

WORDPLAY
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
THROUGH LYRICS

FEATURING
TAMARA JADE



Find materials for additional artists at
<https://thelyricsproject.org>



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WORDPLAY

ICONS

For each heading in the materials, we have identified an icon to help instructors quickly find and identify information.

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More Challenging (for intermediate/advanced learners)	
Online Tip	

New year, new me, new trees, new leaves
Finally got the hang of this thing called life
Taking it all in stride
On my own two feet,
traveling, living this dream
seeing places I ain't never seen before
Ready for so much more

Here you come to mess things up for me,
Walls are closing in on me,
It's just all too much for me,
Stop, and breathe

We gone, we gone, be alright
We gone, we gone, be alright
Keep your head up, it's gonna get better
We gone, we gone, be alright

Mama says be cautious,
They say we're all good,
I don't know who to believe,
Collective misfortune they ain't got the potion,
How are we going to get out of this thing?

Quarantine, work on me, that's all I can do right now,
I won't stress over what I can't change

We gone, we gone, be alright
We gone, we gone, be alright
Keep your head up, it's gonna get better
We gone, we gone, be alright

Stop and breathe
Only going up from here
Only going up from here

Keep your head up it's going to get better
Only going up from here
Only going up from here (repeated)

We gone, we gone, be alright
We gone, we gone, be alright

Associated Audio



"Better" by Tamara Jade

A2 Level Words

believe - verb, to think something is true

dream - noun, a series of images that happen in your mind when you sleep

finally - adverb, after a long time or some difficulty

going to - verb, to intend to do or be something

just - adverb, only or simply

keep - verb, continue to do something

own - adjective, belonging to or done by a particular person or thing

so - adverb, very; a lot or a large degree of something

B1 Level Words

breathe - verb, to take air into and out of your lungs

call - verb, to give something a particular name

go up - verb, to become higher in level

stress - noun, feelings of worry caused by difficult situations or problems

B2 Level Words

cautious - adj., taking care to avoid risks or danger

come to - verb, change something

get out of - verb, to avoid doing something that you do not want to do

work on - verb, to spend time repairing or improving something

C1/C2 Level Words

close in - verb, surrounding something

misfortune - noun, bad luck, or an unlucky event

over - preposition, about (something)



Other Words

collective – noun, a group of people or society

gonna – verb, going to (informal)

mama – noun, mother

mess up – verb, to do something badly

potion – noun, a drink of poison or magic powers

quarantine – noun, when a person keeps away from others in order to prevent disease

travel – verb, going from place to place

***we gone be alright** – another way to say the phrase *we are going to be alright*

"Better"

Tamara Jade

Activity Summary



Students practice their speaking skills by discussing the meanings of phrases from a song and answering questions before listening to a song.

Associated Audio



"Better" by Tamara Jade

Lesson Plan



1. Before class, print out copies of the worksheets (on the following pages) for each student.
2. Put students in small groups and tell them that they are going to guess the meaning of phrases in English. They should not use a dictionary at this time.
3. When they have finished, check the answers as a class.
4. Ask students to use the newly learned phrases to analyze the song lyrics in Section II before checking the answers as a class.
5. Give each group a copy of the song lyrics or project them in the classroom. Ask students to read the lyrics and then answer questions in Section III. Check their answers as a class.

Answer key for Section I:

1. Got the hang of it - learned how to do something new
2. Taking it all in stride - dealing with a difficult circumstance or problem calmly
3. To be on his/his/their own two feet - to be independent
4. To work on myself/himself/herself/theirself - to improve oneself, usually mentally
5. To get out of (something) - to cancel plans or to leave a bad situation
6. To keep my head up/to keep my chin up - to stay positive and/or be proud of oneself even in bad circumstances

“Better”

Tamara Jade

Section I - Read the sentences below. In groups, discuss the meaning of the phrases in **bold** and take notes on your answers. Do not use a dictionary.

1. He's new at riding his bicycle, but I think he's **got the hang of it**.
2. Losing my job was difficult, but I'm **taking it all in stride**.
3. She moved out of her parent's house. She wanted **to be on her own two feet**.
4. I just graduated college and I have more free time. I want to use this time **to work on myself**.
5. I'm in trouble with my parents. How am I going to **get out of** this?
6. I'm going through a difficult time right now, but I'm trying **to keep my head up**.

Section II - Now, find the same phrases in the lyrics to the song “Better.” Discuss the meaning of the song lyrics.

“New year, new me, new trees, new leaves
Finally **got the hang of this thing** called life
Taking it all in stride
On my own two feet,
traveling, living this dream”

“Collective misfortune they ain't got the potion,
How are we going **to get out of this thing?**”

“Quarantine, **work on me**, that's all I can do right now,
I won't stress over what I can't change”

“Keep your head up, it's gonna get better”

“Better”

Tamara Jade

Section III - Read the lyrics to the song “Better” and answer the questions below.

1. In one word, how would you describe the lyrics to the song “Better”?

2. What do you think the song “Better” is about?

3. What do you think Tamara Jade is referring to when she says, “they ain’t got the potion”?

4. Why do you think the lyrics “we gone be alright” are repeated many times?

5. How do you think the music will sound in “Better”? (Happy, upbeat, sad, slow, etc.)



"Better"

Tamara Jade

Activity Summary



Students put song lyrics into the correct order.

Associated Audio



"Better" by Tamara Jade

Before class:

- Print enough lyrics scramble sheets (found on the following pages) for one out of every three students.
- Cut the song lyrics on the dotted lines.
- Mix up the order of the lyrics, taking care to keep lyrics from each sheet separate.

Lesson Plan



1. Put students into small groups and give each group of students a set of the cut-out lyrics.
2. Ask students to put the song lyrics in order.
3. Ask groups to check their answers with another group.
4. Listen to the song to check the answers as a class.

Less Challenging



Depending on the level and ability of your students, you can play the song several times.

"Better"

Tamara Jade

New year, new me, new trees, new leaves
Finally got the hang of this thing called life

Taking it all in stride
On my own two feet,

traveling, living this dream,
seeing places I ain't never seen before

Ready for so much more

Here you come to mess things up for me,
Walls are closing in on me,

It's just all too much for me,
Stop, and breathe

We gone, we gone, be alright
We gone, we gone, be alright
Keep your head up, it's gonna get better
We gone, we gone, be alright

Mama says be cautious,
They say we're all good,

I don't know who to believe,

Collective misfortune they ain't got the potion,
How are we going to get out of this thing?

Quarantine, work on me, that's all I can do right now,
I won't stress over what I can't change

We gone, we gone, be alright
We gone, we gone, be alright
Keep your head up, it's gonna get better
We gone, we gone, be alright



"Better"

Tamara Jade

Stop and breathe
Only going up from here
Only going up from here

Keep your head up it's going to get better
Only going up from here
Only going up from here (repeated)

We gone, we gone, be alright
We gone, we gone, be alright

Activity Summary



Students listen to a song and fill in the missing words.

Associated Audio



“Better” by Tamara Jade

Lesson Plan



1. Print enough lyrics gap-fill sheets (found on the next pages) for each student.
2. Give each student their own lyrics gap-fill sheet.
3. Ask students to take 1-2 minutes to look at the song lyrics before listening to the song.
4. Play the song and ask students to fill in the missing words. Play the song a second time to complete the worksheet.
5. Put students into groups of 2-3 to check answers.
6. Project the lyrics gap-fill sheet on the board and ask students to come to the board to fill in the missing words, or write the numbers on the board and ask students to write the missing word next to the correct number.

Online Tip



This activity can be easily replicated online. Share the worksheet with students online, and put students into breakout rooms to check their answers in small groups. Ask students to write their answer for each number in the chat box or by saying the word aloud.

Answer key:

- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| 1. tree | 7. believe |
| 2. living | 8. collective |
| 3. ready | 9. thing |
| 4. closing | 10. change |
| 5. breathe | 11. breathe |
| 6. cautious | |

New year, new me, new 1._____, new leaves
Finally got the hang of this thing called life
Taking it all in stride
On my own two feet,
traveling, 2._____ this dream
seeing places I ain't never seen before
3._____ for so much more

Here you come to mess things up for me,
Walls are 4._____ in on me,
It's just all too much for me,
Stop, and 5._____

We gone, we gone, be alright
We gone, we gone, be alright
Keep your head up, it's gonna get better
We gone, we gone, be alright

Mama says be 6._____,
They say we're all good,
I don't know who to 7._____,
8._____ misfortune they ain't got the potion,
How are we going to get out of this 9._____?

Quarantine, work on me, that's all I can do right now,
I won't stress over what I can't 10._____

We gone, we gone, be alright
We gone, we gone, be alright
Keep your head up, it's gonna get better
We gone, we gone, be alright

Stop and 11._____
Only going up from here
Only going up from here



Keep your head up it's going to get better

Only going up from here

Only going up from here (repeated)

We gone, we gone, be alright

We gone, we gone, be alright

“Better”

Tamara Jade

Activity Summary



Students practice writing skills by writing about a goal.

Associated Audio



“Better” by Tamara Jade

Lesson Plan



1. Print enough activity worksheets (found on the following page) for each student.
2. Ask students if they have achieved a goal in the past and what steps they took to reach that goal. (If needed, give an example from your life.)
3. Tell students they are going to write about a **specific** goal. For example, “Learning English” is too general. A more specific answer would be “Pass all English classes with a score of 90% or above.” or “Get an 80 or above on the TOEFL exam this December.”
4. Give students time to work independently to answer the activity questions. When they are finished, ask for volunteers to share what they wrote.

More Challenging



Use this activity as a pre-writing activity. Depending on the level of your students, they can use this worksheet to write a paragraph or short essay about a goal and how they plan to reach it.

Online Tip



In an online course, you may want students to read more about creating SMART goals. You can find more information about SMART goals through this link: <https://www.umassd.edu/fycm/goal-setting/resources/smartgoals/>

"Better"

Tamara Jade

Think of a specific goal you would like to achieve in the next five years. Be as specific as possible. How will you measure this goal?



Learn English (too general)



Take the TOEFL in December and get a score of 80 or above. (specific)

A goal I have for the future is _____

Is this a realistic/achievable goal? _____

How will you know if you have reached this goal? _____

What actions do you need to take to reach this goal? Give a deadline for each action.

1. _____ complete by: _____

2. _____ complete by: _____

3. _____ complete by: _____

4. _____ complete by: _____

5. _____ complete by: _____

When will you achieve your goal? _____



Activity Summary

- ✓ Students practice their listening skills by answering comprehension questions based on a video.

Associated Video



“Inspiration for the Song” Video

<https://thelyricsproject.org/package/tamara-jade/>

Lesson Plan



1. Print enough activity worksheets (found on the following page) for each student.
2. Tell students they should read the questions first and then watch the video.
3. Play the “Inspiration for the Song” video. (You may play the video as many times as needed.)
4. After watching the video, give students a few minutes to complete the worksheet. They may need to watch the video more than once.
5. When they are finished, ask students to check their answers with a partner, and then check the answers as a class.

Read the questions and watch the video about the inspiration for the song “Better.” Then, answer the comprehension questions based on the video.

1. What was Tamara Jade doing before the pandemic started?

2. How did she feel during the pandemic?

3. How did Tamara stay productive during the pandemic?

4. Where did Tamara first hear Brandon’s “10-second loop”?

5. Why does Tamara say that the song “Better” is special?



Activity Summary



Students practice their listening, speaking, and skills by watching and discussing videos.

Associated Videos



“About Your Instrument” – “Spoken vs. Written” – “Songwriting Process” – “Historical Reference” videos

<https://thelyricsproject.org/package/tamara-jade/>

Lesson Plan



1. Put students into groups of four. Each student is in charge of watching one video and sharing the content with their group. (If you do not have enough students to put four people in a group, you can eliminate one of the videos.)
2. Assign each student in a group to watch **one** of the videos listed above. (If you are teaching online or assigning this step as homework, send students a link to their assigned videos. If you are teaching in person, you can create four computer stations so each student can watch their assigned video.)
3. Ask students to watch their assigned videos and be ready to summarize them for their group. Students may watch multiple times, but they should not take notes as they watch.
4. Now, put students into their Expert Groups. The Expert Groups are composed of the students who watched the same video. (Everyone who watched video 1 is in a group, video 2 in another group, etc.) Students should practice summarizing their videos. Students need to make sure everyone in their Expert Group can summarize the video.
5. Ask students to leave their expert groups and return to their original groups. Students take turns summarizing their videos for the group.
6. Use the questions on the next page (or create your own) to check understanding of the videos.

Online Tip



Use Kahoot (<https://kahoot.com/>) to create an interactive quiz game. (Learn more about jigsaw activities at: <https://www.jigsaw.org/>.)



Sample Assessment Questions**Video 1: “About Your Instrument”**

1. Where did the music from “Better” originally come from?

Answer: Brandon Watts created the music.

2. On what social media platform did Tamara hear Brandon Watts’ music?

Answer: Instagram

3. True or False: Tamara and Brandon collaborated on their song in person.

Answer: False

Video 2: “Spoken vs. Written”

1. What does “we gone be alright” mean?

Answer: We are going to be alright.

2. Why did Tamara choose to sing the words “We are going to be alright” like this?

Answer: It is easier to sing.

Video 3: “Songwriting Process”

1. What type of song did Tamara want to create?

Answer: something easy to sing along to

2. Where does the musical technique “call and response” come from?

Answer: Black churches in the U.S.

Video 4: “Historical Reference”

1. Tamara originally described the word *quarantine* as a _____.

Answer: prison

2. What is Tamara’s advice to people who have to quarantine or can’t do things they love to do?

Answer: Think about ways to improve yourself.

