



[Note to Teachers: This series of lessons uses songs that address the use of drugs for recreation and escape. If your school policy allows, you might take advantage of opening a discussion on the topic of inappropriate use of drugs. If your curriculum is subject to restrictions on the topic, you should review the videotape before using it in the classroom.]

# BEHIND THE MUSIC

## Music in America 1968

Lessons for Music and Social Studies Classes, Grades 9-12

### A Song for Today

Lesson 3 of 4

## Objective

- Students will analyze musical and topical elements in popular songs
- Students will compose song as a classroom effort
- Students will consider and choose musical elements to effectively convey a message

National Standards 3, 4, 5, 9— Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments; Composing and arranging music within specific guidelines; Reading and notating music; Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

## Materials

VHS VCR Player

Television

VH1 Cable in the Classroom program Behind the Music: Music in America 1968

Web-based materials--Lesson 3

piano and some knowledge of playing basic chords

lyrics of protest songs



## Procedures

1. Read aloud lyrics to selected protest songs of the 1960s. (See examples below.)  
Discuss the meter of the lyrics, pointing out to students the stressed and unstressed words.

### **"Blowin In The Wind"**

Words and music by Bob Dylan

How many roads must a man walk down  
Before you call him a man?

Yes, 'n' how many seas must a white dove sail  
Before she sleeps in the sand?

Yes, 'n' how many times must the cannon balls fly  
Before they're forever banned?

The answer, my friend, is blowin in the wind,  
The answer is blowin in the wind.

### **"We Shall Overcome"**

Composer unknown. Lyrics derived from Charles Tindley's gospel song "I'll Overcome Some Day" (1900)

We shall overcome  
We shall overcome  
We shall overcome  
Some day

Chorus  
Oh, deep in my heart  
I do believe  
We shall overcome  
Some day.

2. As a classroom project, write a poem with four iambic lines--each line consisting of four feet, each of one unstressed or short syllable followed by one stressed or long syllable. Students will eventually sing this in the style of the protest songs of the late 1960s. The lyrics can address anything from serious societal or global issues such as hunger, human rights, or pollution to minor annoyances like homework, car repairs, or chores at home

3. When your class has come up with four lines, discuss the theme of these lyrics. What type of music does it call for? Write a song chart on the board for the class-written lyrics. To discuss rhythm, you may ask the students to tap out a rhythm on their desks. Ask the students if they want a rhythm to match the topic of the lyrics. Would rubato, syncopation, or other rhythmic elements help the message or the sound? In a similar way, discuss melody with your students. Ask the students if the melody should be lyrical or ragged. Should it move by steps or leaps? For tone color, ask students if they think the song should be rough and angry or smooth and innocent.

### Song Chart

Song Title	Subject Classification	Tone Color Instrumental & vocal	Rhythm	Melody
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3. Have the class chant the poem as you play one of the following chord progressions:

(3a)

(3b)

4. Play the progression again, using one of the rhythms suggested (or make up another by having students tap the rhythm on their desks as you play the chords; then playing the chords with the newly chosen rhythm as the students chant the lyrics).

(4a)

(4b)

(4c)

5. Ask for volunteers to sing the first line of the melody. While you play the chords and students tap out the rhythm, have the volunteer sing the first line. Continue in this manner until all four lines have been sung.
6. Have students sing the entire song with rhythm and melody. Ask your students for reactions. Ask them how effective is the song and message. Would they make any changes? Incorporate any changes the group thinks should be made.
7. Practice the song and record a final version. Save this to play back at the end of the year.
8. Notate the recording for the students to read. Have students write the lyrics on the manuscript. For advanced classes, ask the students to notate the song from the recording.
9. Ask each member of the class to write a short paragraph evaluating the effectiveness of the song in conveying the message of the lyrics.

VH1, in partnership with Cable in the Classroom, collaborated with MENC: The National Association for Music Education to develop this series of lessons.



# National Standards for Music Education

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.