# Accentuate The Positive: Unit 1: Lessons 1 & 2

## Lesson #1: "Accentuate the Positive" (1944) by Johnny Mercer & Harold Arlen

## Lesson Overview
These lessons are an introduction to Johnny Mercer, the Great American Songbook, and lyric writing. Classes will receive the original Accentuate the Positive: Guide to Lyric Writing for Kids programming. Students will be exposed to different subject matters and will have opportunities to learn tools for lyric writing and creating personal lyrics, all while fulfilling national core standards. Have fun!

## Objectives
Upon completion of this lesson students will be able to:
Know about songwriter Johnny Mercer
Understand the definitions of lyricist and composer
Have an understanding of songwriting skills: Rhyme, Personification
Write lyrics for a song

## Standards
*Nat'l Core Arts - Music: Creating*. Students will generate musical ideas, rhythms and will be encouraged to create their own melodies.

*English/Lang Arts Standards:* STRANDS--*Reading Foundational & Writing*. Students will apply phonics and word recognition as well as writing personal opinionated texts using the figurative language concepts discussed in the lessons.

**Top of Form**
**Bottom of Form**
**Time Required**
One class period of at least 45-50 minutes

## Lesson Preparation
Ask students what music they like and have them start to investigate who wrote those songs.

Materials:
Accentuate the Positive: Guide to Lyric Writing for Kids booklet
Whiteboard space for teacher/teaching artist
Writing paper and pencils

Resources:
The Johnny Mercer Foundation: www.johnnymercer.org
        If needed, refer to the video of the educator workshop on the Accentuate the Positive webpage.
Johnny Mercer Collections at Georgia State University: http://library.gsu.edu/mercer

# Accentuate The Positive: Unit 1: Lessons 1 & 2 *(con't)*

## Lesson Procedure

Introduce the program and Johnny Mercer.
>    Who is Johnny Mercer?

Empower the students by explaining that anyone has the ability to write lyrics, even if they have no experience.  (If they can write a sentence, they can write a song, and they will be given the tools to do that).

Define Lyricist & Composer.

Introduce the song "Accentuate the Positive" and discuss the background of the song (see below: Information about "Accentuate the Postiive").

Play the song "Accentuate the Positive" and ask students to follow along with lyrics on sheet music (see page 30 of the Accentuate the Positive: Guide to Lyric Writing for Kids booklet)
>    What is the message of the song?
>    Review understanding of lyrics – clarify definitions of words they may not understand,
>    particularly the title "Accentuate."

Additional Writing Skills: Introduce and define Rhyme and Personification.
>    Circle the rhyming words in the lyrics.
>    Underline examples of personification.

Brainstorm Song Ideas

Positive advice, ways students stay positive, how to help others/community/environment, how they can cheer up a friend, etc.

Write the lyrics for a song using the brainstorming prompt.
>    Encourage students to experiment with rhyme/personification.

Have students share their work.

Introduce copyright and have the students copyright their songs.
>    © name, year

## Extension
Students could start to experiment with how they would sing or rap the song by adding melodies and/or beats.

## Lesson Evaluation
>    Teacher observation of participation.
>    Evaluation of song lyrics using a rubric.
>    Student self-evaluation of process and project.

# Accentuate The Positive: Unit 1: Lessons 1 & 2 *(con't)*

## Information about "Accentuate The Positive"
Published in 1944 and used in the 1944 American musical film *Here Come the Waves*.
Made popular by Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters, but has since been covered by Ella Fitzgerald,
Perry Como, Aretha Franklin, Paul McCartney, and Barry Manilow.
Nominated for the 1945 Academy Award for Best Original Song.
Has been inducted into the Library of Congress' National Recording Registry because of its "cultural,
artistic, and historical significance to American society."
**From *The Complete Lyrics of Johnny Mercer*:**