

## The Music Drawer

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Twelve-year-old Lou didn't collect stamps or keychains or trading cards. Lou collected music. Not in a dusty shelf of CDs or playlists full of hundreds of random tracks—but in memories.

Music had always been around. In the house, in the car, in the background of big moments and tiny ones. It was almost like a second language in Lou's family—one they didn't talk about, but all understood.

There was the song that Lou's brother used to blast from the kitchen speaker when they were getting ready for school—"You Get What You Give" by New Radicals, with a shouty chorus and bouncing rhythm. It played on sunny mornings when the light hit the windows just right. He'd be rushing out to high school, Lou to primary. The song made Lou feel like the day was something you could jump into, like a trampoline.

Even now, years later, if that song came on, Lou's whole mood lifted. It worked better than coffee.

Then there was the jazzy track their mum always put on in the car when they went on trips—"Cantaloop (Flip Fantasia)" by US3. It would start just as they turned onto the motorway, snacks packed, windows cracked open, the wind tossing Lou's hair around. Just the three of them: Lou, Mum, and big brother. Lou remembered the funky trumpet line, the voice singing a rap verse to a sample taken from Herbie Hancock, and the way everyone seemed to smile more when it played.

There were other songs too—quieter ones. Lou didn't remember hearing Billie Holiday's "Gloomy Sunday" for the first time, but apparently, Mum used to play it when Lou was a baby. It was sad, slow, full of longing—but it felt like a



lullaby. A strange one, maybe, but comforting. Like a soft hand smoothing your hair.

But the music that had changed everything came during a different kind of moment.

Lou was ten when their aunt died. It had been sudden, confusing, and the house had felt different—quieter, heavier. Lou's brother had given them his old tablet, already a bit cracked and slow, but still full of his music apps and playlists.

"There's good stuff on it," he said. "Real stuff."

Lou had listened. Again and again. Nirvana Unplugged. Songs that were raw and moody and unsure of themselves. Lou hadn't understood all the lyrics, but something about the voice, the way it cracked or faded, made the sadness feel seen. For weeks, it was the only thing Lou wanted to hear.

It didn't erase the grief. But it made it breathable.

Now, at twelve, Lou had a habit.

Whenever something big or confusing or exciting happened, they'd go to their room, close the door, and pull out what they called the Music Drawer—not a real drawer, but a playlist on their old tablet.

They had songs for different moods:

- Electric energy: the shouty kitchen song
- Adventure buzz: that jazzy car track
- Deep calm: Billie Holiday's voice, like a whisper
- Heavy days: Nirvana, all raw edges and honesty
- Gentle quiet: new songs Lou had found for themselves—lo-fi piano, soft strings, instrumental film scores



It wasn't just about the music. It was about the feeling that came with it—the memories, the meaning, the way one song could catch your emotions and make them easier to carry.

One rainy Wednesday, after a long day full of maths tests, forgotten lunches, and an argument with a friend, Lou came home exhausted. They dropped their bag, grabbed the tablet, and curled up in the corner of the couch. Not to distract themselves—but to *tune in*.

They put on a song that started slow and warm, with a steady beat and a hopeful chord in the background. It wasn't one of the old family songs. It was Lou's own find. Something that made room for the mess inside their head.

After a while, Mum passed through the room and paused. "You okay?"

Lou nodded. "Just... needed a soundtrack."

Mum smiled gently. "Good choice."

That night, Lou opened a new note in their journal and wrote:

"Music doesn't fix everything. But it helps you notice what needs fixing. Or feeling. Or letting go."

They added a song title beneath it. And another.

The list grew.

And so did Lou.

Because music, they realised, wasn't just about what you listened to. It was about what it woke up inside you—and how it stayed, like a thread, connecting all your past selves to the one you were becoming, giving you the memories to hold on to, and showing you that you're not the only one feeling *this particular feeling*.

## **Activity: Create Your Emotional Playlist (kids 10 yo and older)**

### **Objective:**

To help children and preteens reflect on their emotions and emotional needs by selecting songs that support, reflect, or shift their moods—just like Lou in the story.

### **Part 1: Discussion / ice-breaker**

In the story, Lou used music like a tool. When Lou felt tired, sad, calm, or excited, they had different songs to match or shift their mood.

👉 Have you ever listened to a song that made you feel better? Or one that reminded you of a memory?

👉 If your life had a soundtrack, what would today's track be?

👉 If you were a song, what song would it be? (but maybe this is too categorical, asking pupils what ONE song would they choose and maybe it somehow defies the reason of all this tale and exercises)

### **Part 2: Make your own Music Drawer**

Print or draw this **playlist template** on paper or whiteboard. Each category is a “mood drawer.” Pupils fill in at least one song per drawer.

<b>Mood Drawer</b>	<b>Song Title / Artist</b>	<b>Why this song?</b>
Energy boost		When I need to wake up, move, or feel powerful
Calm and quiet		When I want to slow down or fall asleep
Feeling sad or low		When I need to sit with hard feelings

Feeling happy

When I'm already happy and want to enjoy it more

Nostalgia &  
memories

When a song reminds me of a person, place or moment

My secret/safe  
song

A song I turn to when I don't want to explain myself

Suggest to your pupils to decorate or draw little icons for each drawer - they could use our set of icons!!!!

**Bonus idea:**

Invite your pupils to make their actual playlist on Spotify, YouTube, etc., and title it "My Music Drawer". Remind them that, just like in real life, this playlist can change - songs can be added or removed, or that they can make more than one playlist!



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