

# Sketch a Data Story

Use WordCounter to analyze a musician's lyrics and sketch a story with their words

## What is WordCounter?

WordCounter analyses text and tells you the most common words and phrases. It helps you quantitatively summarize your text so you can investigate how words are used. Sketching a data story helps participants build their data literacy by finding and drawing a story about what words show up in famous musicians' lyrics.

## Learning Goals

- Increased ability to analyse and reason about text data
- Understanding that one can find many stories in one dataset
- Ability to quickly communicate a data-driven story to others

## Run the Activity

### Solving a Problem

Text is data too! Finding patterns in large sets of text can be hard to do by hand, but computers can help. WordCounter helps you start to analyze text quantitatively by showing you the most common words and phrases.

## Share Inspirational Examples

Visualizing music lyrics is a popular thing to do. Show examples like Tahir Hemphill's "Rap Research Lab" (<http://rapresearchlab.com>) or Celebrity Cruise's "Music Mapped" (<https://www.celebritycruises.co.uk/music-mapped/>). Ask participants what stories they see in these examples.

## Introduce the Tool

Open up WordCounter ([https://databasiceducation.cymru/en\\_CY/wordcounter/](https://databasiceducation.cymru/en_CY/wordcounter/)) and choose "Elvis Presley" from the sample data drop-down menu. Press "Count!" to show an analysis of all of Elvis' lyrics. Show your group how the word cloud of his lyrics shows that he used the word "love" a lot, but only by looking at the bigrams and trigrams can you start to understand how and why. The fact that Elvis said "love" so many times but only said "attorney" once could be a fun and revealing story to sketch. Mention that you can download CSVs of the results for further analysis.

## Total time

30 – 45 minutes

## Audience

3 – 100 people. Ages 12+

Designed for grades 6 – 12, Higher Ed classrooms, News Organisations, Nonprofits and community workshops. No prior experience with data is required.

## Space

- A projector and computer
- Space to break out into small groups of 3, with a computer for each group
- Large tables or floor, or tape to stick paper to walls so participants can draw

## Supplies

- Computers/laptops  
1 for every 3 participants
- Large pieces of paper  
roughly 2ft x 3ft
- Crayons or markers

## Run the Activity (continued)

### Launch the Activity

1. Participants have 15 minutes
2. Participants work in teams of three
3. Each team uses WordCounter to analyze the lyrics of a musician and find a story to tell about their lyrics ([https://databasiceducation.cymru/en\\_CY/wordcounter/](https://databasiceducation.cymru/en_CY/wordcounter/))
4. Each team sketches a visual way to tell that story on a big piece of paper with crayons.

### Share-Back

As you walk around keep an eye out for different types of stories to highlight. If you see any particularly interesting visuals, or novel stories, keep them in mind to call on during the share-back time at the end of the workshop. With your time constraints in mind, ask for groups that want to share back their story. Limit them to 1 minute, so you don't get lost in one group's example. As folks share, make sure to call on any groups you noticed earlier that had novel or different stories they created.

Focus on these themes:

- There are many types of stories you can tell with the same data
- Sketching is a helpful way to communicate your ideas to those around you
- Working with data can be fun
- Demonstrate how you can download the CSVs to continue your analysis in Excel.

## Reminders

- Stick figures are fine.
- Data stories can be as simple as "Elvis said 'love' way more than 'clambake'".
- The "stopwords" checkbox lets you ignore or include common words like "the" or "and".
- Don't worry about being perfect, just sketch something.

## Terms to Introduce

### Bigrams

A bigram is a two word phrase.

### csv

A "comma-separated values" file; a standard way to save tables of information in a plain text file.

### Qualitative data

Data that describes something (like a picture or quote).

### Quantitative Data

Data that counts or measures something (like a number).

### Stopwords

Stopwords are words that are helpful to ignore for text analysis, such as "this", "that", "and" and "but".

### Trigrams

A trigram is a three word phrase.

### Word Cloud

A picture of all the words in a document, where each word is bigger if it is used more, and smaller if it is used less.

### Sample Sketches

