

Taylor or William? Who has done a better job?

This classroom activity can be done in one session with stronger classes but will usually take two sessions depending on how deep you want to go into the discussion with your students.

At the end of the lesson plan you can find topics for further discussions or creative writing tasks which can be used for summative evaluation.

Introduction

Ask students to write 3 things they know about Taylor Swift. Give them 1 minute for the task and then elicit answers and write them on the board. Do a short follow up by asking students if they listen to her music, why yes / no?

Main part

After the discussion in the previous part give hand-outs with the lyrics to the song “Ophelia”.

The first task will be to try and guess which words are missing. You can choose any words you want to practice. In the example the missing words are the one's students probably don't know. (The hand-out is attached at the end)

After the guessing part and a short discussion play the audio or even better the video of the song. Students check their answers.

After the audio do the comprehension questions:

1) Identify one metaphor in the song that suggests emotional heaviness / being consumed by feelings.

(Possible answers: drowning, sinking, falling, being weighed down)

2) What feeling or situation does the narrator claim she is “saved” from?

(Possible answers: emotional destruction / heartbreak / being overwhelmed)

3) Explain why comparing oneself to Ophelia creates a dramatic tone.

(Answer: Because Ophelia symbolizes tragic emotional collapse)

4) What image in the song suggests transformation from despair to hope?

(Possible answers: saved, pulled from the water, lifted, light)

5) In *Hamlet*, Ophelia is silenced and dies tragically. In the song, how is Ophelia's story altered or reimagined?

(Possible answer: The song rewrites Ophelia's ending as one of rescue instead of death; she is saved not drowned, giving her meaning and hope.)

6) What does this reinterpretation say about how modern artists use older stories to express new emotions?

(Possible answer: Artists use older stories because the symbolism is universal; it helps express deep emotions using familiar stories.)

7) Identify two themes present in the song (e.g., rescue, identity, fate). Explain each briefly.

(Possible themes: emotional rescue, redemption, identity, fame and pressure, overcoming despair)

8) What might “drowning” symbolize in the context of a modern pop song?

(Possible answers: emotional overload, depression, heartbreak, or losing oneself)

9) Why do artists often use tragic literary characters to express personal experiences?

(Possible answer. Because tragic characters express intense emotions, making them powerful tools for metaphor.)

Conclusion

As a conclusion to the topic ask students to do a short creative task. They can choose between 2 options:

- 1) Write 4–6 lines from the perspective of “modern Ophelia” responding to the song.
- 2) Create a one-sentence statement that summarizes what the song is saying about emotional survival.

Extra discussion topic:

Discussion / Debate: Is the Song a Reclamation of Ophelia’s Story?

Divide the class in 2 groups:

Side A: The song tries to give Ophelia meaning, transforms tragedy into strength.

Side B: The song uses tragedy for pop-star metaphor but doesn’t address the real tragedy — is that problematic?

Encourage use of both song lyrics and knowledge about Ophelia’s original story in Hamlet.

Extra creative writing tasks:

- 1) Rewrite a short diary entry from the perspective of “Ophelia (modernized)” — reflect on her feelings before rescue, at the moment of redemption, or after.
- 2) Write a short paragraph that turns the tragic ending into a hopeful one, as the song does.
- 3) Imagine a dialogue between “classical Ophelia” (from *Hamlet*) and “song-Ophelia” (from *The Fate of Ophelia*) — what might they say to each other?

Student hand-out

Taylor Swift

"The Fate of Ophelia"

I heard you calling on the _____
You wanna see me all alone
As legend has it you are quite the pyro
You light the _____ to watch it blow

And if you'd never come for me
I might've drowned in the melancholy
I _____ my loyalty to me, myself, and I
Right before you _____ my sky up

All that time, I sat _____ in my tower
You were just honing your _____
Now I can see it all
Late one night, you _____ me out of my grave
and
Saved my _____ from the fate of Ophelia
Keep it one hundred on the land, the sea, the
sky

_____ allegiance to your hands, your
team, your vibes
Don't care where the _____ you been, 'cause
now you're mine
It's 'bout to be the _____ night you've
been dreaming of
The fate of Ophelia

The eldest daughter of a nobleman
Ophelia _____ in fantasy
But love was a cold bed full of scorpions
The _____ stole her sanity

And if you'd never come for me
I might've _____ in purgatory
You _____ around me like a chain, a
crown, a vine
Pulling me into the fire

All that time, I sat _____ in my tower
You were just honing your _____
Now I can see it all
Late one night, you _____ me out of my grave
and
Saved my _____ from the fate of Ophelia
Keep it one hundred on the land, the sea, the
sky

_____ allegiance to your hands, your
team, your vibes
Don't care where the _____ you been, 'cause
now you're mine
It's 'bout to be the _____ night you've
been dreaming of
The fate of Ophelia

'Tis _____ inside my memory
And only you possess the key
No longer drowning and deceived
All because you came for me
_____ inside my memory
And only you possess the key
No longer drowning and deceived
All because you came for me

All that time, I sat _____ in my tower
You were just honing your _____
Now I can see it all
Late one night, you _____ me out of my grave
and
Saved my _____ from the fate of Ophelia
Keep it one hundred on the land, the sea, the
sky

_____ allegiance to your hands, your
team, your vibes
Don't care where the _____ you been, 'cause
now you're mine
It's 'bout to be the _____ night you've
been dreaming of
The fate of Ophelia

You saved my heart from the fate of Ophelia

- 1.** Identify one metaphor in the song that suggests emotional heaviness / being consumed by feelings.
- 2.** What feeling or situation does the narrator claim she is “saved” from?
- 3.** Explain why comparing oneself to Ophelia creates a dramatic emotional tone.
- 4.** What image in the song suggests transformation from despair to hope?
- 5.** In *Hamlet*, Ophelia is silenced and dies tragically. In the song, how is Ophelia’s story altered or reimagined?
- 6.** What does this reinterpretation say about how modern artists use older stories to express new emotions?
- 7.** Identify two themes present in the song (e.g., rescue, identity, fate). Explain each briefly.
- 8.** What might “drowning” symbolize in the context of a modern pop song?
- 9.** Why do artists often use tragic literary characters to express personal experiences?
- 10.** Write 4–6 lines from the perspective of “modern Ophelia” responding to the song.
- 11.** Create a one-sentence statement that summarizes what the song is saying about emotional survival.