UNIT ONE:
Two Sides to Every Story: Exploring Politics through Music

OVERVIEW:
These lessons can be used as supplementary activities during classroom units covering the 1960s and early 1970s. This project-based learning experience provides students the opportunity to conduct research, create a display, and present their findings on influential songs and songwriters featured in the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum’s exhibition Dylan, Cash, and the Nashville Cats: A New Music City. This unit can be completed in four 45-minute class periods with opportunities to extend research and writing time.

OBJECTIVE:
After completing the lesson, students will identify and define how political, cultural, economic, and social events impact the way songs are written and received by listeners.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:
How do political, social, and cultural events impact how music is written and received by listeners?

PROJECT:
Students will research one recording artist from the list provided in the appendix and one impactful song by that artist from Dylan, Cash and the Nashville Cats: A New Music City. Each student will create an exhibit booth using a tri-fold display to present a brief biography of the artist. Students will choose album artwork, photographs, at least four songs by the artist, and artifact images to illustrate the artist’s point of view. Additionally, each student will choose one song written and performed after 2000 that is similar in tone and content to material from the historical artist.

In a persuasion paper written to support the assessment of the artist’s politics, the student will analyze the song lyrics and explain how the songs display the artist’s point of view. The student will also discuss why the modern era song is similar. Students will be expected to analyze song lyrics throughout the paper.

Following the completion of the papers, students will present their artist to the rest of the class. Students will have two minutes to present their research in a concise and clear manner and should be prepared to answer questions from the teacher and classmates.

TEACHER TIP:
For students in grades 5–8, have them design a smaller poster, and discuss songs that speak to them. Ask them to write a paper that describes the meaning of a specific song and how it relates to them.

STANDARDS OVERVIEW
7th – 12th Grade College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards
7th – 12th Grade College, Career & Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards

WHAT YOU NEED:
- Computer lab time
- Notebooks
- Markers
- Scissors
- Library Research Time
- Pens and Pencils
- Computer to play songs
- Tri-Fold Poster Boards
- List of Artists (Appendix)
- Lyrics Sheets (Appendix)
- Printer
INTRODUCTION ACTIVITY:

Musical Debate  (2-4 45 minute class periods)

STANDARDS

CCR Anchor Standards: Reading 1, 2, 4, 6; Speaking and Listening 1, 4, 6
C3 Framework: D2.Civ.14, D2.His.2, D4.2

Divide class into groups of 3–4 students and assign each group a song about conflict from the list provided on the next page. Give groups time to research the song, songwriter, performer, and year it was written. Students should listen to the song, read the lyrics, and then discuss the meaning of the song in their groups. Each group will decide what their song is supporting or advocating, using specific lyrics to support their conclusion. The objective of this lesson is for students to recognize that opinions and biases have been expressed in songs throughout history.

For the persuasive arguments, groups with songs about the same event will present one after the next. Each group will persuade the class that the position their song takes is the best position. Following the presentations of each era, the class will vote as to which position they will follow based on the persuasive arguments. For example, one group has “I Drive Your Truck,” performed by Lee Brice, and another group has “21 Guns,” performed by Green Day. Students will be able to ask questions of each group following both presentations. The contemporary groups should be the first debate, followed by the others in reverse chronological order. Each group should be able to find lyrical support for the following questions:

• What is the most significant line in the song?
• How does the song make you feel?
• Which lines represent your position best?

This activity gives students an opportunity to do research in a group before doing similar research on their own for the main project. Teachers may also choose to use this activity to assess students’ ability to understand political motives expressed through song. Following the completion of the debate, assign each student the artist that they will be researching for the remainder of the unit (Suggested Artists to Research List [Appendix]).
Please note that in the song list below, songs are listed with performers rather than writers.

IRAQ WAR AND GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR
- “I Drive Your Truck,” Lee Brice
- “21 Guns,” Green Day
- “Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue,” Toby Keith
- “Waiting on the World to Change,” John Mayer
- “Letters from Home,” John Michael Montgomery
- “Some Nights,” Fun.

VIETNAM WAR
- “Okie from Muskogee,” Merle Haggard
- “Imagine,” John Lennon
- “Born in the USA,” Bruce Springsteen
- “Peace Train,” Cat Stevens
- “Dear Uncle Sam,” Loretta Lynn
- “All Along the Watchtower,” Bob Dylan

WORLD WAR II
- “I’ll Be Seeing You,” Bing Crosby
- “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy,” Andrews Sisters
- “At Mail Call Today,” Gene Autry
- “Soldiers Last Letter,” Ernest Tubb

WORLD WAR I
- “It’s a Long Way to Tipperary,” John McCormack
- “Over There,” Billy Murray
- “I Didn’t Raise My Boy to be a Soldier,” Morton Harvey

CIVIL WAR
- “Bonnie Blue Flag,” 2nd South Carolina String Band
- “Maryland, My Maryland/Carry Me Back to Old Virginny,” 2nd South Carolina String Band
- “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” U.S. Military Bands
- “Taps,” U.S. Military Bands

AMERICAN REVOLUTION
- “Yankee Doodle,” Patriotic Fathers
- “God Save our Thirteen States,” Colonial Revelers
- “God Save the King,” London Symphony Orchestra and Philharmonic Choir
LESSON ONE:
Research, Writing and Design  (45+ minutes)

STANDARDS
CCR Anchor Standards: Reading 1, 2, 5, 7, 10; Writing 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10
C3 Framework: D1.5, D2.Civ.14, D2.His 2, 3, 9, 10, 11; D3.1

Begin with a discussion on reliable sources. Use the documents in the appendix for practice reading a primary source. Suggest that students use Wikipedia only as a launching pad, as many of the entries cite primary and secondary sources with more credibility. Students should consider the following questions about each source they use during their research:

• Where is the source from?
• What is the context of the source?
• How is the source cited?
• Who is the author?
• What is the format?

Encourage students to utilize the computer lab, school library, and Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum website to research their projects. Allow students time to develop their project idea and to research their chosen artist.

Students will write their persuasion papers and exhibit text. They will create their exhibit booth to display important information to support their research and feature their artist and the songs chosen.

Set up check in times at the beginning of each class. Give students the opportunity to ask questions for the teacher and their classmates. The teacher can guide students who are behind on their project and make sure that students are consistent with information in paper and exhibit. The teacher should ensure each student has a thesis and supporting arguments.

TEACHER TIP (Field Trip: 2 hours)
Bring your class to the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum to learn more about country music and how it relates to American history. Classes will have the opportunity to explore the galleries, discuss the history, and hear stories about artists featured in the guide.
LESSON TWO:
Peer Editing (30 minutes)

STANDARDS
CCR Anchor Standards: Writing 5

Students will have the opportunity to review each other’s work, ask questions, and develop their own work further. Students should consider the questions below and more while editing:

- Does the paper have a central idea or purpose?
- What is the thesis?
- Does the paper have evidence supporting the thesis?
- What else do you want to know about the topic?
- What is excess information on the topic?

Bob Dylan’s lyrics for “Temporary Like Achilles,” from Blonde on Blonde. Fragments of lyrics from other songs appear at the bottom.

Courtesy of EMP Museum
LESSON THREE:  
Museum Exhibition Day  (1-2 45 minute class periods)

STANDARDS
CCR Anchor Standards: Speaking and Listening 4, 5, 6  
C3 Framework: D4.2

Students will display their exhibit booths in the classroom as part of a museum day. Give five minutes for students to view their classmates’ work. Once students have toured the room, each student will give a two minute presentation on their project based on their research and persuasion paper. Encourage students to ask questions following each presentation.

Listening booths in the exhibit Dylan, Cash, and the Nashville Cats: A New Music City.

POST-UNIT DISCUSSION OPPORTUNITIES

STANDARDS
CCR Anchor Standards: Speaking and Listening 1, 3  
C3 Framework: D4.2

Thinking about the differing viewpoints people have when coming from around the world, discuss open-mindedness. What stereotypes do you think the musicians had about each other before meeting? Do pre-conceived notions affect how you work in groups in class or after-school activities? How did the musicians handle this? How do you collaborate and stay open-minded?

As you listened to music related to this unit, how do you think the music shaped the viewpoint of the listener? What are people on the other side of the war singing? In the more modern songs we hear differing points of view on one issue. How does that affect public opinion?

Thinking back to the project and class discussion, is there a current topic you feel strongly about and would like to write a song about? How does music allow the United States to have political discussion? How does music provide an outlet for free speech?