

# MULTIMODAL CASE STUDY

**By Kay and Kristof**

# CONNECTING WITH STUDENTS THROUGH MUSIC

For our multimodular case study, we decided to focus on how connecting with students Liam and Connor through their musical tastes enabled us to build rapport, discuss serious issues of importance to them, and motivate them in the classroom.

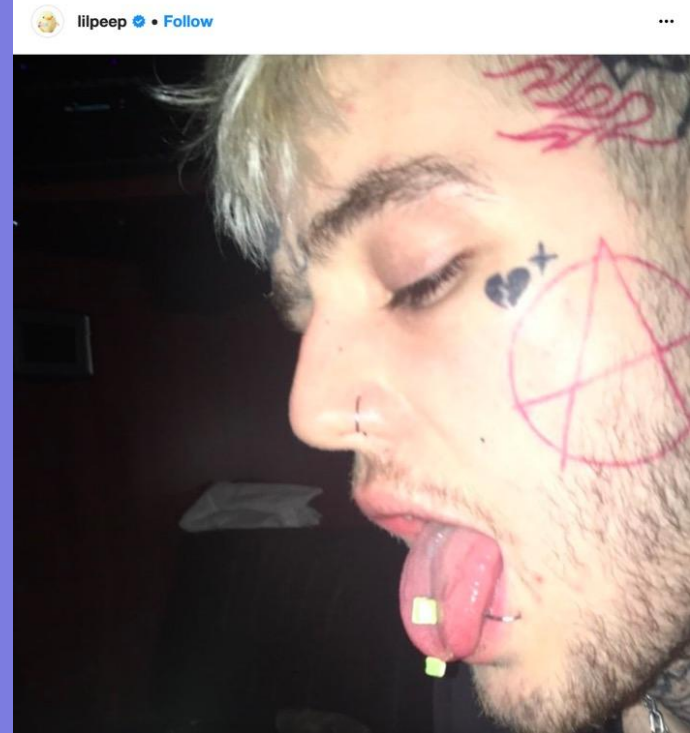


# FIRST DAY AT ESQUIMALT HIGH SCHOOL

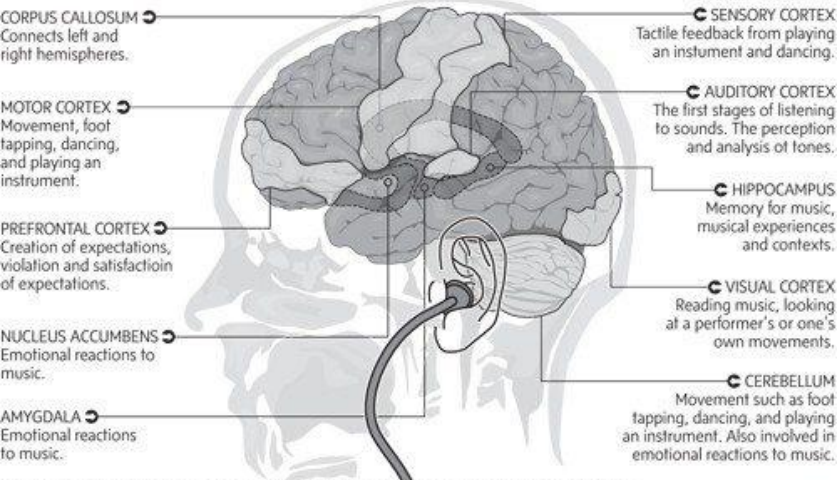
On the first day of class, Kay commented on Liam's sweater which had a frowny face on the front of it. Liam told the group it was a Lil Peep sweater. Kristof and Kay recognized the name Lil Peep and we all began talking about rap music. We discussed Lil Peep's uninhibited incorporation of his own mental health and personal issues into his music (Lil Peep is known for his personal lyrics and his musical style which borrows from emo music, this style of rap could be described as "emo rap").



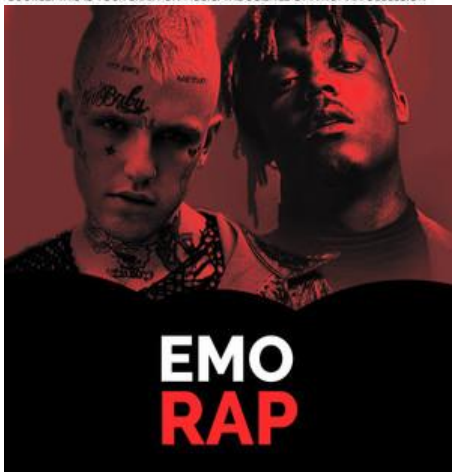
Our discussion centred around how Lil Peep is a complicated role model because he has exhibited some problematic behaviour but he was also very open about mental health issues, which is useful for breaking stigma. Lil Peep died of an overdose in 2017, a few weeks after his 21st birthday. We did not get into this at the table, but we are curious as to what the youth think about Lil Peep's death. We are also curious as to their opinion on Lil Peep's lifestyle choices, such as getting multiple face tattoos and heavy use of recreational drugs including prescription medication.



When we listen to music, it's processed in many different areas of our brain. The extent of the brain's involvement was scarcely imagined until the early nineties, when functional brain imaging became possible. The major computational centres include:



MIKE FALLE/THE GLOBE AND MAIL SOURCE: THIS IS YOUR BRAIN ON MUSIC: THE SCIENCE OF A HUMAN OBSESSION



## WHY LIL PEEP?

We wonder why liking Lil Peep is part of Liam's identity to the extent that he wears a Lil Peep sweater. We could perhaps relate this personally to artists that we enjoyed in our youth such as Kurt Cobain or Marilyn Manson. These artists explore dark topics such as sex, death, and substance use. This could be intriguing to a younger viewer who is just beginning their personal exploration of these areas of life. In some ways it would be easier to avoid acknowledging or discussing the student's fandom of this kind of music because it brings up many difficult topics. However, it is clearly a big part of their identity and was ultimately a useful entry point to discussing big issues with the students. We hope we can be a positive voice in these tough conversations.

A video for Context



# GHOSTEMANE



We also discussed the rapper Ghostmane. We talked about his particular visual aesthetic including his music videos, which are very unique and visually consistent. Liam and Connor pointed out that the videos use archival footage of old cartoons, which they thought was a cool concept. Kay pointed out that these cartoons were made during a time when race relations in North America were different, and wondered if all the dark-coloured cartoon animals and plants featured in Ghostmane videos had a slight minstrel show quality that was being used in the videos. She found this to be a potentially interesting entry point into further discussions about race relations with the youth and mentally noted that something like this could be an interesting hook in a Social Studies classroom, or for an inquiry project with a Social Studies component.



# I BELIEVE YOU BUT MY TOMMY GUN DON'T - GHOSTEMANE





# RELATING OUR PROJECT TO THEIR INTEREST

Building rapport by discussing what media interested us also came in handy because we were able to explain why the classroom learning we were doing might be relevant to the students' interests and experiences. When we were recording sounds to build a soundscape with the students we talked about how music producers often sample real-life sounds. Rap producers might record a sound from their environment and put it into a beat. We were able to communicate how our sound recording process was a learning experience that was applicable to their interest in rap music.

## HOW DO WE TAKE THE INTEREST OF 20+ STUDENTS INTO CONSIDERATION

In our visits as Esquimalt High, we were able to take interest in the students' personal lives and interests. However, we only worked with four students in total. When we have our own classes, we will have to consider over twenty different students' interests. I think it is beneficial for Teachers to incorporate as much discussion and connection to the students' personal interests because it helps the student think critically about the media that they interact with every day. In an English class, it is easy to adapt a unit to teach the students through the poetry in the music they listen to, or understand the music videos that they watch. Personally, I would discuss at the beginning of a term the books, video games, music, and films that the students love and hate.

# LOVE AND HATE: BUILDING A CULTURE OF READING IN THE CLASSROOM

In Peggy Silva's article, "Can We Read Today or Do We Hafta Do English", Silva explains that on the first day of her English class she always asks the students to write down the name of a book that they love and book that they despise. To adapt her activity, I would include the expanded notions of text that have developed over the 21st century. Silvia then has the class discuss the books they love and despise and any conclusions they can draw from these. This seemingly random conversation that the students have becomes important for the entire year of Silvia's class. From then on she transforms her classroom and builds a culture of reading. Silva creates a culture of reading through encouragement, encouraging the students interests and transforming her teaching environment to allow reading every class. Again, this can be adapted to more modern texts as well and as teachers we can build a culture of reading a "Text" and critically thinking about the "texts" that students find interesting--Whatever that text is. In our Esquimalt visits it happened to be the music of Lil Peep and the videos of Ghostmane that helped shape our final project.

Article:

Silva, P. (2003). Can we read today, or do we hafta do english? *The English Journal*, 93(1), 29-32. doi:10.2307/3650566