick to anger and difficult to forgive - evil



ארבע מדות בדעות:

נוח לכעוס ונוח לרצות -

יצא שכרו בהפסדו.

קשה לכעוס וקשה לרצות -

יצא הפסדו בשכרו.

קשה לכעוס ונוח לרצות - חסיד.

נוח לכעוס וקשה לרצות - רשע.

Questions:

Why does the mishna only talk about anger and forgiveness and not other aspects of personality?

What if a person is quick to anger and easy to forgive, but is still a nice person, is he considered evil?

What if a person is slow to anger but quick to forgive, but is not a nice person, or has other bad personality traits, is he still considered pious?

Topics & Images:

Topics -

anger

forgiveness

good person

bad person

personality

Images

• A child that has promised not to eat treats, so throws a tantrum

• A kindergarten teacher who no matter what stays patient

• A fight between me and my siblings where we fight, and then a second after we are best friends again.

• Mathematical graph

• balancing on a scale.

equal ✓

Connections (T-S, T-T, T-W):

T-S = A lot of times me and my siblings fight, and sometimes we forgive each other a second later, but sometimes we stay mad at each other.

T-T = In the Torah it continually shows that god forgives us easily, and usually doesn't get angry.

T-W = In wars, a lot of times they start because of old fiefs and so on, and usually it is very hard to fix the wounds they inflict.

Interpretation(s):

This Mishna shows the different kind of people.

This Mishna might tell us to rethink our personalities, and become the person we want to be.

Structure:

There is a word in the beginning, then the first word of the next sentence. Is the first word of the last sentence, then the first word of the 3rd line is the first word of the 5th line, and the first word of the 4th line is the first word in the 6th line.

Step 3: Popular Song Sampling

Duration: 10 – 20 minutes per song

For many years I've been collecting popular songs from the 50's, 60's, 70's, 80's and 90's that are either thematically or linguistically related to each *mishnah* in Pirkei Avot. I am happy supply a list of these songs.

Following the in-depth study of a Mishnah in text 2, play the chosen song for students to listen to and compare to the section of Pirkei Avot. Students should have the lyrics of the song before them as they listen.

Two questions should drive the discussion following the listening:

3a: How is this song commenting on or illuminating a theme of the *mishnah*?

3b: What elements of this song do you think made it popular in its time and possibly even now?

(For a wonderful example, read Pirkei Avot 2:7 "He also saw a skull floating upon the water" and then listen to Harry Chapin's "Cat's in the Cradle".)

Below are some sample songs with the connected Mishnah citation in the right hand corner.

POP SONG STRUCTURE

Classic Form:

- Verse 1
- Chorus
- Verse 2
- Chorus
- Bridge
- Verse 3
- Chorus

Terms:

VERSE: The lyrics that tell the story or express the emotions in different ways, progressing throughout the song.

CHORUS: The lyrics that become familiar, and are frequently repeated. Often, the chorus includes the song's title.

BRIDGE: A short set of lyrics – similar to a verse, but set to a different melody – that signal the last verse or chorus. Sometimes called the “middle 8”, as the bridge is usually 8 measures of music in the middle of the song.

Teach Your Children

1:1

Lyrics: Graham Nash, 1970

Artist: Crosby, Stills, & Nash

You, who are on the road must have a code that you can live by.
And so become yourself because the past is just a good bye.
Teach your children well, their father's hell did slowly go by,
And feed them on your dreams, the one they fix,
the one you'll know by.

Don't you ever ask them why, if they told you, you would cry,
So just look at them and sigh and know they love you.

And you, of the tender years
can't know the fears that your elders grew by,
And so please help them with your youth,
they seek the truth before they can die.
Teach your parents well, their children's hell will slowly go by,
And feed them on your dreams, the one they fix,
the one you'll know by.

Don't you ever ask them why, if they told you, you would cry,
So just look at them and sigh and know they love you.

Mama Tried

Artist: Merle Haggard, 1968

The first thing I remember knowing,
Was a lonesome whistle blowing,
And a young un's dream of growing up to ride;
On a freight train leaving town,
Not knowing where I'm bound,
No-one could change my mind but Mama tried.
One and only rebel child,
From a family, meek and mild:
My Mama seemed to know what lay in store.
Despite all my Sunday learning,
Towards the bad, I kept on turning.
'Til Mama couldn't hold me anymore.

And I turned twenty-one in prison doing life without parole.
No-one could steer me right but Mama tried, Mama tried.
Mama tried to raise me better, but her pleading, I denied.
That leaves only me to blame 'cos Mama tried.

Dear old Daddy, rest his soul,
Left my Mom a heavy load;
She tried so very hard to fill his shoes.
Working hours without rest,
Wanted me to have the best.
She tried to raise me right but I refused.

And I turned twenty-one in prison doing life without parole.
No-one could steer me right but Mama tried, Mama tried.
Mama tried to raise me better, but her pleading, I denied.
That leaves only me to blame 'cos Mama tried.

For What It's Worth

1:12

Lyrics: Stephen Stills, 1966

Artist: Buffalo Springfield

There's something happening here
What it is ain't exactly clear
There's a man with a gun over there
Telling me I got to beware

I think it's time we stop, children, what's that sound
Everybody look what's going down

There's battle lines being drawn
Nobody's right if everybody's wrong
Young people speaking their minds
Getting so much resistance from behind

It's time we stop, hey, what's that sound
Everybody look what's going down

What a field-day for the heat
A thousand people in the street
Singing songs and carrying signs
Mostly say, hooray for our side

It's s time we stop, hey, what's that sound
Everybody look what's going down

Paranoia strikes deep
Into your life it will creep
It starts when you're always afraid
You step out of line, the man come and take you away

We better stop, hey, what's that sound
Everybody look what's going down
Stop, hey, what's that sound
Everybody look what's going down
Stop, now, what's that sound
Everybody look what's going down
Stop, children, what's that sound
Everybody look what's going down

(What's So Funny 'Bout) Peace, Love, and Understanding

Lyrics and Artist: Elvis Costello, 1974

As I walk through
This wicked world
Searchin' for light in the darkness of insanity.

I ask myself
Is all hope lost?
Is there only pain and hatred, and misery?

And each time I feel like this inside,
There's one thing I wanna know:
What's so funny 'bout peace love & understanding? Ohhhh
What's so funny 'bout peace love & understanding?

And as I walked on
Through troubled times
My spirit gets so downhearted sometimes
So where are the strong
And who are the trusted?
And where is the harmony?
Sweet harmony.

'Cause each time I feel it slippin' away,
just makes me wanna cry.
What's so funny 'bout peace love & understanding? Ohhhh
What's so funny 'bout peace love & understanding?

So where are the strong?
And who are the trusted?
And where is the harmony?
Sweet harmony.

If Not Now

Lyrics and Artist: Carrie Newcomer

If not now, tell me when
If not now, tell me when
We may never see this moment
Or place and time again
If not now, if not now, tell me when

I see sorrow and trouble in this land
Although there will be struggle
We'll make the change we can
If not now, if not now, tell me when?

Chorus

And I may never see the Promised Land
I may never see the Promised Land
And yet we'll take the journey
And we'll walk it hand in hand
If not now, if not now, tell me when

Chorus

We'll work it 'til it's done
Every daughter, every son
Every soul that's ever longed for something better
Something brighter
And it will take a change of heart for this to mend
But miracles do happen every shining now and then
If not now, if not now, tell me when

Chorus

And miracles do happen every shining now and then
If not now, if not now, tell me when

What's Mine is Yours

Lyrics: Katherine Nelson, Deanna Harper

Artist: Katherine Nelson

Counting down days since nine months last summer
From the baby quilts to the sunshine light-switch cover
All the plans she made
Wall-papered dreams she made for him someday

Doctor hardly glanced her way shut off the monitor
As he walked out the door said "You're young, there'll be others"
No sirens or loud screams, no rushing or comforting
It was just over

On the longest road toward home
She parked in the church lot and cried, and said

What's mine is yours, it's always been
What slips through my hands has your fingerprints on it
I'm letting go, remembering
Though Heaven's doors feel shut they're wide open
What's mine is yours

Teenage girl clinging to the gates of mercy
Holding the weight of the world and her newborn baby
Trying her best to be brave
Wrapped in hope giving him away to a longing family

When her courage met their eyes she saw
Somehow her baby was born to be in their arms
And cried

In this life we come and go and say goodbye
But there's more than we can see with our own eyes
And when my faith's a thread-bare blanket and I can't take it anymore
I remember

What's mine is yours, I'm letting go
Remembering
Though heaven's doors feel shut they're wide open
What's mine is yours

Say Little and Do Much

1:15

Lyrics: Lisa Litman

Artist: Ethical Start, Peer K Explorer

Say little and do much,
Say little and do much,
Emor m'at va-aseh harbeh
Say little and do much

When Abraham our father invited in his guests,
He said, Have a bite to eat."
And then Sarah made a feast because:

Say little and do much,
Say little and do much,
Emor m'at va-aseh harbeh
Say little and do much

You see friend in trouble,
or someone needing help,
Say, "I'll try to lend a hand."
But then give it all you can, because. . .

Say little and do much,
Say little and do much,
Emor m'at va-aseh harbeh
Say little and do much

Anyone can put some words together.
Anyone can say, "I will."
Follow through is what makes life much better,
Action is what packs the thrill

Say little and do much,
Say little and do much,
Emor m'at va-aseh harbeh
Say little and do much

Suite: Judy Blue Eyes

Lyrics: Stephen Stills, 1969

Aritst: Crosy, Stills, & Nash

It's getting to the point where I'm
no fun anymore

I am sorry

Sometimes it hurts so badly I
must cry out loud

I am lonely

I am yours, you are mine, you
are what you are

You make it hard

Remember what we've said and
done and felt about each other

Oh, babe have mercy

Don't let the past remind us of
what we are not now

I am not dreaming

I am yours, you are mine, you
are what you are

You make it hard

Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh

Tearing yourself away from me
now you are free

And I am crying

This does not mean I don't love
you I do that's forever

Yes and for always

I am yours, you are mine, you
are what you are

You make it hard

Something inside is telling me
that I've got your secret

Are you still listening?

Fear is the lock and laughter the
key to your heart

And I love you

I am yours, you are mine, you
are what you are

You make it hard

And you make it hard

And you make it hard

And you make it hard

Friday evening

Sunday in the afternoon

What have you got to lose?

Tuesday morning

Please be gone I'm tired of you

What have you got to lose?

Can I tell it like it is? (Help me I'm
sufferin')

Listen to me baby

It's my heart that's a sufferin' it's
a dyin' (Help me I'm dyin')

And that's what I have to lose (To
lose)

I've got an answer

I'm going to fly away

What have I got to lose?

Will you come see me

Thursdays and Saturdays?

What have you got to lose?

Chestnut brown canary

Ruby throated sparrow

Sing a song, don't be long

Thrill me to the marrow

Voices of the angels

Ring around the moonlight

Asking me said she so free

How can you catch the sparrow?

Lacy lilting lady

Losing love lamenting

Change my life, make it right

Be my lady

Que linda me la traiga Cuba

La reina de la Mar Caribe

Cielo sol no tiene sangreahi

Y que triste que no puedo vaya

oh va, oh va

Not Ready To Make Nice

Artist: Dixie Chicks, 2006

Forgive, sounds good.
Forget, I'm not sure I could.
They say time heals everything,
But I'm still waiting

I'm through, with doubt,
There's nothing left for me
to figure out,
I've paid a price, and I'll keep paying

I'm not ready to make nice,
I'm not ready to back down,
I'm still mad as hell
And I don't have time
To go round and round and round
It's too late to make it right
I probably wouldn't if I could
Cause I'm mad as hell
Can't bring myself to do what it is
You think I should

I know you said
Why can't you just get over it,
It turned my whole world around
and i kind of like it

I made by bed, and I sleep like a baby,
With no regrets and I don't mind
saying,
It's a sad sad story
That a mother will teach her daughter
that she ought to hate a perfect
stranger.

And how in the world
Can the words that I said
Send somebody so over the edge
That they'd write me a letter
Saying that I better shut up and sing
Or my life will be over

I'm not ready to make nice,
I'm not ready to back down,
I'm still mad as hell
And I don't have time
To go round and round and round
It's too late to make it right
I probably wouldn't if I could
Cause I'm mad as hell
Can't bring myself to do what it is
You think I should

I'm not ready to make nice,
I'm not ready to back down,
I'm still mad as hell
And I don't have time
To go round and round and round
It's too late to make it right
I probably wouldn't if I could
Cause I'm mad as hell
Can't bring myself to do what it is
You think I should

Forgive, sounds good.
Forget, I'm not sure I could.
They say time heals everything,
But I'm still waiting

Hillel's Song

2:6

Lyrics: Steve Brodsky, Josh Zweiback, and Jeff Greenstein
Artist: Mah Tovv

A long time ago there lived a great teacher,
Hillel was his name.
People would ask him all kinds of questions,
His wise answers brought him fame.
Someone once asked, "In a place that is evil,
How are we supposed to behave?"
Hillel thought for a moment, he pondered the question,
And this is the answer he gave:

(Chorus)

"B'makom she-ein anashim,"
Hillel omer, "hishtadeil lih'yotish."

Every person has two inclinations, for evil and for good
Hillel knew that it's not always easy to act the way we should.
So we look to our parents, our teachers, our children,
And we search for the answer inside.
And in the struggle between what's right and what's wrong
We let this lesson be our guide.

Chorus

Where people are acting inhuman,
Hillel said, "We must strive to be human
Make peace with your sister and brother,
What is hateful to you do not do to another."

So many questions, not enough answers
As we travel along the road
But if we remember the words of wise Hillel,
We will always know which way to go.
When we find ourselves in a place that is evil,
And we don't know how to behave,
If we stop for a moment and ponder the question,
We'll remember the answer he gave.

Chorus

Cat's in the Cradle

2:7

Lyrics & Artist: Harry Chapin, 1974

My child arrived just the other day
He came to the world in the usual way
But there were planes to catch and bills to pay
He learned to walk while I was away
And he was talkin' 'fore I knew it, and as he grew
He'd say "I'm gonna be like you, Dad
You know I'm gonna be like you"

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man on the moon
When you comin' home, Dad
I don't know when, but we'll get together then
You know we'll have a good time then

My son turned ten just the other day
He said, "Thanks for the ball, Dad, come on let's play
can you teach me to throw", I said "Not today
I got a lot to do", he said, "That's ok
And he walked away but his smile never dimmed
And said, "I'm gonna be like him, yeah
You know I'm gonna be like him"

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man on the moon
When you comin' home, Dad
I don't know when, but we'll get together then
You know we'll have a good time then

Well, he came from college just the other day
So much like a man I just had to say
"Son, I'm proud of you, can you sit for a while"
He shook his head and said with a smile
"What I'd really like, Dad, is to borrow the car keys
See you later, can I have them please"

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man on the moon

When you comin' home son
I don't know when, but we'll get together then, Dad
You know we'll have a good time then

I've long since retired, my son's moved away
I called him up just the other day
I said, "I'd like to see you if you don't mind"
He said, "I'd love to, Dad, if I can find the time
You see my new job's a hassle and kids have the flu
But it's sure nice talking to you, Dad
It's been sure nice talking to you"

And as I hung up the phone it occurred to me
He'd grown up just like me
My boy was just like me

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man in the moon
When you comin' home son
I don't know when, but we'll get together then, Dad
We're gonna have a good time then

Forever

3:11

Lyrics & Artists: Ken Chasen, Josh Zweiback, 2004

No scar, no blood
You cut me just the same
Look in my eyes – you'll see

Cold laugh, hot tears
I turn away in shame
Away from you, and deep inside of
me

Everything I thought I knew
I don't know today

But I know, I know, I know, I know
forever
I know, I know, I know, I know
forever

Yes, now I know
That safe is far
And what you say
is who you are

*Hamalbin p'nei chavero barabim
Af al pi sheyesh beyado Torah
uma'asim tovim
ein lo cheleck la'olam habah.*

No try again
No one more day
No second chance
The price you pay

I shut the door
I hide the key
I seal the hurt
Away from me

No going back
No turning 'round
There ain't no peace
That can be found

No you and me
Like we should be
And I fell free
'Cuze now I see. . .

Yeah, I know, I know, I know, I
know forever.
I know, I know, I know, I know
forever.

Yes, now I know
That safe is far
And what you say
Is who you are.

Step 4: Song Writing

Duration: 5 - 10 class periods

4a: Lyric writing instruction

I invite local song-writers to spend a class period with the group to share their tips and techniques.

I have students watch Jonathan Mann's "How to write lyrics" video. He has been writing and recording one song a day for over two years:

<http://youtu.be/-Eow2hUHQyo>

I show students Benjamin Scheuer's Ted talk on writing songs that are true to yourself. He wrote and recorded songs while undergoing cancer treatment:

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

I encourage students to read the WikiHow article entitled "How to Write Song Lyrics" as it has good suggestions for getting the creative juices flowing:

<http://m.wikihow.com/Write-Song-Lyrics>

When students are engaged in the lyrics editing process and beginning to think about music, I share with them a piece from NPR: "How to Write a Hit Song: Adele on Someone Like You."

4b: Lyric writing time

Students are given an entire period to write (either alone or with a partner) a single draft of a song. Several drafts are required for a song to be accepted in the "running" and students receive feedback from song-writers, teacher, and fellow students.

Students will write at least three songs based on different *mishnayot*, select the song they feel is strongest and then re-work that song until it meets the approval of classmates. All songs MUST include Hebrew from the *mishnah*.

Students are instructed to write lyrics without a song tune in mind and are STRONGLY dissuaded from writing parodies of currently popular songs.

Below are some sample song drafts and completed lyrics written by students.

Pirkei Avot Song Writing

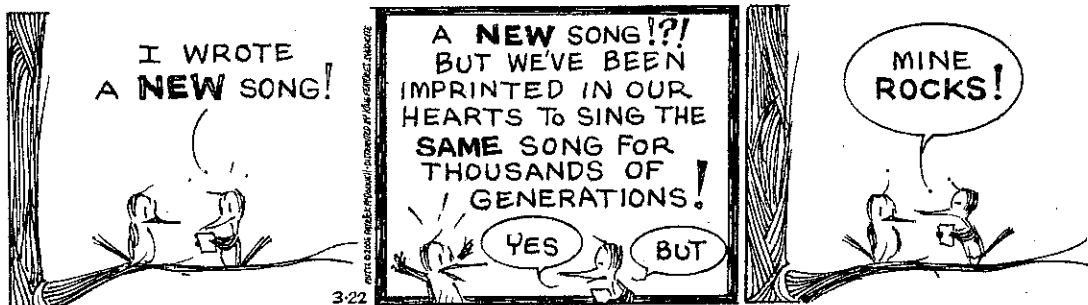
Authors: _____

Draft #: _____

Inspired by Pikei Avot _____ :

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

MUTTS Patrick McDonnell



Pirkei Avot Song Writing

Authors: Lauren [redacted] Amanda [redacted]

Draft #: 1

Inspired by Pirkei Avot 1 : 14

Believe in Yourself
Or who will believe

Hillel used to teach

Yet if you are only for yourself
What can you be?

on stage

Friend in audience cheering 4 you

Start with yourself

Begin with yourself

Don't be weak:

Don't be weak, Believe in yourself

Believe in yourself

Up on the stage, you see all those

Don't wait, Don't hesitate

faces

~~If it's not done soon, when~~

If it's not now, then when can it happen?

believe in yourself, despite all
those braces

~~You can do~~ You don't want to sing/dance/do ...?

You don't want to sing

opposite, shake off

You don't want to dance

~~You don't want to talk~~

Across from you

Believe in yourself

thinks other person great

And you'll have a chance

Thinks she's so great

Thinks she's a pearl

Friends in the crowd

cheering 4 you

But to her

they only say boo

pearl

Pirkei Avot Song Writing

Authors: Amanda [redacted] Lauren [redacted]

Draft #: 2

Inspired by Pikei Avot 1 : 14



Up on the stage,
You see all those faces,
Believe in yourself,
Despite all those braces.

Chorus ² _{us}: Believe in Yourself, (: 7N11C 7'7 1C-17)
On who will believe? '8 'N '8 'J1C 11C 21C

⁴ Yet if ~~you are~~ only ~~for~~ yourself,
What can you be? ('N388 'J1C 7-13)
~~Don't wait,~~ 'J1C 7N)

~~Don't hesitate,~~
~~chan~~ ~~If it's not now,~~
~~Then when can it happen?~~

Start with yourself,
Begin with yourself,
Don't be weak:
Believe in yourself!

You don't want to sing,
You don't want to dance,
Believe in yourself,
And you'll have a chance.

>Chorus<

Tick. Tick. Tock

Inspired by Pirkei Avot 2:7

If death follows death
Then we have made a lock
So says 2:7: Tick. Tick. Tock.

One killer killed a being
And sentenced, he soon found
That his extremely grim fate was
That he was to be drowned

If death follows death
Then we have made a lock
So says 2:7: Tick. Tick. Tock.

The killer shambled through heat,
To his gory demise,
The executioner man was,
Unfortunately, wise,

If death follows death
Then enforcers are in a lock
So says 2:7: Tick. Tick. Tock.

The wise man was a killer,
For his murderous job,
The mayor strung him by his neck,
And of his life was robbed

If death follows death
Then the enforcers are in a lock
So says 2:7: Tick. Tick. Tock.

אך הוא ראה גולגולת,

אחת שצפה על

פני המים, אמר לה
"And so the chain goes on"

If death follows death
Then the world is in a lock

So says 2:7: Tick. Tick. Tock.

The mayor's head was cut off,
By a highly trained team,
The town put them all in prison,
Gave them a final dream,

If death follows death
Then the world is in a lock
So says 2:7: Tick. Tick. Tock.

The next door town declared war,
And soon the first had died,
The country was all sucked in then,
And soon the whole world wide,

If death follows death
Then the world is in a lock
So says 2:7: Tick. Tick. Tock.

Murderer killed murderer,
The earth in a eclipse,
The world became a war zone,
A new apocalypse,

If death follows death
Then we are in a lock
So says 2:7: Tick. Tick. Tock.

Soon stood the one who killed all,
On a mountain, calm, still,
Then God struck him down and he
was,
The new king of the hill,

If death follows death
Then life is in a lock
So says 2:7: Tick. Tick. Tock.

God knew the laws that he said,
And he had killed his pride,
He debated back and forth and,
Committed suicide,

If death follows death
Then our morals have been socked
So says 2:7: Tick. Tick. Tock.

And soon all traces rotted
Under time's mighty breath
And all the world disappeared
Because of one sad death

If death follows death
Then we have made a lock
So says 2:7: Tick. Tick. Tock.

Learn to Lie
Inspired by Avot 1:9

VERSE 1

The sound of silence is hard to bear
Especially when I know she's there
She's a Cheshire cat but not from
wonderland (from wonderland, oh)
And the rose she was before
Could now cut me with its thorns
I could not see, I cannot see

CHORUS

Her voice is a slow acting poison
And it's coursing through my veins
Oh, she's a player
I'm a pawn in her game
Through my words, she'll tell the truth,
she'll tell the truth
And through hers, I'll learn to lie, I'll learn
to lie

VERSE 2

I'm a witness and she's a judge
I'm trying to not think too much
Her words are paper butterflies and
she's an artist (she's an artist)
Interrogation, communication
All I'm feeling is desperation
She's not the girl I used to know

CHORUS

Her voice is a slow acting poison
And it's coursing through my veins
Oh, she's a player
I'm a pawn in her game
Through my words, she'll tell the truth,
she'll tell the truth
And through hers, I'll learn to lie, I'll learn
to lie

BRIDGE

I'm a witness of a life that was taken all
too fast
She's an angel, she's a devil, she's
playing god at her best
Open my eyes, I'm in the hospital and
she stands above my bed
והוי זהיר בדבריך
שמא מתוכם ילמדו לשכר
(oh)

CHORUS

Her voice is a slow acting poison
And it's coursing through my veins
Oh, she's a player
I'm a pawn in her game
Through my words, she'll tell the truth,
she'll tell the truth
And through hers, I'll learn to lie, I'll learn
to lie

SLIGHTLY-CHANGED CHORUS

My words are a dangerous drug
And she's become addicted
She's a pawn in a game
And I'm a player
Through my words, she'll tell the truth,
she'll tell the truth
And through hers, I'll learn to lie, I'll learn
to lie
Through hers, I've learned to lie, I've
learned to lie

Cycle

Inspired by Pirkei Avot 1:9

Your footsteps get traced
And you're back where you began
Same old position
Nothing new, all is bland

Your words running behind you
Catching up like a race
Remind you of your losses
All the time, in every place

Your sins go on and so do your lies
So you must be bold and interrogate
wise

והוי זהיר בדבריך
שמא מתוכם ילמדו לשקר
השקר יחיד אבל מתפשט מהר

Chorus:

It is worse than most, what you have
done
You have hurt and the pain has just
begun
While you go in a circle they stay in a
line
Trying to forget and leave everything
behind

Yet forgetting is no option,
And you will haunt them in their sleep
The pain is uncontrollable
And all they can do is repeat

Your sins go on and so do your lies
So you must be bold and interrogate
wise

והוי זהיר בדבריך
שמא מתוכם ילמדו לשקר
השקר יחיד אבל מתפשט מהר

Chorus:

It is worse than most, what you have
done
You have hurt and the pain has just
begun
While you go in a circle they stay in a
line
Trying to forget and leave everything
behind

This child you have hurt
A child without a friend
Will now repeat your words
And the cycle will never end

Chorus:

It is worse than murder, what they have
done
Both of you have hurt and the pain has
just begun
While you go in a circle they stay in a
line
Trying to forget and leave everything
behind

Step 5: Voting

Duration: 1 class period

I create a Google doc with all final draft song lyrics. No names are attached to songs.

I create a Google form that students can fill out at home. It asks them to select their 3 favorite song lyrics after close readings of the work of their classmates.

After tabulating the votes and meeting with the year's featured artist – a local musician and recording artist who will be writing the music for the songs – two songs are selected for the next step.

If a song is not selected to move on the step 6 but writers share an interest in writing and recording their own music, we will set up studio time for these groups to record their work. Two such songs can be heard in our collection.

Step 6: Music writing

Duration: Up to two weeks

The students who wrote the selected songs will meet for one class period with the year's featured artist to share their visions and dreams for the music to accompany the lyrics they've created.

The artist will then work on composing and recording the music. They have teacher and student permission to move

in any stylistic direction the muse may pull them and they can change slightly the words of the song to fit their vision.

This step is completed off-site.

Step 7: Voice recording

Duration: One week

When the featured artist returns with a music track for the two songs students are invited to “try-out” for a singing part. The featured artist chooses the voices that fit the vision of the song, but everyone in the class is invited to sing as a chorus in at least one of the songs.

The lyric writer(s) of the song are rarely chosen to sing their own song, but it does happen on occasion.

We use in house equipment to record: a relatively simple microphone, a mac laptop running Pro Tools, a small mixer, and low-end headphones.

We record in a small “break-out” room that fits no more than 5 people and has no sound padding.

Step 8: Mixing

Duration: Two weeks

The featured artist takes the tracks home to mix into a work of art. To hear the final products, click here:

<http://pirkeiavotpopsong.blogspot.com>





Brief video of recording session with one class:

<https://youtu.be/BLzuJ-Va40Y>