



storytellers

## VH1 Storytellers: The Dixie Chicks

VH1 Music Studio  
Cable in the Classroom

Lesson for Music Classes, Grades 7-12  
Lesson 1

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 better understand and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of musical performances through use of music telling a story as featured by the group the Dixie Chicks.
- Students will compare and contrast philosophy and form of the two songs featured in the first segment.
- Students will compare and contrast the sound sources and explain emotional responses to the various musical effects used.

#### **National Standards for music education:**

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.

## Materials

- VHS VCR Player
- Television
- VH1 *Storytellers: The Dixie Chicks*
- Student copies of the lyric sheet to “Wide Open Spaces” (provided below)

### **Prior Knowledge:**

- Students will have a basic understanding of form and are able to identify instruments.

## Procedures

1. Cue the tape to the first segment if VH1 *Storytellers: The Dixie Chicks*. Have students watch through the end of “Wide Open Spaces.”
2. Lead a brainstorm session on the quality and effectiveness of the musical performance telling a story. Focus on the group’s 10-year history as represented in approximately 4 minutes in “Taking the Long Way” and the philosophy they portray. Possible discussion questions include:
  - Do both songs tell a story?
  - Does where the inspiration of music come from have a bearing on the “sound”?
  - What are the similarities/difference in the two songs?
  - What form or other musical elements are the most effective?
  - How are the instruments in both pieces most effectively used, or how do the band members show their expertise on the instruments?
  - Students should explain their personal preference between the two songs, with specific reference to performance, composition, arrangement, and improvisations.
3. The Dixie Chicks describe “taking the long way” as their philosophy. Lead a discussion taking the following questions into consideration:
  - What do students think this philosophy is after listening to the track again?
  - Why do you think they had written so many notes for this song?
  - What would you do to edit your work into a 4 minute section?
4. Distribute the lyric sheet below. In “Wide Open Spaces” we learn this song was given to the band by the lead singer’s father. What are the music-to-world connections? What emotions does this music evoke? What personal connections can students make? Students should study the words of this song in groups to list their ideas, and listen more critically. Is there a more recent song students can compare this to?

5. What are the sound sources for each song? How are the sound sources chosen for each song used? Ponder the question asked by the Dixie Chicks: Where would you hear banjo if not in country music? Consider musical elements – harmony, texture, and structure.

### Extensions

*Watch the intermission between section one and two of the VH1 storytellers.*

Consider the relationship between vocal and instrumental knowledge of passages in the songs. Why is it important to know more than just your own part in a musical ensemble? How is the relationship of band members enhanced when vocalists and instrumentalists can assist each other? Discuss.

### Supplemental Resources:

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dixie\\_Chicks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dixie_Chicks)
- [www.dixiechicks.com](http://www.dixiechicks.com)
- Recordings: *Thank Heavens for Dale Evans* (1990) *Little Ol' Cowgirl* (1992) *Shouldn't a Told You That* (without Robin Lynn Macy) (1993) *Wide Open Spaces* (with Natalie Maines replacing Laura Lynch) (1998) 12x Platinum *Fly* (1999) 10x Platinum *Home* (2002) 6x Platinum *Top of the World Tour: Live* (live concert album) (2003) Gold *Taking the Long Way* (2006) Platinum
- Students should use the recordings listed as further listening activities to enhance knowledge of the group.

### 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.

## **“Wide Open Spaces”**

**Copyright The Dixie Chicks**

Who doesn't know what I'm talking about  
Who's never left home, who's never struck out  
To find a dream and a life of their own  
A place in the clouds, a foundation of stone

Many precede and many will follow  
A young girl's dream no longer hollow  
It takes the shape of a place out west  
But what it holds for her, she hasn't yet guessed

[Chorus:]

She needs wide open spaces  
Room to make her big mistakes  
She needs new faces  
She knows the high stakes

She traveled this road as a child  
Wide eyed and grinning, she never tired  
But now she won't be coming back with the rest  
If these are life's lessons, she'll take this test

[Repeat Chorus]

She knows the high stakes

As her folks drive away, her dad yells, “Check the oil!”  
Mom stares out the window and says, “I'm leaving my girl!”  
She said, “It didn't seem like that long ago”  
When she stood there and let her own folks know

[Repeat Chorus]

She knows the highest stakes  
She knows the highest stakes  
She knows the highest stakes  
She knows the highest stakes



*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 Helen A. Krofchick, Music Educator, Doby's Mill School, Elgin, South Carolina.*