



Lesson:

Investigating the Many Meanings of *Charm*

OVERVIEW

Investigating the meaning of the title word of this piece, *Charm*, will help students develop a personal view about how to interpret the music as you rehearse the piece. By exploring original ideas about the meanings of 'charm,' they will broaden their perspective of the composer's intent.

LEARNING GOAL

Alone or in groups, students will define and interpret the multiple meanings for the word 'charm.'

RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- dictionaries, thesauruses
- computers to search internet dictionaries (optional)
- writing materials, art materials (pencils, markers/colored pencils)
- copies of the worksheet "[Perspectives on the words Charm, Charming, & Charmed!!](#)" for each group
- chart paper
- [Information for Teachers about the Multiple Definitions and Uses of the Word "Charm"](#)

PROCESS

This lesson is best used early in your work on *Charm*.

1. Write the word CHARM on a sheet of chart paper and remind students that it is the title of a piece by Kevin Puts that the band is currently rehearsing.
2. Ask students to discuss and spontaneously define 'charm' and related words, charmed and charming. Jot down the key words from their responses on the chart. Point out that there are multiple meanings for this simple word.
3. Read this quote by Kevin Puts about his reasons for naming the piece *Charm*.

"I decided to call it 'Charm' because, for me, the music conjures up magic and good luck charms...I was also thinking of the other meaning of the word, that intangible quality possessed by certain people and places that can truly cast a spell."

4. Ask student to identify the two meanings of 'charm' in the composer's quote (magic/good luck charms and a personality trait).
5. Tell students that they will think expand their thoughts about these two meanings of the word 'charm' in a small group activity. Distribute the Activity Sheet and answer any questions. Before dividing into small groups of five or six, tell students that each group should select a:
 - facilitator/spokesperson who will keep order and make sure all are heard
 - time keeper
 - a scribe to write responses on the Activity Sheet
 - a researcher who can look up words in a dictionary or on a computer

Groups will discuss and expand their understanding of the word in four ways:

- By defining each version of the word using a dictionary, a computer search, and prior knowledge.
- By brainstorming one or more synonyms and antonyms. (These should be familiar terms, but be prepared to remind students that a synonym is a word or phrase that means nearly or exactly the same thing; an antonym is a word or phrase that means the opposite.)
- Using the word to cast a spell or write a sentence about a person with charm.
- Drawing pictures of the word.

Their ideas will be documented by the scribe on the worksheet. Drawing and writing can be delegated to various group members. Provide extra paper for groups that wish to make more than one drawing.

OPTIONAL: Students can do this work as individuals.

6. Reconvene and ask groups to share some of their work. Ask them to relate their word study to the music and discuss the final question:

Why is *Charm* a good title for this piece?
What elements and characteristics in the music make it a good fit?

Save all charts and activity worksheets for future writing assignments. They will provide words and ideas.

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS ABOUT THE MULTIPLE DEFINITIONS AND USES OF THE WORD “CHARM”

These pages were created as supporting information for you to use with students as they investigate the multiple meanings of the word ‘charm.’

CATEGORIES of CHARM ¹

In the category of magic, mythology and superstition the word might be used for:

- A spell or incantation.
- A blessing for good outcomes.
- Good luck charms such as:
 - amulets – objects with the power to protect one from danger.
 - talismans – similar to amulets.
 - rabbit’s foot.
 - charm stones – painted smooth pebbles from the Northern Isles of Britain.
 - touch pieces – metal coins or medals believed to cure disease, bring good luck, etc.
 - milagros – small metal charms in the shape of body parts, animals, fruits, vegetables, and symbols of daily life. The word *milagro* means miracle. Used in Mexico and New Mexico. Left on a saint’s altar as a prayer for healing or a situation with which one needs help. In some churches, *milagros* are often attached to statues of saints or to the church walls.
- Snake charming a performance involving the control of snakes.
- To ‘charm’ is to take control of another human being by a spell caster.
- Charm bracelets which are worn around the wrist with charms or pendants that are symbols of important things or events in the owner’s life. A custom likely begun far in the past as amulets to ward off evil spirits or bad luck.

In the area of human character and personality, the words charm, charming, charmed can refer to:

- Someone who has charisma or traits that are attractive and desirable; those that inspire loyalty and admiration. Good sense of humor, courtesy, style, etc. might be desirable traits leading to charisma.
- “Turning on the charm” could be superficial charm without substance; it comes and goes.

In literature and fairy tales there is the perennial character, “Prince Charming,” the handsome heroes that others swoon over.

We buy products that use ‘charm’ in the name such as:

- Charms Blow Pops are lollipops with bubble gum centers and a hard candy shell.
- Lucky Charms breakfast cereal with oat grain flakes and marshmallow “charms” in shapes such as stars, moons, and clovers.
- BlackBerry Charm is a mobile phone is notable for being the first BlackBerry with technology that allows a full keyboard and text support with a standard phone keypad.
- Charmin’ toilet paper, supposed to be so soft everyone wants to squeeze it.

¹ Based on Wikipedia entry, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charm>

In the category of music and other entertainment:

- Charmed is a Norwegian music group.
- *Charm* is the name of an album by American producer and rapper Danny!
- "Charms" is the title of a song by the Canadian band, The Philosopher Kings, included on their 1996 album *The Philosopher Kings*.
- Otis Williams and the Charms is an American doo-wop group.
- *Charmed* a television show about witches that ran for eight seasons until 2006.
- Charming, California is a fictional town, the setting of the television series *Sons of Anarchy*.

In the sciences, physics, chemistry, and technology, charm is related to:

- Charm quark, a subatomic particle.
- Charm (quantum number), the "flavor" of that particle.
- CHARMM a widely used set of force fields at Harvard (Chemistry HARvard Macromolecular Mechanics or CHARMM).
- CHARM, comprehensive high-throughput arrays for relative methylation, is "a highly sensitive and specific approach to measure DNA methylation across the genome".
- Charm++, a C++ based parallel programming language.
- Charm (programming language), an object oriented modular programming language.
- Mobile phone charms, light-up keychain devices which indicate incoming calls or messages.

The Online Merriam/Webster Dictionary definition provides details about the many underlying meanings and uses of "charm" and its synonyms and antonyms.²

As a noun

1. Something worn or kept to bring good luck or keep away evil (I have an old cap that I use as a *charm* for whenever I play softball)

Synonyms amulet, fetish (*also* fetich), mascot, mojo periapt, talisman

Related Words gris-gris (*also* gri-gri), juju, philter, toadstone, emblem, symbol, token, totem

Near Antonyms curse, hex, spell

Antonyms jinx, hoodoo

2. The power of irresistible attraction (The young actor has the *charm* that turns a performer into a star.)

Synonyms allure, animal magnetism, appeal, attractiveness, captivation, charisma, enchantment, fascination, force field, glamour (*also* glamor), magic, magnetism, oomph, pizzazz (*or* pizazz), seductiveness, witchery

Related Words allurement, attraction, call, lure, seduction, agreeableness, delightfulness, desirability, niceness, pleasantness, sweetness, sex appeal

Near Antonyms disagreeableness, distastefulness, obnoxiousness, offensiveness, unpleasantness

Antonyms repulsion, repulsiveness

3. A spoken word or set of words believed to have magic power (He recited a *charm* to help his team win the game.)

Synonyms abracadabra, bewitchment, charm, conjuration, enchantment, glamour (*also* glamor), hex, incantation, invocation, whammy

Related Words curse, jinx, bewitchery, concurring, magic, mojo, necromancy, sorcery, voodoo, voodooism, witchcraft, witchery, wizardry

² Definitions from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/charm>

4. An ornament worn on a chain around the neck or wrist (She wore a *charm* in the figure of a horse on her bracelet.)

Synonyms bangle, charm, lavalier (*also* lavalier)

Related Words locket, teardrop

As a transitive verb

1. To affect by or as if by magic: compel; to please, soothe, or delight by compelling attraction (He *charms* customers with his suave manner.)
2. To endow with or as if with supernatural powers by means of charms; *also*: to protect by or as if by spells, charms, or supernatural influences
3. To control (an animal) typically by charms (as the playing of music) (*charm* a snake)

As an intransitive verb

1. To practice magic and enchantment
2. To have the effect of a charm: fascinate

PERSPECTIVES ON THE WORDS CHARM, CHARMING, & CHARMED!!

Alone or with partners, explore the word, CHARM, and some of its possible meanings.

| Charm as magic spells | Charm as a personality trait |
|--|--|
| Write your own definition for this kind of 'charm.' | Write your own definition for this kind of 'charm.' |
| <u>synonyms</u> ? | synonyms? |
| <u>antonyms</u> ? | antonyms? |
| Write a sentence about a magic spell using the word 'charm'. | Write a sentence about the personality of a person using the word 'charm.' |
| Draw a picture of 'charm' on the back of this page. | |

Why is *Charm* a good name for the piece?

Your name/group names _____

