



## A General Flocabulary Lesson Plan

This lesson plan offers a general guide to incorporating Flocabulary learning tools into your classroom. This lesson isn't specific to any one title, but is general enough to apply to most Flocabulary titles. Please note that additional lesson plans are available in the Teacher Resource Books for each title.

A note for those using *The Word Up Project*: Because *The Word Up Project* includes student exercises, you may not find this lesson plan terribly useful. For detailed *Word Up* lesson plans, please consult *The Word Up Project* Teacher Resource Books.

### How Does This Fit into My Existing Lesson?

Teachers often use Flocabulary materials in one of three ways: to introduce a unit, to augment an existing unit, or to provide an entertaining review.

### Introducing It for the First Time

Some teachers express reluctance to play the songs in their class. Usually they are nervous about how students will react or whether students will feel that playing hip-hop music in the classroom is somehow pandering to them. Ask your students to evaluate a song. We are convinced that they will prefer it to the typical study tools. The best way to overcome this reluctance is to be honest with your students. Here is how one teacher presented it:

“How many of you ever find studying the layers of the Earth boring? Well, a group of musicians and rappers in New York City decided that they wanted to do something about that, and they did something totally new. They created rap music that teaches some of the same things that we cover in class. They have been on MTV and CNN, and one of the producers in the group has worked with Jay-Z and Beyonce. Now some of you might prefer the traditional way of learning by reading the information in books. That's fine because we're still going to be doing that. But I wanted to play one of these songs for you to see what you think.”  
(You might also add: “I don't know a whole lot about rap music. And no,

I'm not going to rap for you! I just want to see if you enjoy this.”)

## A Suggested Lesson Plan

Note: “Day One” and “Day Two” do not have to be consecutive days; they could be many days apart.

### Day One

#### **Step One: Intro**

The easiest way to introduce a Flocabulary lesson is to read the chapter introduction aloud as a class. While this is optional, it will get students thinking about the topic and pique their interest.

Another good idea is to have students do “carousel brainstorming,” a straightforward cooperative learning technique. Split your class into groups of three or four each, and provide each group of students with a piece of paper and a pencil. Give each student 60 seconds to write down whatever they already know about the topic at hand. Instruct them to write down names, facts, concepts, impressions—as much as they can in just 60 seconds. Encourage them to write even if they are not 100 percent sure that what they’re writing is correct. After 60 seconds, the student must pass the paper to a teammate. Repeat this procedure until all the group members have completed the activity. Then have the groups discuss what they have written either within their small groups or as a whole class.

#### **Step Two: Play the Song**

While the music portion of Flocabulary learning tools is just one lesson element, it is the most engaging and interesting element. Most likely, your students will feel the same way and will ask to listen to the song over and over. Fortunately, you can humor them without feeling like class work has been thrown out the window because each time you play the song presents new teaching opportunities.

#### **Step Three: Review the Basics**

The next step is for your students to analyze the song and for you to make sure that they understand it. Here are some questions to ask.

1. What was that song about?
2. From whose perspective was it told?
3. Were there any lines that you especially liked?
4. What characters were mentioned in the song?
5. What is the timeframe for the song? When did that action take place?
6. What new information about this event/time period did you gain from the song?

#### **Step Four: Close Reading**

If you are using this song to introduce the topic, you will want to direct your students to the central themes that you will be covering in the next few weeks. Paint the

big picture for them. Let's say you are using *Hip-Hop History of the World* to teach about the human evolution. The big picture might be: For millions of years humans were nomadic and followed their food, but civilization started when people began to farm. With that as a central thesis, you can then use the song to provide supporting facts.

If you're using the song in the middle of your lesson or as a review, your students will already be somewhat familiar with the subject material. It is still a good idea to do a close reading of the lyrics, but you may want to provide a main thesis or central idea, simply in order to give your students a foundation for tackling the song.

Look through the song as a group, seeking out critical facts that relate to your main point. You might direct a student to think about these lines:

*We ira-irrigate, control water flows,  
Plow the land, plant the crops,  
And watch them grow.  
Now my brother doesn't even  
Have to farm no more,  
The Bronze Age – he's making  
Bronze arms and swords.*

This is your chance to reinforce key terms and ideas by asking those crucial questions: What is irrigation? Why does irrigation and farming lead to the line "now my brother doesn't even have to farm no more?" Why did this guy's brother have to farm originally? What changed? Discussing such questions in the context of the song will encourage critical thinking and engage even those students who rarely participate.

At the end of this lesson, each student should have their own CD and textbook, so they will be able to listen to the songs and read along at home or on the bus.

### **Day One Homework**

For homework, have students listen to the song again and then read the whole chapter or a part of it. A typical chapter is six to seven pages long, but much of that is lyrics.

### **Day Two**

#### **Step Five: Explaining the Lyrics**

Now that students have more knowledge about the topic and the song, you are going to play the song and have your students explain the lyrics. Play the song but pause it after the first chunk of important information. (Your students may wish to hear it all the way through first). For example, play the first song up to this point:

*Man, we didn't always look like this,  
We didn't have fire,  
Couldn't cook like this.  
We didn't sleep with a pillow,  
Lived in trees originally, so if you*

*Cried you would weep in a willow.  
But one monkey comes down;  
It's cool,  
When he gets up on his hind legs,  
He can use tools.  
Might kill a bird or two, but that's  
Not happening much,  
Instead, he's picking blueberries  
And he's gathering nuts.  
But what's this?  
He's making a stone knife,  
Now he's hunting antelope his  
Whole life.*

Now, pause the song and ask your students, "What physical traits helped humans become successful hunters? What inventions helped early humans survive?" Once your students have answered these questions, play the song until the next important point and then pause it again. Continue through the song using this procedure.

If your class period is already very full, you may find this is all you can do. Luckily, many of your students will independently listen to these tracks and find themselves learning and recalling the information when it comes to the test. Day 3 is the extended lesson plan that offers some creative opportunities for your students to develop relevant knowledge.

### **Day Three**

#### **Step Six: Debate and Discussion**

Students of all ages enjoy discussion and debate. Debating appeals to them because it involves interacting with others. Use discussion and debate to develop meaningful connections to academic content. In this case, you can think of the activity as a debate, a rap battle, or both. First, your students should identify potential controversies in the selected topic. Here are a few examples for Unit One:

- The invention of farming was more important than the development of tools.
- Controlling water lead to civilization more than controlling fire did.

Anything works so long as both sides can be intelligently argued. Once your class has generated a few controversies, divide your students into groups of four to six. Assign each group one side of one controversy, so that two groups together represent both sides of an argument. Now have each group independently come up with a list of arguments or facts that support their thesis. For example, if one group was assigned "Controlling fire was more important to civilization than controlling water," they might list the following:

1. Fire allowed humans to eat meat safely (instead of dying from bacteria)
2. Fire allowed humans to cook the grains they planted. Without that, the only thing they'd be able to farm is vegetables.
3. Fire allowed humans to move to colder climates and survive there.

They should generate at least one point per person in the group. Once all of your students have written down their points, you need to decide if you will be hosting a debate or a rap battle. With a debate, set up some ground rules: Each team has one minute to argue their point and thirty seconds to respond, and winners will be chosen by the teacher. Then, let the kids do their thing.

If you choose to turn your debate into a rap battle, instruct your students to turn each of their points into two or four rhyming lines. Students can work independently or in groups on one rhyme each. Set up some basic rules such as: No foul language, and no dissing others. A student might come up with something like this:

*If you eat uncooked meat, you could get E Coli,  
But use fire to cook it and you won't die,  
Now it tastes so nice, it's hotter than hot tea,  
I put water on my meat, it just got soggy,*

Next, have the student groups perform their raps in a back and forth manner. This fun exercise lets students use their own performance and discussion skills to process the information. You can elect a winner or keep the rap battle uncompetitive.

*Find more lesson plans in the Teacher Resource Book for each title.*