

Making up Lyrics for Rhythms

I'm constantly encouraging my students to relate musical language to a language they already know. If students are having a hard time grasping rhythms (1/4 notes, 1/8 notes, etc) I ask them to write lyrics for the rhythm. Usually this equates to one syllable per note.

The way that words like "Ham-burg-er" and "Fr-ench-Fr-ies" (not the best lyrics, but they work for this purpose) roll off the tongue in syllables can be intuitive for a middle school student. From there, it becomes a matter of translating those syllables into a rhythm and time, and this connection often helps to bridge that divide.

I will then go around the room and spontaneously ask other students to come up with their own rhyme or phrase for the rhythm.

By putting the students on the spot to be spontaneously creative it adds an excitement and motivation for them to process the rhythm written on the page.

