



VH1 News Presents:

Soundtrack to War
VH1 Music Studio
Cable in the Classroom

Lesson for Music Classes, Grades 9-12

Lesson 3 – Songs for Soldiers

Note to Teachers: The programs viewed in conjunction with these lesson plans may include references, consistent with the eras portrayed, to substance abuse, violent acts, and topics of a sexual and/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

Objectives

- Students will gain an understanding of the ways in which music reflects the personal preferences and backgrounds of an individual.
- Students will gain an understanding of the powerful feelings/emotions music can express.
- Students will reflect on their own musical preferences, and how those preferences may be incorporated into self-expression.
- Students will express their feelings through their own writing.

National Standards:

4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

Materials

- VHS VCR Player
- Television
- VH1's *VH1 News Presents: Soundtrack to War*
- Web-based lesson materials
- Overhead projector
- Pencils/pens and paper (students)
- Overhead transparency of Resource 3.1 **OR** photocopies for individual student use
- Copies of Resource 3.2 for individual student use
- Copies of Resources 3.3 and 3.4 for teacher use
- Overhead transparency of Resource 3.5 **OR** photocopies for individual student use (optional)

Prior Knowledge:

- Students have completed Lesson 2 of this series, or have at least watched the first half of the VH1 *Soundtrack to War* program.

Procedures

1. Lead students in a brief review of the discussion held during Lesson 2 of this series. (If Lesson 2 has not been completed, students should view the first 20 minutes of the VH1 program.) Remind students of the important role that music plays for soldiers in Iraq, and review the list of reasons that people “make” music, if desired. Explain that the second half of the show investigates more deeply the personal expression in each soldiers’ music, through both composing and listening to music.
2. Distribute student copies of Resource 3.1, Self-expression through music, and/or display it on the overhead. Guide students in identifying musical artists to whom they would choose to listen when experiencing the emotions listed (students may wish to suggest a musical genre if they cannot name specific artists). They should be prepared to explain their choices.
3. Distribute student copies of Resource 3.2, Video Quote Worksheet, and allow students a few moments to read the questions.
4. Show VH1's *VH1 News Presents: Soundtrack to War*, beginning about 20 minutes into the program and watching until the end. Direct students’ attention to the soldiers’ use of music for self-expression purposes. Have them take notes in response to the questions on Resource 3.2 while watching.
5. After viewing the program, lead students in discussing their worksheet answers (use Resource 3.3 to help guide discussion if necessary). Do the individual quotes from the soldiers help explain why they gravitate to the type of music they listen to or write? Have students summarize the range of emotion that is conveyed through the soldiers’ musical choices. Continue the discussion using Resource 3.4 as a guide.

6. Ask students to brainstorm a few ideas based on question three of the Discussion Guide. Is there a topic that concerns them, either politically or socially, that they would like to express? Encourage them to choose one or two emotions they would like to convey.
7. Divide the class into groups of two to four students for the writing activity, if desired. Guide students in writing a poem/rap about what goes on around them, similar to the process described by the soldiers.

Supplemental Resources:

- Resource 3.5 – Band and Artist Web site Reference Guide: Web sites for many of the artists mentioned in Soundtrack to War (see below).

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.

Resource 3.1 – VH1: Soundtrack to War

Self-expression through music

Identify a band or musical artist that would help you express or cope with these emotions:

1. Anger
2. Fear
3. Depression
4. Homesickness
5. Nervousness
6. Joyfulness
7. Frustration
8. Disappointment
9. Amusement
10. Grief (mourning)

Resource 3.2 – VH1: Soundtrack to War

Video Quote Worksheet

“The things that I think about when I roll out of that gate are just unreal.”

- Spec. Joshua Revak and Sgt. Trenton Dull perform a song they composed themselves. How does this song help them to deal with their situation in Iraq?

“I’m a thousand shells bouncing off the prayer deflector.”

- The artist Mystikal is described as a favorite of these soldiers. Why do they relate to Mystikal?

- Spec. Heather Haskins uses the Dixie Chicks song “Traveling Soldier” to express what feelings?

“It probably has been damaging to me as a person being here.”

- Christopher Snow performs a favorite song. How does this song relate to his time in Iraq?

Resource 3.2 – VH1: Soundtrack to War, continued

“Whenever I listen to Jay-Z it reminds me of home.”

- How does Jay-Z’s song “Streets of Washington” remind Andrew Starski of his hometown, Brooklyn?

“I feel like a target.”

- What aspects of his service in Iraq does Pfc. Leimyrain Moses incorporate into his rap?

“You can listen to music and create a space for yourself.”

- What does Sgt. William Foster mean by using music to create a space for one’s self?

“Music has a lot to do with uniting us out here.”

- Rappers Sgt. Delmus McGill, Spec. Joshua Revak, and Spec. Jaimeran Tippins express what ideas through their music?

Resource 3.3 – VH1: Soundtrack to War

Video Quote Worksheet – Teacher Version

“The things that I think about when I roll out of that gate are just unreal.”

- Spec. Joshua Revak and Sgt. Trenton Dull perform a song they composed themselves. How does this song help them to deal with their situation in Iraq?

The song describes the soldiers’ sense of loss for their comrades who were killed in the line of duty in Iraq. This song may be considered a memorial as it pays tribute to the memories, names and faces of those for whom they cared.

“I’m a thousand shells bouncing off the prayer deflector.”

- The artist Mystikal is described as a favorite of these soldiers. Why do they relate to Mystikal?

Mystikal served in the Persian Gulf War. Although many other artists perform music about the life of a soldier, Mystikal actually was one. The soldiers in Iraq find a common ground with him.

- Spec. Heather Haskins uses the Dixie Chicks song “Traveling Soldier” to express what feelings?

Feelings of loneliness and homesickness are evident throughout her performance.

“It probably has been damaging to me as a person being here.”

- Christopher Snow performs a favorite song. How does this song relate to his time in Iraq?

Snow’s song describes a search for strength to just get through another day in Iraq.

“Whenever I listen to Jay-Z it reminds me of home.”

- How does Jay-Z’s song “Streets of Washington” remind Andrew Starski of his hometown, Brooklyn?

Many of Starski’s acquaintances from home listen to Jay-Z. “Streets of Washington” describes the poor living situation he experienced in his upbringing in a housing project, which he relates to the poverty-stricken areas he sees in Iraq.

Resource 3.3 – VH1: Soundtrack to War, continued

“I feel like a target.”

- What aspects of his service in Iraq does Pfc. Leimyrain Moses incorporate into his rap?

Moses describes aspects of his job as a fuel truck driver and how that makes him feel like he is in danger.

“You can listen to music and create a space for yourself.”

- What does Sgt. William Foster mean by using music to create a space for one’s self?

Music is a very personal expression that reflects many things about someone’s personality. Soldiers often use music as an escape from their demanding environments.

“Music has a lot to do with uniting us out here.”

- Rappers Sgt. Delmus McGill, Spec. Joshua Revak, and Spec. Jaimeron Tippins express what ideas through their music?

Patriotism, freedom, and an end to war are all prevalent themes in the rap.

The preceding questions showed different ways in which soldiers used music in very personal ways to help cope with life in Iraq. The following ideas were covered:

- Music as a memorial
- Common ground with artists/bands
- Music to deal with homesickness
- Music as a source of strength
- Music as a reminder of home
- Descriptive information about life situations
- Music as a personal “space”
- Music as a personal expression of patriotism

Resource 3.4 – VH1: Soundtrack to War

Discussion Guide for Teachers

1. Discuss answers from Resource 3.2 (See Resource 3.3 for main ideas that students should grasp from each vignette.)

2. In the video, Mike Donahue says, “I’ve got my music and I’m happy.”
 - What do you think he meant by that?
 - If you were fighting in Iraq, how would music comfort you?
 - If you were deployed to Iraq and could only take three CDs with you, which would you bring and why?

3. (Introduction to rap writing activity.) Sgt. Delmus McGill, Spec. Joshua Revak, and Pfc. Leimyrain Moses demonstrated a rap towards the end of the video. They explained that rappers at home in the U.S. write about “the streets” and what is around them. In Iraq, they write raps about what they experience there. If you were to write a rap about your surroundings, what things might you include?

Resource 3.5 – VH1: Soundtrack to War

Band and Artist Web site Reference Guide

- AC/DC: www.ac-dc.net/
- Bloodhound Gang: www.bloodhoundgang.com/
- Bush: www.bush-music.com/
- Dixie Chicks: dixiechicks.launch.yahoo.com/
- Eminem: www.eminem.com/
- Guns-n-Roses: <http://gunsnrosesrock.proboards42.com/>
- Jay-Z: www.jayzonline.com/
- Linkin Park: www.linkinpark.com/site.php
- Metallica: www.encycmet.com/
- Six Feet Under: www.sfu420.com/
- Toby Keith: www.tobykeith.com/
- Tupac: www.tupac.com

NOTE: Teacher discretion is advised before directing students to any of these Web sites.



These standards-based materials are provided through a partnership with MENC: The National Association for Music Education. This lesson plan was created by MENC member Ann C. Clements, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Music Education Department, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, in collaboration with Sarah Watts, MME candidate