

L. Steels (Ed.)

© 2015 The authors and IOS Press.

This article is published online with Open Access by IOS Press and distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License.

doi:10.3233/978-1-61499-593-7-205



Or should I say that MOOCs have been following me?

Yes, MOOCs are a hype. Yes, everybody is discussing if they are going to change the way we learn. Yes, I decided to follow one to see how it is and no, I didn't know what the acronym MOOC meant!

So the first step has been to look it up on Google ...



- 1) My Opinion Only Counts
- 2) Mafia, Outlaws and Organized Crime
- 3) Massive Open Online Course

MOOCs are online courses on virtually EVERY subject, with millions of subscribers. I decided to follow the Songwriting MOOC of the Berkeley College.

It's Berklee! not Berkeley, BERKLEE!!!

Right, it's Berklee, a very famous College of Music in Boston, where many successful musicians have studied, such as ... well ... OK, the only reason why I know Berklee is that my boyfriend went there to study guitar when he was seventeen, instead of attending a very important exam in France. The truth is that I don't know anything about music.



I just know that I'm a little jealous of musicians. When they play it looks like they could go on and on and never stop. They seem to be floating in some kind of supernatural magic dimension from which amusical humans are forever banned.

I would love to be a musician! Maybe this MOOC will make my dream come true!

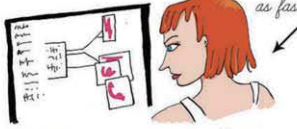


So, I'm very enthusiastic about this MOOC and I think I'm going to learn very fast a lot of new things. I signed up on COURSEERA, the online platform for MOOCs, and I'm checking it everyday to see if the MOOC has begun.

So, I'm very enthusiastic about this MOOC and I think I'm going to learn very fast a lot of new things. I signed up on COURSEERA, the online platform for MOOCS, and I'm checking it everyday to see if the MOOC has begun.

*It's late, It's late!  
The Mooc I have to wait!*

*MOOCS will allow us to learn  
as fast as Leela in the 5th element!*



Finally the Songwriting course begins. The first lesson is composed by a few short videos - which are not presenting the course as one would expect. There is the Professor, a guy in his sixties called Pat Pattison. The first video is a very dramatic monologue about a couple splitting up?

He's very emphatic, just like and actor on stage, and he always wears a rock 'n' roll leather jacket.

He repeats things like 6 or 7 times. I can't help but thinking that he's too "American". I mean, he's American like a bald eagle eating a hamburger at the White House.



But I'm impressed by the technical quality of the video. Everything is perfect!

*Sooo .... you wanna compose a song, dude?*

The course goes on and the theory behind it is beginning to unfold. The course is actually about how to write lyrics. Pat Pattison has some very clear rules:



| <i>Number of Lines</i> | <i>Length</i>  | <i>Rhymes</i>      | <i>Emotion</i>  |
|------------------------|----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Even</i>            | <i>Equal</i>   | <i>Perfect</i>     | <i>Stable</i>   |
| <i>Uneven</i>          | <i>Unequal</i> | <i>Not rhyming</i> | <i>Unstable</i> |

I'm of two minds about this. On the one hand it looks to me an over simplistic approach: did all great lyric writers really work in this way? I'm trying to picture Bob Dylan counting his verses to check if they are uneven to suggest a sense of instability and I just can't visualise it.

The whole thing seems too reductionist and too much based on "measurable" things, while hey, writing is not about measuring stuff!

*Mind if I add another syllable ma'am?*



On the other hand I begin to listen differently to lyrics, trying to analyse them. Actually I begin to LISTEN, full stop.

For instance, on the bus!

The problem is all inside your head", she said to me  
 The answer is easy if you take it logically  
 I'd like to help you in your struggle to be free  
 There must be fifty ways to leave your lover  
 Fifty ways to leave your lover



→ long and articulated like a conversation...

You just slip out the back, Jack  
 Make a new plan, Stan  
 You don't need to be coy, Roy  
 Just get yourself free  
 Hop on the bus, Gus  
 You don't need to discuss much  
 Just drop off the key, Lee  
 And get yourself free

→ Uneven number of lines and last line shorter : unstable! And it's true, you really wait for the song to move to the second half...

→ This is stable... you even have two rhymes in the same line and lines are shorter and matching with each other ....

*You actually feel like you HAVE to leave your lover and do it really fast!*

(Paul Simon, 50 ways to leave your lover)

A MOOC is like a real course not only you have to "attend classes" once a week but you also have classmates and homework.

I discover my classmates after one week or so: there is a huge online activity going on there! A forum with a many threads. People are coming mainly from the US and they are music lovers, many of them have bands and perform. I read several discussions on the forums, but I don't feel like participating. Why? Maybe I'm the lurker kind, maybe Planet Music is still very distant from me.

Forum's web pages:

1 2 3 ... 45 46 → Next

★ See top forum posters



*No, I don't have a Mac.*



As for homeworks, I have been doing some very easy quizzes every week, but the dreadful moment arrives in which I have to submit my work to PEER REVIEWING!

Now, not only making homework is in itself not very pleasant because it makes me feel like I was back at the elementary school, but I have a special problem with peer reviewing.

You don't know what you can expect from your classmates, you cannot evaluate their level of knowledge as you can do with a teacher: long story short, you cannot trust them! Yet you must submit your work for them to judge.



And by the way, hey, it's time to find an idea for our own lyrics!

We had to either choose from some proposed title or make up one of our own. I've chosen the title "Two Story House" because I liked the fact that the word "story" can have two meanings. Also, I have a lot of memories about a my grandparents' home where I used to went on holiday when I was a kid, and some kind of unresolved issues about it so... I thought that I could write the lyrics about it could be a way to solve them or at least archive them.

So, I went through four or five different version for the lyrics, here's the last one

I was scared the first time I had to read peer comments about this intimate stuff!

But I was relieved when I read reviews like these

REV #1: This is great. Could be a duet. Good imagery and good scene setting. I am surrounded by snow currently, but the opening lines take me there. Nice work.

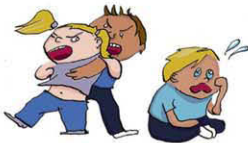
REV #2: Love the detail and the set up in the verse.  
 He first line in the chorus is great. Love the idea and how it sets us up for the rest of the song. My only problem (?) is with lines 2 and 4 of the chorus. I would have liked a rhyme of some sort not necessarily a perfect one or even a family one but some kind. It almost threw me off only cause it was specifically supposed to be stable. Of course, lol what do I know? Overall I loved. Good work!!

REV #3: Very good. Nice unstable and stable structures here, and I like your use of a spotlight in the last line of the verse. I really like how descriptive the verse is -- you're setting the scene quite clearly here. The idea in the verse strikes me as stable, so I'd be inclined to not use it in an unstable structure.



At the beginning this made me feel like I had to return the favour to my fellow students trying to tell them something really meaningful and helpful about their work, as far as I could not just it's good or it's bad.

My reviews of others' work are not saved on the Coursera platform, so I cannot copy them here. Anyway it was in the same style of my reviewers #2 and #3.



At the same time, I'm more and more interested in what is going on in the Forums, and I see that I'm not the only one who has a problem with peer reviewing, as since the course began the forum's threads are filling up with bitterness :

Typical threads at the beginning of the MOOC:

Hello from sunny Arkansas! (10 posts)

Hi from Chattanooga, can we be friends? (16 posts)

Yay! Looking for collaboration (12 posts)



Grandmother called us but we were hiding  
 A summertime seldom seen  
 The pegs on the wire, the white sheets drying  
 Above the hill bold green  
 The house had two floors we had two stories  
 You dig "hide and seek", and still in the evening  
 you were playing out while I was dreaming  
 of sailors and warriors, dragons and fairies  
 Do you remember?

Then you kept reading and I went clubbing  
 just to seem a grown up  
 I lost myself in many bluffs  
 while you whirled up

The house had two floors we had two stories  
 You dig "hide and seek", and still in the evening  
 you were playing out while I was dreaming  
 of sailors and warriors, dragons and fairies  
 Do you remember?

We have found an agreement in not talking  
 to each other anymore  
 but sometimes I look back dreaming and hoping  
 That you remember

The house had two floors we had two stories  
 You dig "hide and seek", and still in the evening  
 you were playing out while I was dreaming  
 of sailors and warriors, dragons and fairies

I do remember

Threads when peer reviewing has begun:

I am not satisfied with the reviews (53 posts)

I know who you are, Reviewer #2 (421 posts)

Post here if you hate your reviewers (683 posts)



