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Common Core Connections

The Common Core State Standards require close reading of literary texts with analysis of content, structure, themes, and use of language. Rich and complex, this nonfiction picture book provides opportunities for careful reading to glean facts, understand the history and relationships portrayed, and analyze poetic language. This teachers' guide includes discussion questions and curriculum activities to use with students in grades 4–7, reading the book as a class, in small groups, or independently. Several of the curriculum activities emphasize the book's references to music, an area with high appeal for many students. The activities also highlight the book's back matter, which supplements the text and models the kind of research that underlies strong informational writing. The guide correlates the questions and activities with specific Common Core English Language Arts Standards. For more information on specific standards for your grade level, visit the Common Core website at www.corestandards.org.

When Paul Met Artie

The Story of Simon & Garfunkel

by G. NERI

illustrated by DAVID Litchfield

About the Book

Long before they became one of the most beloved and successful duos of all time, Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel were just two kids growing up in Queens, New York—best friends who met in a sixth-grade production of *Alice in Wonderland* and bonded over girls, baseball, and rock 'n' roll. As teens, they practiced singing into a tape recorder, building harmonies that blended their now-famous voices until they sounded just right. They wrote songs together, pursued big-time music producers, and dreamed of becoming stars, never imagining how far their music would take them. Against a backdrop of street-corner doo-wop gangs, the electrifying beginnings of rock 'n' roll, and the rise of the counterculture folk music scene, G. Neri and David Litchfield chronicle the path that led two boys from Queens to teenage stardom and back to obscurity before they found their own true voices and captivated the world with their talent. Back matter includes an afterword, a discography, a bibliography, and a fascinating list of song influences.


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Discussion Questions

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These questions correlate to Common Core ELA Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL.4–7.1, RL.4–7.2, RL.4–7.3; Craft and Structure RL.4–7.4, RL.5–6.5, RL.5–6.6; and ELA Speaking & Listening Standards: Comprehension and Collaboration SL.4–7.1.

1. Before reading the book, carefully study the cover. What can you predict about the book's content? What does it show about Paul and Artie, their relationship, and their interests? What can you tell about the time and place? Give evidence for your answers.



2. Discuss why the author chose to start with an event in 1981 and then go back to "Thirty Years Earlier." After reading the book, return to this first section and analyze what it foreshadows about the duo's success and their relationship to New York City.
3. When did Paul meet Artie? How did they become friends? Describe what they had in common when they were kids and the ways in which they were different.
4. Paul's father was a musician. Explain what he did in his work. What difference did Paul's father make in his son's career? What did he think of rock 'n' roll? How did he help Paul and Artie? What did Paul's mother think her son should do for a career, and why?
5. Find places in the text that refer to the fact that Paul and Artie are Jewish. What role did being Jewish play in their lives and their careers? Why did they initially choose not to use their last names for their recording?
6. Discuss what happens in the section titled "I Am a Rock" and its significance for the duo's future. Analyze the last lines: "But it's too late. Paul and Artie are the only ones who recognize that everything has changed." What has changed and what caused the change?
7. "They don't give you an A for effort in the music biz," Paul's father tells him in the section titled "The Sound of Silence." What does he mean? What were Paul and Artie doing to prompt this observation? Talk about the role of perseverance in their success.

8. Paul and Artie's time together as musicians had significant ups and downs. What were some of the high points? What were some of the setbacks they faced? How did they deal with the setbacks?
9. The book is filled with names of musicians, musical groups, and songs that influenced Simon & Garfunkel. Discuss those influences and the difference they made in the duo's lives and music. Who or what do you think were their most important musical influences? Why?
10. The back cover calls the duo "the voices of their generation." How did their music reflect their time and the feelings of other members of their generation? How did politics and current events influence their songs?
11. The book ends during the time when the song "The Sound of Silence" made it to the top of the charts. Why did the author end the story there instead of later in their career? Why does it end with Paul and Artie in the car in Queens?
12. What surprised you about this true story? What did you learn about the character traits needed to become a successful musician? What do you think were the most important elements in Simon & Garfunkel's musical success?
13. Like Simon & Garfunkel, the author uses metaphors and other figurative language. Find examples and talk about what they add to your reading of the story. In the case of metaphors and similes, what comparisons are being made and why?
14. The illustrations reflect the text and expand upon it. Look at illustrations of Paul and Artie together and analyze what they show about their relationship at that time. Do they look like they are getting along or disagreeing? Discuss the picture that accompanies the section "Bookends," which shows them in the car and above the city.
15. Read the afterword and the bibliography note, as well as the other information at the back of the book. What does the back matter tell you about the work that went into this relatively short book? Discuss why the author includes a discography and the section called "Musical Connections."



Activities

Listen and Respond!

Simon & Garfunkel's music makes a perfect complement to *When Paul Met Artie*. At the official Simon & Garfunkel website, Sony Music has posted videos from their 1981 concert in Central Park. Have students use these or other sources to listen to the duo's songs. Let students respond to the songs through art, poetry, prose, singing, or another creative outlet.



Musical Influences

The “Musical Connections” section at the back of the book lists some of Simon & Garfunkel's influences. The songs date from 1916 to 1966 and include many of the groups and singers mentioned in the text. Have pairs of students each research a different song or album and create a multimedia presentation that includes the music (if possible), facts about the performers, and insights about the music's relationship to Simon & Garfunkel.

Looking Closely

The illustrations effectively convey emotions and information throughout the book. Ask each student to choose a double-page spread (except the one for “Bookends”) and analyze it in writing, connecting the art to the text. What information about time and place does the artwork add? What emotions does it convey? What does it suggest about the relationships of the people shown?

Alike Yet Different

Paul and Artie had a lot in common but were also different in many ways. Have each student create a Venn diagram to illustrate similarities and differences in their backgrounds, interests, personalities, talents, and more. Ask students to meet in small groups, compare their diagrams, and discuss how differences as well as similarities strengthened Simon & Garfunkel's success as a musical duo.

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These activities correlate to Common Core ELA Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL.4–7.1, RL.4–7.2; ELA Speaking & Listening Standards: Comprehension and Collaboration SL.4–7.1; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL.4–7.4, SL.4–7.5, SL.4–7.6; and ELA Writing Standards: Text Types and Purposes W.4–7.2, W.4–7.3; Research to Build and Present Knowledge W.4–7.7.



Activities

Voices of Different Generations

Simon & Garfunkel have been called the “voices of their generation.” Have students interview four adults about the music they consider important to their generation. Students should write down the names of the influential musical groups or singers, the titles of their songs or albums, and the ages of the people they interviewed. Create a classroom chart with the facts, then discuss why the people they interviewed considered this music important.

“I Couldn’t Have Had a Better Time”

The afterword quotes Paul Simon as saying he “couldn’t have had a better time” working with Art Garfunkel. Have students think about what kind of work might lead them to say the same thing when they are older. They should imagine that it’s forty years in the future and write an essay about their lives and the fulfilling work they did in those years.

Johnny Cash Biography

After reading *When Paul Met Artie*, have a class read-aloud of *Hello, I’m Johnny Cash*, another book by the same author. Hold a class discussion comparing the two biographies in terms of content, structure, language, art, and more. Discuss whether biographies of musicians are different from those of other noteworthy people. Listen to a song by Simon & Garfunkel and one by Johnny Cash, then have students talk about the differences and similarities.



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About the Author

G. Neri is the award-winning author of many books for young readers, including *Ghetto Cowboy*, winner of a Horace Mann Upstanders Book Award, and *Hello, I’m Johnny Cash*, an Association for Library Service to Children Notable Book. He is also a filmmaker and artist. He lives on the Gulf Coast of Florida with his wife and daughter.

About the Illustrator

David Litchfield is the creator of the award-winning picture book *The Bear and the Piano* and the illustrator of several other books for young readers. His early artwork included comics that he created for his brother and sister. He lives in the United Kingdom.

A note about the inspiration behind *When Paul Met Artie* is available on the book’s page at www.candlewick.com.

This guide was prepared by Kathleen Odean. She was a school librarian for more than fifteen years and now presents all-day workshops on new books for young people, including one that focuses on Common Core nonfiction. She served as chairperson of the 2002 Newbery Award Committee and is the author of several guides to children’s books, including *Great Books for Girls*, *Great Books for Boys*, and *Great Books About Things Kids Love*.