



Presents

MESSAGE ACADEMY

A young woman with long dark hair is wearing large white headphones. She is smiling and making a peace sign with her right hand. She is wearing a white crop top and denim overalls. The background is a solid blue color.

~~BEHIND THE LINES~~

USER GUIDE



LISTEN

DIFFERENT

LIVE

DIFFERENT

Music isn't just entertainment, it's an extension of who we are. Whether it's a turn-up anthem or a heartbreak ballad, the lyrics we memorize, repeat, and internalize are more than catchy lines. They shape how we see ourselves, how we handle emotions, and how we move through the world. That's what Message Academy Episode 1: Behind the Lines is all about.

This video lesson invites youth to go beyond beats and vibes. Through storytelling, neuroscience, and a guided remix activity, students will unpack the messages in their favorite songs. Because when we learn how to listen differently, we start to live differently.

Behind the Lines is hosted by Juma Inniss – media literacy educator, social entrepreneur, and hip-hop artist.

NOTE: *Adapt the language in this section to match your voice and teaching style when introducing the video to students.*



LOGISTICS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Recognize how lyrics impact mood, mindset, and behavior
- Understand the role music plays in shaping personal identity
- Develop critical listening skills that support mental health and self-awareness
- Use creative writing to adapt song lyrics to give a socially conscious message

MATERIALS NEEDED

Teacher / Facilitator Needs:

- Behind the Lines access link (video link + supporting materials)
- Reliable internet connection
- Laptop, tablet, or another streaming device
- Projector, television, or another collective screening device
- Bluetooth speaker
- Access to Spotify, YouTube, or another similar streaming service

Learners Need:

Laptop, phone, Chromebook, tablet, or another device with access

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

US

National Core Arts Standards in Media Arts (Grades 8-12)

Creating, Producing, Responding, and Connecting

ISTE Standards for Students

Empowered Learner, Creative Communicator

CASEL SEL Competencies

Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, Responsible Decision-Making

Canada

Ontario Curriculum (Grades 8-12)

Enhances critical thinking about song lyrics as media texts influencing identity and behavior (Language Media Literacy)



SESSION FLOW

DURATION OPTIONS

- 20 minutes: Video only
- 25-40 minutes: Video, warmup, and debrief
- 25-90 minutes: Video, warm-up, debrief, guided exercise

1. OPTIONAL WARM-UP (5-10 min)

Build engagement through personal connection to music.

- Ask: "What's one song you've been vibing to or had on repeat lately? Why?"
- Optionally collect responses to build a shared playlist, be sure to specify any school/org preference for clean or explicit versions
- Emphasize: "There's no right or wrong answer; this is about sharing something that moves you, not judgement."

2. WATCH THE BEHIND THE LINES VIDEO (20 min)

- Introduce the video using the "Listen Different, Live Different" narrative adapted for your voice and style
- Let participants know they'll have a chance to remix the lyrics to a song of their choice at the end of the video; they can choose from the shared playlist or select a different song
- Play the video, and let them know if there will be a quiz or discussion afterward
- Share the Behind the Lines Worksheet link either before the video or during Chapter Three

3. "REMIX THE MESSAGE" EXERCISE (Option to extend 30-60 min or next session)

Ground the learning in creative action

- Break students into small groups
- Allow each group to choose a popular song + instrumental
- Instruct students to use the Behind the Lines Worksheet link (in their groups or individually) to analyze the song's message
- Challenge them to rewrite a single line, verse, or chorus of a song to convey a positive or empowering message, something they want to tell the world

4. OPTIONAL DEBRIEF (10 min)

- "What part of the video or the exercise stood out to you the most?"
- "When have you noticed lyrics changing your mood or mindset?"



REINFORCE AND EXTEND LEARNING

KEY LEARNING POINTS

1. Teen brains are uniquely moldable, making them particularly susceptible to lyrical influence
2. Lyrics directly activate the brain's default mode network, connecting song messages to personal identity
3. Unhealthy music use – to ruminate in negative emotions rather than move through them – can lead to depression symptoms
4. Listening to prosocial or positive lyrics can increase kinder, more empathetic, behavior

VIDEO TIPS YOU CAN REINFORCE

- Build a feel-good playlist (on purpose)
- Don't just vibe, pay attention to the message
- If the mood sets you back, switch the track

FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

1. Positive Playlist Challenge

Students create a personal playlist of 3–5 songs that make them feel strong, hopeful, or at peace. They briefly explain why each song was chosen, and the group can compile these into a shared playlist.

2. Music & Identity Journal

Over the course of a week, students reflect on how the music they listen to affects their mood, mindset, and self-perception. Prompts can include:

- "Today, the song that stuck with me was..."
- "It made me feel..."
- "It reminded me of..."

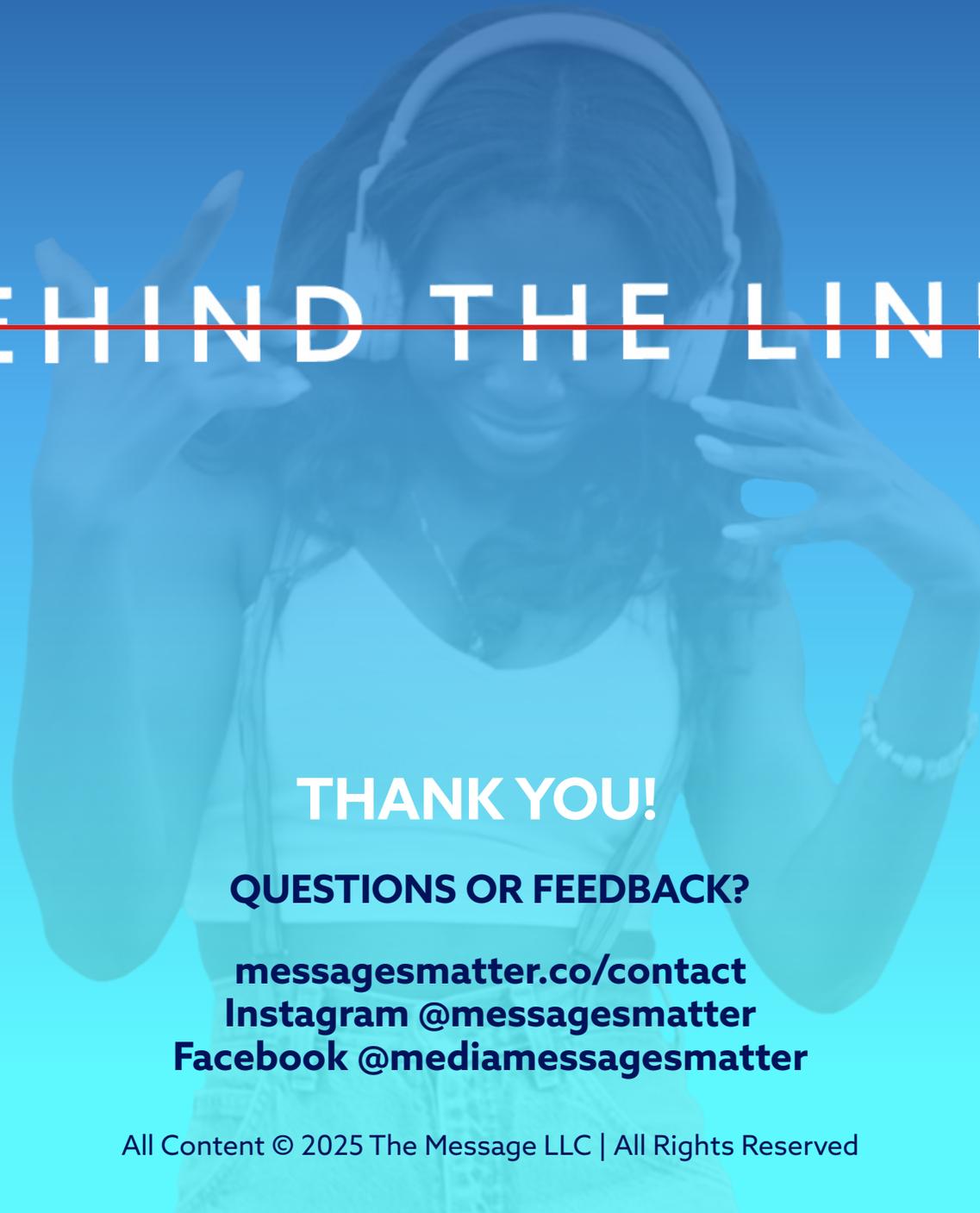
3. Run it Back

Repeat the remix exercise from the video, but use different songs. Students can work individually or in small groups to decode a new song's message, then rewrite part of the lyrics to convey a positive, empowering, or socially conscious message.



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BEHIND THE LINES

THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS OR FEEDBACK?

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