

# Sounds of Social Change

## 1. Question & Research Task

When you were in elementary school, you probably heard or sang “This Land is Your Land” (start 1:00 in).

But you probably did not sing the whole song as it was originally written by Woody Guthrie in 1940! Guthrie wrote this song as a statement of protest, not a celebration of patriotism, but those lyrics are typically left out on recordings for younger audiences.

Compare the lyrics of the version you know with the original, particularly stanzas 5 and 6 where he discusses No Trespassing signs and welfare office lines. Is it an alternative national anthem, or is it a political response to “God Bless America?”

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Woody Guthrie in 1943.

Image Source: Public domain, Wikipedia

**In this Slam Dunk, you will conduct brief, focused research to respond to the inquiry question:**

**How do music and lyrics create social change?**

## 2. Information Sources

Choose several of the information sources linked here to complete the Student Activity on Slide 3 for your ONE song.

Many of these songs may be new to you. Have an adult play the song for you if possible. It could start an interesting discussion!

**\*If you are prompted to log in to access a database or digital content links, your teacher/librarian can provide login information.**

"A Change is Gonna Come" Sam Cooke	"Big Yellow Taxi" Joni Mitchell	"I am Woman" Helen Reddy	"What's Going On" Marvin Gaye	"Mississippi Goddam" Nina Simone	"The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll" Bob Dylan	"American Skin, 41 Shots" Bruce Springsteen	"Ohio" Crosby Stills Nash & Young
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Lyrics</a></li><li>• <a href="#">"Unlikely Story..."</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Biography</a></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Lyrics</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Biography</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Environmental Anthem</a></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Lyrics</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Biography</a></li><li>• <a href="#">SongFacts</a></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Lyrics</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Biography</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Still Relevant</a></li><li>• <a href="#">The Story</a></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Lyrics</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Biography</a></li><li>• <a href="#">National Registry</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Behind the Song</a></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Lyrics</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Biography</a></li><li>• <a href="#">A Lonesome Death</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Tragic Story</a></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Lyrics</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Biography</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Angers NYC Police</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Ballad of Brutality</a></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Lyrics</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Explosive Band</a></li><li>• <a href="#">SongFacts</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Kent State</a></li></ul>
"Strange Fruit" Meerolpol/Billie Holiday	"John Brown's Body"	"For What It's Worth" Buffalo Springfield	"Be Free" J. Cole	"Safe" Sage, Kesha, Chika			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Lyrics</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Biography</a></li><li>• <a href="#">NYT article</a></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Lyrics</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Biography of Brown</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Song History</a></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Lyrics</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Biography</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Youth in Revolt</a></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Lyrics</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Biography</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Vanity Fair article</a></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Lyrics</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Biography</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Op/Ed</a></li></ul>			

### 3. Student Activity

Use the information sources on Slide 2 to complete your organizer.

**Step 1 – Lyrics** - Read the lyrics of your selected song. You may need to define any unfamiliar words or research allusions/references that may be unfamiliar to you.

**Step 2 – Biography** - Examine the resources for your song and songwriter. Who was the song writer? When did your songwriter write the song?

**Step 3 – Historical Context** - What was going on at the time the song was written? What social change was the song a part of or initiate?



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In 2019, singer/songwriter India Arie released “What If” in celebration of Black culture and civil rights.

“What if Maya didn't speak out?  
What if Langston Hughes didn't write it down?  
What if Josephine Baker didn't dance it out? (No)  
Tell me where would we be now?  
What if Sojourner never told the truth?  
Or Ida B. Wells never printed the news?  
Harriet never went underground?  
Where would we be now?  
We are the ones we've been waiting for  
We can change the world  
We can change the world”



## 4. Assessment Activity

### How do music and lyrics create social change?

Americans have always exercised freedom of speech through music to advocate for change, even when those advocating for change were not always recognized by the Constitution.

You are compiling a Sounds of Social Change collection of music to be released in multiple formats. Use the Google Slides Spotify Template to briefly explain your song, the musical history and the change it inspired or was inspired by. Your cover will also be used in the description for potential digital download or streaming sales.

Be sure to check your work against the success criteria.



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Kendrick Lamar's song "Alright" was not written as a protest, though his song was frequently referenced at Black Lives Matter protests.

## 5. Enrichment Activities



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In 1984, ska band [The Specials](#) released “[Free Nelson Mandela](#)” in response to apartheid in South Africa.

What is a change in our own community that you would like to see changed? Think local.

Now think how you could express that change in music.

What would be the tempo?

What instruments might you need?

What might be the refrain or the hook?

Answer in a Schoology discussion or in another method as directed by your teacher.

# 6. Teacher Resources

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## Grade 6-8 Content Area: Vocal Music

### Unit 3 “How Does Choral Singing Relate to Me and My Community?” Lesson 2

**Objective:** The students will be able to analyze lyrics in a song in order to identify how music is used as a means of social change.

**Time Frame:** One or two 45-minute class periods

#### Notes to the teacher:

- Collaborate with your school library media specialist to plan and implement this lesson.
- Have students use learning supports provided in any [BCPS-licensed Digital Content](#) included in this lesson. Refer to [Digital Content Snapshots & Support resources](#) for guidance as needed.
- Consider [using the Schoology Assignment Apps feature](#) to assign Microsoft and Google documents and files for students to access, edit, and submit through Schoology.
- Youtube and lyrics websites may not be accessible through the filter for students. While other songs may be more current, songs were selected for resource availability and lack of egregious profanity.

## Learning Standards Alignment

### Content Learning Standards

- Anchor Standard 7 Perceive and analyze artistic work
- Anchor Standard 11 Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.
- Response to music is informed by analyzing context (social, cultural, and historical) and how creators and performers manipulate the elements of music.
- Understanding connections to varied contexts and daily life enhances musicians’ creating, performing, and responding •

### Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy

**Reading: 1.** Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

**Writing: 7.** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

**AASL Standards Framework for Learners** - Inquire: Build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems.

Think: Learners display curiosity and initiative by: I.A.2 Recalling prior and background knowledge as context for new meaning.

Create: Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes: I.B.1 Using evidence to investigate questions. I.B.3 Generating products that illustrate learning.

Share: Learners adapt, communicate, and exchange learning products with others in a cycle that includes: I.C.1 Interacting with content presented by others.

Grow: Learners participate in an ongoing inquiry-based process by I.D.2 Engaging in sustained inquiry.

### ISTE Standards for Students:

3. Knowledge Constructor – 3d. Students build knowledge by actively exploring real-world issues and problems, developing ideas and theories and pursuing answers and solutions.

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