

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT
Vietnam War Music Analysis
From Kailee Donovan

Grade: 11th

Length of Class: 1 hour

Essential Question: How does war affect individual people?

Lesson Objective: Students will investigate the climate on the home front during the Vietnam War by analyzing Vietnam War protest music.

Materials:

- Vietnam War Music lyrics and Worksheet
- Songs: *Eve of Destruction*, *Ballad of the Green Berets*, *War, Ohio*

Activities:

- Initiation: Class Review
 - What was the American people's response to the Vietnam War in the United States?
How do you know? (discuss specifics like Kent State, draft dodgers, televised war, journalism)
 - What can we learn by listening to music (in history or today)?
- Pass out *The Vietnam War: Protest Music*
- Teacher will play Vietnam song while students listen and follow along with the printed lyrics
- When song is finished students will take a few minutes to answer the questions alone or with a partner. Then students will share out their answers/ideas as a class.
 - The first song analysis can be done as a whole class to model the interpretation if students need assistance
- Process will repeat for three more protest songs
- Closure: Discuss the “Sum it all up” questions on the worksheet as a class.
 - Why do you think so much music was written about the Vietnam War?
 - Why is music such an effective and powerful form of protest?
- Collect worksheets for completion grade

Assessment: Informal-Student discussion of questions and completion of the worksheet.
Formal-Worksheet collected and reviewed for a homework grade

Performance Standards: 1.12: Analyze how the arts, architecture, music, and literature of the United States reflect its history and cultural heterogeneity.

Eve of Destruction-Barry McGuire, 1965

The eastern world, it is exploding
Violence flarin', bullets loadin'
You're old enough to kill, but not for
votin'
You don't believe in war, but what's
that gun you're totin'
And even the Jordan River has bodies
floatin'

But you tell me
Over and over and over again, my friend
Ah, you don't believe
We're on the eve
of destruction.

Don't you understand what I'm tryin' to
say
Can't you feel the fears I'm feelin'
today?
If the button is pushed, there's no
runnin' away
There'll be no one to save, with the
world in a grave
[Take a look around ya boy, it's bound
to scare ya boy]

And you tell me
Over and over and over again, my friend
Ah, you don't believe
We're on the eve
of destruction.

Yeah, my blood's so mad feels like
coagulatin'
I'm sitting here just contemplatin'
I can't twist the truth, it knows no
regulation.
Handful of senators don't pass
legislation
And marches alone can't bring
integration
When human respect is disintegratin'
This whole crazy world is just too
frustratin'

And you tell me
Over and over and over again, my friend
Ah, you don't believe
We're on the eve
of destruction.

Think of all the hate there is in Red
China
Then take a look around to Selma,
Alabama
You may leave here for 4 days in space

But when you return, it's the same old
place
The poundin' of the drums, the pride
and disgrace
You can bury your dead, but don't leave
a trace
Hate your next-door neighbor, but don't
forget to say grace
And... tell me over and over and over and
over again, my friend
You don't believe
We're on the eve
Of destruction
Mm, no no, you don't believe
We're on the eve of destruction.

Ballad of The Green Berets, SSgt Barry
Sadler, 1966

Fighting soldiers from the sky
Fearless men who jump and die
Men who mean just what they say
The brave men of the Green Beret

Silver wings upon their chest
These are men, America's best
One hundred men we'll test today
But only three win the Green Beret

Trained to live, off nature's land
Trained in combat, hand to hand
Men who fight by night and day
Courage deep, from the Green Beret

Silver wings upon their chest
These are men, America's best
One hundred men we'll test today
But only three win the Green Beret

Back at home a young wife waits
Her Green Beret has met his fate
He has died for those oppressed
Leaving her this last request

Put silver wings on my son's chest
Make him one of America's best
He'll be a man they'll test one day
Have him win the Green Beret

Ohio by Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young, 1970

Tin soldiers and Nixon's comin'.
We're finally on our own.
This summer I hear the drummin'.
Four dead in Ohio.

Gotta get down to it.
Soldiers are gunning us down.
Should have been done long ago.
What if you knew her and
Found her dead on the ground?
How can you run when you know?

Na, na, na, na, na, na.

Gotta get down to it.
Soldiers are cutting us down.
Should have been done long ago.
What if you knew her and
Found her dead on the ground?
How can you run when you know?

Tin soldiers and Nixon's comin'.
We're finally on our own.
This summer I hear the drummin'.
Four dead in Ohio.

sings 'Wohh oh Lord' over the top)
Absolutely nothing...listen to me

WAR! It ain't nothing but a
heartbreaker,
War. Friend only to the undertaker.
Ohhh! War is an enemy to all mankind,
The thought of war blows my mind.
War has caused unrest within the
younger generation
Induction then destruction...who wants
to die? Ohhh

WAR! good God y'all huh
What is it good for?
Absolutely nothing...say it say it SAY
IT!
WAR!...uh huh yeah hu!
What is it good for?
Absolutely nothing...listen to me

WAR! It ain't nothing but a
heartbreaker,
War! It's got one friend that's the
undertaker.
Ohhhh! War has shattered many a young
man's dream,
Made him disabled, bitter and mean,
Life is much too short and precious to
spend fighting wars these days.
War can't give life, it can only take
it away!

Ohhh WAR! huh...good God y'all
What is it good for?
Absolutely nothing...say it again
War!...uhuh...woh oh oh Lord
What is it good for?
Absolutely nothing...listen to me

War! It ain't nothing but a
heartbreaker,
War. Friend only to the
undertaker...woo
Peace lovin' understand then tell me,
Is there no place for them today?
They say we must fight to keep our
freedom,
But Lord knows there's got to be a
better way.

Ohhhhhh WAR! huh...good God y'all...
What is it good for?...you tell me!
Say it say it say it saaaay it!
War! good God now...huh
What is it good for?
Stand up and shout it...NOTHING [END]

War, Edwin Starr, 1970

War...huh...yeah
What is it good for?
Absolutely nothing
Uh ha haa ha
War...huh...yeah
What is it good for?
Absolutley nothing...say it again y'all
War..huh...look out...
What is it good for?
Absolutely nothing...listen to me
ohhhhh

WAR! I despise,
'cos it means destruction of innocent
lives,
War means tears to thousands of
mother's eyes,
When their sons gone to fight and lose
their lives.

I said WAR!...huh...good God y'all,
What is it good for?
Absolutely nothing...say it again
War! Huh...What is it good for (Edwin

The Vietnam War: Protest Music

Eve of Destruction:

1. What does Barry McGuire mean when he says:

a. "You're old enough to kill, but not for votin'"

b. "If the button is pushed there's no runnin away"

2. What is the overall message of this song?

Ballad of the Green Berets:

1. How does this song make you feel?

2. How does the song portray soldiers?

3. Does this song support or condemn American Involvement of the Vietnam War?
How do you know (give two specific examples from the song)?

Ohio:

1. Who are the soldiers Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young are referring to? What do you think the artists mean by "tin soldiers"? (Hint: Tin is a cheap metal.)

2. What event is this song written for? How do you know? (Use specific examples from the lyrics.)

War:

1. What is the overall message of this song? Think about the tone as well as the lyrics.

2. Choose 1-2 lines in the song that you feel send the strongest message. Record them here:

Why did you choose those lines? What message do they send? What is especially powerful about the lines you chose?

Sum it all up:

1. Why do you think so much music was written about the Vietnam War?

2. Why is music such an effective and powerful form of protest?