

# Boost the Four Skills in Your ESL Classroom with Critical Thinking and Music



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### Introduction

Hey, ESL teachers! Ready to shake up your lessons and get your students excited about learning English? Check out "**Match the Mood: A Musical Story Connection**" – a 60-minute lesson plan idea that fuses music and storytelling to create an epic learning experience. This blog post will show you how to craft your own music-infused lessons that'll turbocharge your students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills while igniting their critical thinking and creativity.

As an ESL teacher, you're always searching for fresh ways to help your students conquer English. By adding music and a gripping short story to your lessons, you'll create a dynamic learning environment that your students will love. "Match the Mood" seamlessly blends these elements, giving you a step-by-step guide and resource material examples to inspire your own lessons.

In this lesson plan, your students will:

- Boost their listening skills by exploring the link between music and emotions
- Enhance their reading comprehension with an engaging short story
- Improve their speaking abilities through group discussions and presentations
- Strengthen their writing skills by crafting unique endings to the story

"Match the Mood" not only targets the four essential language skills but also develops critical 21st-century skills like critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication. By connecting with music and a thought-provoking story, your students will gain a deeper appreciation for English and its cultural context.

Whether you're a seasoned ESL pro or a newbie looking for inspiration, "Match the Mood" is worth exploring. Keep reading to discover how this music-infused lesson plan idea can inspire you to create unique lessons that help your students master language skills while unleashing their inner critical thinkers and creative geniuses. The post includes a step-by-step guide and resource material examples to get you started on your own one-of-a-kind lessons

### ENGAGE YOUR STUDENTS WITH "MATCH THE MOOD: A MUSICAL STORY CONNECTION"

#### What is "Match the Mood: A Musical Story Connection"?

"Match the Mood" is a 60-minute activity - for B1 and above- that combines music and short stories to create a captivating learning experience. Students explore the connection between music and emotions, read a short story, predict the outcome, select a piece of music that matches the story's mood, and discuss their choices with the class. As homework, they write the story's ending, allowing them to unleash their creativity.

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## Objectives:

- Develop critical thinking skills by connecting music and literature
- Improve speaking and listening skills through group discussions
- Encourage creativity through music selection
- Stimulate imagination by listening to music and reading stories

## 21st Century Skills:

Critical thinking, Collaboration, Creativity, Communication

## Duration:

60 minutes

## Preparation:

- Choose a short story with a cliffhanger to distribute to students
- Select 3 or 4 song excerpts or pieces of music from Mixkit.co and prepare a way to play them in class

## Quick guide for teachers to obtain pieces of music from mixkit.co:

1. Visit the website: [mixkit.co](https://mixkit.co)
2. Browse the library of music tracks and sound effects to find a piece that fits the mood of the story you have chosen for your class.
3. Download the track by clicking the "Download" button under the desired track.
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 until you have enough music tracks to choose from for your class.

Mixkit.co is a platform that provides a library of royalty-free music tracks and sound effects for use in various projects, including video projects, podcasts, and presentations. All the tracks are free to download, and there are no attribution or licensing requirements. This makes it an excellent resource for teachers who are looking for music to accompany their lessons.

## SUGGESTED STEP-BY-STEP LESSON PLAN

### Step 1 (7 min)

Genially presentation example [link](#)

Show slide one with the photos and the emotions. Have a student read the emotions. Then have students volunteer to give the answers.

Ask your students: is there a connection between music and emotions?

Have students give their opinions as a class. Have them say if music has ever affected them and how the experience was. Ask them to describe what they felt and the type of music they were listening to.

**MATCH THE EMOTIONS**

1. anger ( )  
2. calmness ( )  
3. excitement ( )  
4. fear ( )  
5. happiness ( )  
6. love ( )  
7. nervousness ( )  
8. sadness ( )  
9. surprise ( )

### Step 2 (5 min)

Distribute the short story worksheet to each student.

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Tell them to read the story quickly and think about what may happen next. Help with vocabulary.

Ask them to identify emotions in the story (refer them to the slide). Write them on the board

## Example of a simple short story with a cliffhanger:

*Title: Adventure Awaits*

*Lily from France and Sam from China met at a language school in England. They became good friends quickly. One day, they found a travel magazine in the school library. They loved the beautiful places and fun activities shown in the magazine.*

*Lily and Sam dreamed of traveling the world together. They wanted to see different cultures and learn new languages. They made a list of places to visit, like the beaches of Thailand and the busy streets of Tokyo.*

*While they were talking about their dreams, they heard an announcement. The school was having a competition. The prize was a trip around the world, with tickets, places to stay, and money for activities.*

*Lily and Sam were very excited and signed up for the competition. They worked hard on their presentation, showing their love for travel and their knowledge of different cultures. On the day of the competition, they nervously presented their project to the judges.*

*As they waited for the results, their hearts were beating fast. Would they win and make their dream come true? The room was tense as the head teacher announced the winners...*

*To be continued...*

## Step 3 (5 min)

Have students discuss in pairs what they think is going to happen in the story.

## Step 4 (6 min)

The pairs share their ideas with the whole class.

## Step 5 (5 min)

Music Selection. Slide 02 of the genially presentation. Present the students with a choice of four pieces of music from Mixkit.co.

Allow the students to listen to each excerpt and decide which piece of music matches the story.



## Step 6 (5 min)

Ask students to discuss in pairs or small groups which piece of music matches the story best. Tell them to be prepared to explain their choices.

## Step 7 (10 min)

Have each pair share their selected piece of music and their thoughts and feelings about the story and the music with the class.

Encourage the class to ask questions and provide feedback to each other and say if they agree or disagree and why. Have a mini discussion.

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## Step 8 (5 min)

End the class by summarizing the main ideas discussed and asking students what they learned from the activity

## Step 9 (homework or in-class work if you still have time)

**Homework:** students write the ending of the story based on the cliffhanger.

Give them the descriptions of the characters of the short story, so they can have better ideas to end their stories.

### DESCRIPTIONS OF THE CHARACTERS OF THE SHORT STORY

*Lily:*



*Lily is a teenage girl from France who loves travel and adventure. She has long, curly brown hair in a messy bun and golden skin from being outside. Her big, brown eyes light up when she talks about her travels, and she is always smiling. Lily is confident and outgoing but also thoughtful. She wears bright, colorful clothes that show her love for different cultures.*



*Sam:*

*Sam is a teenage boy from China who loves learning about new cultures and languages. He has short, neat black hair and light olive skin. His sharp features and dark eyes show curiosity. Sam is quiet and reserved but passionate about travel. He wears simple, classic clothes that reflect his love for tradition. Sam is calm and a good listener, often supporting Lily.*

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