



## VH1

Lesson for Humanities (Social Science  
and English)

Soundtrack to War  
VH1 Music Studio  
Cable in the Classroom

Lesson 1 - Music, Culture and War

Note to Teachers: The programs viewed in conjunction with these lesson plans may include references, consistent with the events portrayed, to violent acts, and topics of a war-like or political nature. Because this may be considered inappropriate for classroom use in some communities, you are encouraged to review the programs before presenting them to your students, and if necessary, choose those sections that enhance your lesson and are acceptable for use in your classroom.

Important Note: Due to the nature of this program and the topics discussed through the lessons, teachers should use careful judgment when deciding whether to present this material to students younger than high school age.

## Overview/Goals

The *Soundtrack to War* video illustrates cultural diversity as reflected in musical tastes of soldiers. From Rap to Country, soldiers take a piece of their culture with them when they sing or listen to music. Music can both divide and unite people. Like other pieces of culture, music identifies a time, place, and a people. Understanding the music of a culture can help students appreciate and relate to a prior time period in a more personal way. Music is also able to change emotional states. The documentary and this lesson attempt to raise questions about the use of music by soldiers as they enter battle and deal with the stress of being at war.

## Objectives

- **Students will understand/be able to relate:**
  - connect to people (soldiers) through their music choices
  - that music serves as a major conduit for the transport of knowledge, (information and material goods between East and West and results in global exchange of scientific and cultural traditions)
  - illuminate the historical contributions that music makes socially and culturally to
  - explore musical influences within a broader global context
  - migration of ideas among communities
  - How in this world of increasing awareness and interdependence, music can act as a magnet to draw people together (as in the different groups of soldiers identifying with certain types of music).
  - as we interact with unfamiliar musical traditions we encounter voices that are not exclusive to one community. We discover trans-national voices that belong to one world.

### **National Standards for History**

**Standard 2D** - The student understands contemporary American culture.  
Therefore, the student is able to

- Grade 9-12 Analyze how social change and renewed ethnic diversity has affected artistic expression and popular culture. [Analyze cause-and-effect relationships]
- Grade 7-12 Explain the influence of media on contemporary American culture. [Explain historical continuity and change]

## Materials

VHS VCR Player

- Television
- Audio playback equipment
- VH1's *Soundtrack to War*
- Web-based lesson materials
- Pencils/Pens and paper (students)
- Internet Access (library or home)

### **Prior Knowledge:**

- Students are familiar with the basic facts of the current war in Iraq
- Students can identify the various types of music in the program

# Procedures

**Day 1** – students watch the video documentary *Soundtracks to War* (approximately 45 minutes) As they watch the video students will tabulate, as possible, the variety of music artists listed by different soldiers

**Day 2** – Students will discuss the video from yesterday. A chart will be constructed that groups the artists by type. Students will select one type of music from the chart and research (either as homework, or in a library) both the type of music and the artists backgrounds. Discussion in class will include questions for students to analyze why certain types of music do not appear to be present in the video (classical, blues, jazz) while others seem to predominate (country, heavy metal, gore metal). Additional comments may be made on musical tastes (students may notice cultural issues e.g. race, age, gender).

Websites To Guide Student Research	
<a href="http://www.lacarte.org/songs/anti-war/">http://www.lacarte.org/songs/anti-war/</a>	Links to Legal Downloads and Lyrics
<a href="http://www.peace-not-war.org/Jukebox/index.html">http://www.peace-not-war.org/Jukebox/index.html</a>	Peace Jukebox - War Music
<a href="http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2004/s1094973.htm">http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2004/s1094973.htm</a>	Interview about Soundtracks on War - can be played w/Realplayer

**Day 3** – In small groups present their findings and research to the class noting particularly important characteristics from the video (e.g. artists that had military backgrounds, artists that were perceived as pro/anti war). Discussion questions from the teacher might include:

1. Question 1 - What types of music do you listen to? How does it make you feel? Do you ever use music to change your mood?
2. Question 2 - Given the list in your chart, label each type of music with an emotion you think it brings out.
3. Question 3 - In 1996, the United States used music to disrupt the lives of the ruler of Panama. How might music be used to harm someone? Link here for the list of songs played: Panama
4. Question 4 - Do you think it matters what type of music a soldier listens to? (students should be able to highlight how different groups of soldiers identify with different types of music e.g. gore metal, with concepts of death, heavy metal, loud and aggressive before battle, country ballads to explain loss of life and political purpose)
5. Question 5 - How has technology (cd players, ipods, mp3 players, downloadable music from the Internet) changed a soldiers ability to hear and play music? How do you think this has changed the lives of the average soldier as depicted in the video? (e.g. the cd players wired into the tank, the soldier aware of the Dixie Chicks controversy)
6. How does the music seem to bring the soldiers together? What specifics from the video (e.g. the punk rock fan who lost his friend, the spiritual/gospel group on the roof, the soldiers creating their own rap/ country songs) can students provide to show examples of the variety of music Americans travel with?

## Extensions

1. Students may also expand their knowledge with the other lessons attached to this documentary

### *Supplemental Resources:*

- Ultimate Guide to the War in Iraq (background historical and cultural information): <http://www.academicinfo.net/iraqwar.html>



*This lesson plan was created by Tim Dugan, Cable in the Classroom National Teacher Advisor, Princeton High School, Cincinnati, OH*