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HVL LESSON TITLE:

PROTESTING THROUGH SONG

DEVELOPED BY: ERIN COGGINS

PROTESTING THROUGH SONG

GUIDING QUESTION:

**How did popular music address
the unpopular view of the
Vietnam War?**

OVERVIEW:

Vietnam veteran Tom McKinney states that the unpopular views of the Vietnam War weighed on the minds of soldiers, both while fighting and once they returned. Protests occurred in all states in the form of gatherings, editorials, speeches, and popular music.



SUBJECT(S):
Social Studies/Music



VIETNAM VETERAN(S):
Tom McKinney



DURATION:
1-2 Class Periods

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“In the throes of my two tours of Vietnam, there were protests against the war. People saw the war as misguided. And that became the truth.”

Veteran Tom McKinney

OVERVIEW:

Vietnam veteran Tom McKinney states that the unpopular views of the Vietnam War weighed on the minds of soldiers, both while fighting and once they returned. Protests occurred in all states in the form of gatherings, editorials, speeches, and popular music.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The Vietnam Song Project has identified over 6,000 songs relating to the Vietnam War. Over 700 of these songs were released during the core war years, 1964-1973. Many of these songs remain popular to this day.

The Vietnam War protests were a series of demonstrations and movements opposing the U.S. involvement in the conflict. The protest songs were written to reflect the hatred, love, anger, and unity that the country was feeling at this tumultuous time.

OBJECTIVES:

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to

- Analyze protest songs as primary sources.
- Recognize historical content in primary sources.

STANDARDS:

AL: SS 13

Trace America's involvement in Vietnam, including public opinion.

AL: Reading Literacy: 1 (11-12)

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

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MATERIALS & DOCUMENTS

[HVL Tom McKinney Video](#)

Listening Slip (Doc A)

Protest Song Lyrics & Questions (Doc B)

[Protest Song Audio](#)

Project Directions (Doc C)

Internet Connection

PROCEDURES

ACTIVITY 01

- Distribute the Listening Slip (Doc A) and inform students that they are going to watch a brief video on Vietnam veteran Tom McKinney. They should answer the questions on the Listening Slip.
- Show the [HVL Tom McKinney Video](#)
- Give students a few minutes to finish answering the questions and discuss. Emphasize the question on the Vietnam War protests.

ACTIVITY 02

- Distribute the Protest Song Lyrics (Doc B). Project the lyrics or play the [audio](#).
- As the lyrics are read or listened to, instruct students to circle the words or phrases that are negative against the Vietnam War. **NOTE:** You can write these words and phrases on the board to create a list.
- Discuss the list in regards to: tone, subject matter, who is having the finger pointed at them, etc.

ACTIVITY 03

- Distribute the Project Directions (Doc C). Go over the directions and criteria.
- Allow students to work on the project for 1-2 class periods or assign as homework.
- **NOTE:** A list of Vietnam Protest Songs can be found [HERE](#).

IDEAS FOR EXTENSION

- Give each student a different song and have them present their projects to the class.
- Students write their own protest songs on the Vietnam War or a current event.

PROTESTING THROUGH SONG

LISTENING SLIP

DOC A



1. What was Mr. McKinney's reason for enlisting in the Marines?
2. What type of job was Mr. McKinney trained to do?
3. What part of Vietnam was Mr. McKinney sent to during the war?
4. What was the one thing he stated occurred during this two tours in Vietnam that bothered him?
HINT: He says these happened on just about every corner.
5. What was one of their favorite sayings while fighting in the Vietnam War? What was the reasoning behind this saying?
6. Mr. McKinney states that because the war was seen as "unpopular and misguided," this sentiment led them to do what?
7. If you were fighting in Vietnam, knowing that protests against the war were happening daily (and on the radio through popular music), how would you feel?

PROTESTING THROUGH SONG

“Vietnam Song” Lyrics

DOC B



Well, come on all of you, big strong men
Uncle Sam needs your help again
Yeah, he's got himself in a terrible jam
Way down yonder in Vietnam
So put down your books and pick up a gun
Gonna have a whole lotta fun

And it's one, two, three
What are we fighting for?
Don't ask me, I don't give a damn
Next stop is Vietnam
And it's five, six, seven
Open up the pearly gates
Well, there ain't no time to wonder why
Whoopee! We're all gonna die

Yeah, come on Wall Street, don't be slow
Why man, this is war au-go-go
There's plenty good money to be made
By supplying the Army with the tools of its trade
Just hope and pray that if they drop the bomb
They drop it on the Viet Cong
See upcoming pop shows
Get tickets for your favorite artists

And it's one, two, three
What are we fighting for?
Don't ask me, I don't give a damn
Next stop is Vietnam
And it's five, six, seven
Open up the pearly gates
Well, there ain't no time to wonder why
Whoopee! We're all gonna die

Well, come on generals, let's move fast
Your big chance has come at last
Now you can go out, and get those Reds
'Cause the only good Commie is the one that's dead
And you know that peace can only be won
When we've blown 'em all to kingdom come

PROTESTING THROUGH SONG

“VIETNAM SONG” LYRICS

And it's one, two, three
What are we fighting for?
Don't ask me, I don't give a damn
Next stop is Vietnam
And it's five, six, seven
Open up the pearly gates
Well there ain't no time to wonder why
Whoopee! We're all gonna die

Come on, mothers throughout the land
Pack your boys off to Vietnam
Come on, fathers, and don't hesitate
To send your sons off before it's too late
You can be the first ones in your block
To have your boy come home in a box

And it's one, two, three
What are we fighting for?
Don't ask me, I don't give a damn
Next stop is Vietnam
And it's five, six, seven
Open up the pearly gates
Well there ain't no time to wonder why
Whoopee! We're all gonna die

PROTESTING THROUGH SONG

PROJECT DIRECTIONS

DOC C



What You Will Do:

- Research to find a Vietnam Protest Song (Google Vietnam Protest Songs). There are plenty available. You cannot select Vietnam Song (I Think I'm Fixing to Die) for your project.
- Print out the lyrics. And if possible download the audio version.
- Analyze the lyrics, using the questions listed below.
- Write a short biography of singer (2-3 sentences). Include when the song was recorded and the reaction of the American people to it.

Analysis Questions:

- Throughout the song, what type of person, or American, is being referred to?
- What group of people would have most closely identified to the song during the 1960s? Why?
- Who wrote the song? Why?
- When you first found the song, what did you think it was talking about? Now, after doing research what exactly is the song talking about?
- Why is the song such a powerful form of propaganda or protest?
- Who wrote the song? What is their connection to the message?
- What is your favorite line in the song? Why?
- What is the most "protest" line or portion of the song? What does it mean?
- Did the artist give an interview regarding the song? If so, what outlet, how did the answer the questions proposed to them?
- Compare the song to a protest song of today (a good example is Toby Keith's Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue). What is different? What is similar?
- Why did you chose this particular song?

How Will The Project Be Presented?

Compile the lyrics, answers to analysis questions and biography in either a Google Document or a Google Slides presentation.

What Will I Be Graded On?

- All analysis questions must be answered in complete sentences. Answers should be detailed.
- Biography should be written in complete sentences.
- All grammar, capitalization and punctuation rules will be followed.