Coleridge’s Fantasies: Using Popular Music as a Bridge to Literacy

**Journal Activity:**

Describe one of your most vivid dreams or nightmares, especially one that truly upset or perplexed you. Be sure to go into detail, using details to not only recreate this nocturnal vision, but also to explain your reaction to it.

**Directive:**

Is imagination, as in dreams, the mind playing tricks on the logic? Or is it more than that?

How does this relate to the concept of imagination in the Romantic era?

Note what The Oxford Illustrated History of English Literature defines as Romantic imagination: “a faculty for reordering former sense impressions: the perceiving mind and the perceived object are separate” (290). How does that play against what we think of as dreams?

Describe Coleridge’s idea of “Kubla Khan” and the pleasure-dome terms of imagery and sound devices.

Discuss these.

How should we interpret a poem like this?

How does the imagery affect our interpretation?
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1. “Sweet Dreams”

Action:

Play “Sweet Dreams” by the Eurythmics while students are writing.

Dialogue:

What would be your idea of a dream come true? Be as specific as possible.

Action:

Play “Sweet Dreams” by La Bouche while students write. Invite students to speculate as to why there are both alike and dissimilar versions.

Songfacts:

In the book Annie Lennox: The Biography, Lennox explained that this song is about the search for fulfillment, and the "Sweet Dreams" are the desires that motivate us. She regards "Sweet Dreams" as a song but as a mantra. She added that people have identified with it over the years and that it's open to interpretation; it contains an overview of human existence; whatever it is that makes you tick, that is what it is.
1. **Sweet Dreams - Eurythmics**

Sweet dreams are made of this  
Who am I to disagree?  
Travel the world and the seven seas  
Everybody's looking for something  
Some of them want to use you  
Some of them want to get used by you  
Some of them want to abuse you  
Some of them want to be abused

Sweet dreams are made of this  
Who am I to disagree?  
Travel the world and the seven seas  
Everybody's looking for something  
Some of them want to use you  
Some of them want to get used by you  
Some of them want to abuse you  
Some of them want to be abused

I wanna use you and abuse you  
I wanna know what's inside you  
(Whispering) Hold your head up, movin' on  
Keep your head up, movin' on  
Hold your head up, movin' on  
Keep your head up, movin’ on  
Hold your head up, movin' on  
Keep your head up, movin’ on  
Movin’ on!

Sweet dreams are made of this  
Who am I to disagree?  
Travel the world and the seven seas  
Everybody's looking for something  
Some of them want to use you  
Some of them want to get used by you  
Some of them want to abuse you  
Some of them want to be abused

I'm gonna use you and abuse you  
I'm gonna know what's inside  
Gonna use you and abuse you  
I'm gonna know what's inside you
2. “In-A-Gadda-Da Vida”.

Action:

Display the lyrics to Iron Butterfly’s song In-a Gadda-Da-Vida” on the overhead. Be sure to note that this song was first released in 1968.

Discuss the story of the song, reading from the liner notes of the CD In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida how the lead singer of Iron Butterfly had consumed nearly a gallon of wine before he finished this song, whose chorus was supposed to be “In the Garden of Eden.” When asked by his drummer what the title was, the drunken Doug Engle replied, “In-A-Gadda-Da Vida”.

Note the religious allusions, as well as the literary and psychological symbols (“take my hand”, “please”, etc.) Also note that the song later took on the meaning of “in the garden of life”, which also can be discussed in terms of screened symbolism.

Ask if students feel this song is complete. Why does it seem like a fragment? Lead students into a discussion of our Western notion of literary completion. This linear way of thinking is not universal, as other cultures ascribe value to circular thinking.

Ask students to reflect on how their dreams are not usually linear in that it is difficult to pinpoint an exact introduction/body/conclusion to them. In fact, they may seem incomplete or fragmented, or even illogical in Western terms.

Song Facts:

With its endless, droning minor-key riff and mumbled vocals, "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida" is arguably the most notorious song of the acid rock era. According to legend, the group was so stoned when they recorded the track that they could neither pronounce the title "In the Garden of Eden" or end the track, so it rambles on for a full 17 minutes, which to some listeners sounds like eternity. But that's the essence of its appeal — it's the epitome of heavy psychedelic excess, encapsulating the most indulgent tendencies of the era. Iron Butterfly never matched the warped excesses of "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida," either on their debut album of the same name or the rest of their catalog, yet they occasionally made some enjoyable fuzz guitar-driven psychedelia that works as a period piece. The five tracks that share space with their magnum opus on In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida qualify as good artifacts, and the entire record still stands as the group's definitive album, especially since this is the only place the full-length title track is available.

In-a-gadda-da-vida, honey,
Dont you know that I love you?
In-a-gadda-da-vida, baby,
Dont you know that Ill always be true?

Oh, wont you come with me
And take my hand?

Oh, wont you come with me
And walk this land?

Please take my hand!

-repeat-

~solos~

-repeat-
3. “Sweet Dreams” – La Bouche

Chorus:
Sweet dreams of rhythm and dancing
Sweet dreams of passion through the night
Sweet dreams are taking over
Sweet dreams of dancing through the night

Verse1
I wanna get into motion
A better devotion
So I can make it through the night
So the music is playin
You know what I'm saying
Now everything will be alright

Chorusx1
Bridge:
Ola ola e, ola ola e,
Ola ola e, ola ola e.

Verse2
Rhythm is a creation a better sensation
That will lead you through the night
When your body is movin the music is groovin
I want to take you home tonight

Rap
Keep dancin hard
Give this groove more feeling
Dance trance dance more dealing
In out up down all around
On the dance floor gettin down
Take time just to show them who
We can make your body move
Totally, yes the party's started
Sweet dreams keep comin harder

Chorus + bridge to fade.
4. “Just My Imagination” by the Temptations

Write about the importance and/or size of your imagination. How has it changed since you were a kid? What has influenced it? Be sure to discuss things such as imaginary friends, monsters, superheroes, lying, etc.

**Action:**

Play “Just My Imagination” by the Temptations while students write.

Following writing, ask students to call out the five senses while you write them on the board or overhead: hearing, sight, touch, taste, and smell.

Ask how this affected the “picture” the writer created of his/her imagination. Be sure to note how these sensory perceptions create great imagery for the reader or listener, allowing him/her to vicariously relive the author’s/narrator’s experience.

**Songfacts:**

Motown writers Norman Whitfield and Barrett Strong wrote this in the late ’60s, but since Psychedelic songs were popular at the time, Whitfield and Strong decided to wait a few years before releasing it.
4. “Just My Imagination” by the Temptations

Each day through my window I watch her as she passes by. I say to myself, "You're such a lucky guy." To have a girl like her is truly a dream come true. Out of all of the fellas in the world she belongs to you...

But it was just my imagination running away with me. It was just my imagination running away with me...

Ooh-hoo-hoo-hoo
Soon we'll be married.. and raise a family.
In a cozy, little home out in the country with two children, maybe three. I tell you, I can visualize it all. This couldn't be a dream for too real it all seems.

But it was just my imagination -- once again -- running away with me. I tell you it was just my imagination running away with me...

Every night, on my knees I pray, "Dear Lord, hear my plea... don't ever let another take her love from me or I will surely die.."
Ooh, her love is heavenly; when her arms enfold me, I hear a tender rhapsody... but in reality, she doesn't even know me

Just my imagination -- once again -- running away with me. Tell you it was just my imagination running away with me. I never met her, but I can't forget her. Just my imagination.. -- ooh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah -- running away with me
5. “See Me, Feel Me, Touch Me” – The Who

Ask students to note examples of the senses while the song is being played.

Action:

Put the lyrics to the Who’s “See Me, Feel Me, Touch Me” up on the overhead. Be sure to remind students of the mental pictures these images create.
5. “See Me, Feel Me, Touch Me” – The Who

Tommy: See me, feel me, touch me, heal me.
See me, feel me, touch me, heal me.
See me, feel me, touch me, heal me.
See me, feel me, touch me, heal me, heal me, heal me.

Chorus: Listening to you I get the music.
Gazing at you I get the heat.
Following you I climb the mountain.
I get excitement at your feet!
Right behind you I see the millions.
On you I see the glory.
From you I get opinions.
From you I get the story.
Listening to you I get the music.
Gazing at you I get the heat.
Following you I climb the mountain.
I get excitement at your feet!

[TOMMY AND CHORUS]

Right behind you I see the millions.
On you I see the glory.
From you I get opinions.
From you I get the story.
Listening to you I get the music.
Gazing at you I get the heat (heat).
Following you I climb the mountain.
I get excitement at your feet!
Right behind you I see the millions.
On you I see the glory.
From you I get opinions.
From you I get the story.
Ohhhhh, listening to you I get the music.
Gazing at you I get the heat.
Following you I climb the mountain.
I get excitement at your feet!
Right behind you I see the millions.
On you I see the glory.
From you I get opinions.
From you I get the story.
Listening to you!
6. “Xanadu” by Rush

Find sensory examples in this song as “Xanadu” is being played.

Action:

Try this imagery hunt with “Xanadu” by Rush, a song inspired by Samuel Coleridge’s classic poem

Ask students to comment on this song:
  What could it possibly mean?
  Why would a rock and roll band seek inspiration from such a dead, bald, white guy as Coleridge?

Xanadu by Rush Songfacts:

This is based on an unfinished poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who started writing it while under the influence of drugs. Once the effects of the drugs wore off, he was unable to complete it. Rush have never been known to use illegal substances, however.

This features one of the longest instrumental intros ever recorded. The total time of the song is 11:06, and slightly more than half of this time is used in the intro before any lyrics come in.

In Coleridge's poem, Xanadu is the fictional name of the land where Khubla Khan ordered the dome to be built: "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan a stately pleasure dome decree." Coleridge goes on to describe the dome as a "Miracle of rare device, a sunny pleasure dome with caves of ice." The notion of the "Man from Porlock" is a famous yet unsubstantiated tale offered by Coleridge himself to explain why his poem is unfinished. Many in the literary world believe the tale to be a fabricated explanation. There was even a poem written by a contemporary of Coleridge titled The Man From Porlock which refutes the incident. No one will ever know the truth about the visitor who supposedly interrupted Coleridge's inspiration during his crafting of one of the greatest unrevied first drafts in history.

The legend of Xanadu is related to a number of myths and legends going back to the prehistory of Asia (and in fact throughout the Americas) specifically that of Shamballa. There was a movement in the time of Coleridge to explore these legends, in doing so we are tapping into the universal consciousness, an ability that the members of Rush seem to be quite adept. (thanks, Harry - Lompoc, CA)
6. “Xanadu” by Rush

To seek the sacred river alph
To walk the caves of ice
To break my fast on honey dew
And drink the milk of paradise....

I had heard the whispered tales
Of immortality
The deepest mystery
From an ancient book, I took a clue
I scaled the frozen mountain tops
Of eastern lands unknown
Time and man alone
Searching for the lost ---- xanadu

Xanadu ---- to stand within the pleasure dome
Decreed by Kubla Khan
To taste anew the fruits of life
The last immortal man
To find the sacred river alph
To walk the caves of ice
Oh, I will dine on honey dew
And drink the milk of paradise

A thousand years have come and gone
But time has passed me by
Stars stopped in the sky
Frozen in an everlasting view
Waiting for the world to end
Weary of the night
Praying for the light
Prison of the lost ---- xanadu

Xanadu ---- held within the pleasure dome
Decreed by Kubla Khan
To taste my bitter triumph
As a mad immortal man
Nevermore shall I return
Escape these caves of ice
For I have dined on honey dew
And drunk the milk of paradise
More than paradise
7. Welcome to the Pleasure Dome – Frankie Goes to Hollywood

What is your idea of a pleasure dome? What would it be built of and what would it be filled with?

Action:
While students respond to the prompt, play the song “Welcome to the Pleasure Dome” by Frankie Goes to Hollywood.

Song Facts:
The lyrics of the song were inspired by the poem Kubla Khan by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan a pleasure dome e-e-e-rect!" exclaims singer Holly Johnson in "Welcome to the Pleasure Dome," taking no small liberties with Coleridge’s poem.
7. Welcome to the Pleasure Dome – Frankie Goes to Hollywood

The world is my oyster....... Ha ha ha ha ha........
The animals are winding me up
The jungle call The jungle call Who-ha who-ha who-ha who-ha
In Xanadu did Kublai Khan
A pleasuredome erect
Moving on keep moving on-yeah
Moving at one million miles an hour Using my power
I sell it by the hour I have it so I market it You really can't afford it-yeah
Really can't afford it

*Shooting stars never stop Even when they reach the top
Shooting stars never stop Even when they reach the top

**There goes a supernova What a pushover-yeah
There goes a supernova What a pushover

***We're a long way from home Welcome to the Pleasuredome
On our way home Going home where lovers roam
Long way from home Welcome to the Pleasuredome
Moving on Keep moving on
I will give you diamonds by the shower Love your body even when it's old
Do it just as only I can do it And never ever doing what I'm told

*(Repeat)

**(Repeat)

Keep moving on Got to reach the top
Don't stop Pay love and life-oh my Keep moving on On again-yeah
Shooting stars never stop Shooting stars never stop

****Shooting stars never stop Even when they reach the top There goes a supernova What a pushover

*****(Repeat)

******(Repeat)

Who-ha who-ha Welcome to the Pleasuredome WELCOME........ha ha ha ha ha........
Long way from home WELCOME TO THE PLEASUREDOME
8. Xanadu – Olivia Newton John

Song Facts:

Xanadu is a 1980 musical/romance film directed by Robert Greenwald. It is an unofficial remake of the 1947 film Down to Earth starring Rita Hayworth. The title of the film is a reference to the poem "Kubla Khan, or A Vision in a Dream. A Fragment." by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, which is quoted in the film. Xanadu is the name of the Chinese province where Khan establishes his pleasure garden in the poem.
8. Xanadu – Olivia Newton John

Xanadu – Olivia Newton John

A place where nobody dared to go, the love that we came to know
They call it Xanadu
And now, open your eyes and see, what we have made is real
We are in Xanadu
A million lights are dancing and there you are, a shooting star
An everlasting world and you're here with me, eternally

Chorus:
Xanadu, Xanadu, (now we are here) in Xanadu
Xanadu, Xanadu, (now we are here) in Xanadu
Xanadu, your neon lights will shine for you, Xanadu

The love, the echoes of long ago, you needed the world to know
They are in Xanadu
The dream that came through a million years
That lived on through all the tears, it came to Xanadu
A million lights are dancing and there you are, a shooting star
An everlasting world and you're here with me, eternally

Chorus
Now that I'm here, now that you're near in Xanadu
Now that I'm here, now that you're near in Xanadu, Xanadu