



storytellers

## VH1 Storytellers: Pearl Jam

A VH1 Special  
VH1/Cable in the Classroom

Lessons for High School Social Studies Classes

New Twist on an Old Song

Lesson 1 of 3

Note to teachers: Please view this videotape for appropriateness for your classes. This lesson will take two days (one day for the viewing of the video, the second for the reading/analysis of the lyrics.) If live/recorded versions of these songs are available, students may also enjoy listening to the three versions. Some school districts may prohibit downloading music on the Internet.)

### Objectives

1. Students will explain the lyrics of various songs that have changed over time to illustrate the use of music as a medium for social protest.
2. Students will summarize and outline two social movements and compare their treatment in music from the time period.
3. Students will be able to summarize the musical lyrics and historical significance of key words and phrases of three versions of the song "Here's to the State of Mississippi".

## Materials

- \* Videotape of VH1 Storytellers: Pearl Jam
- \* Television and VCR
- \* Lyrics from “Here’s to the State of Mississippi” (2 versions) by Phil Ochs and “Here’s to the State of Mississippi” by Pearl Jam.

### **Prior Knowledge:**

- \* Students have a general background in American History from 1960 to the present.
- \* Students may use this lesson as a summary of protest movements, or an introduction to them.

## Procedures

1. Have students view and listen to the video VH1 Storytellers: Pearl Jam
2. Students then need copies of the three versions of the song “Here’s to the State of Mississippi” by both Phil Ochs and Pearl Jam. The Lyrics for Phil Ochs and Pearl Jam lyrics are below (listed first is the Pearl Jam version from 2006, listed 2nd is the earliest civil rights version by Phil Ochs, and listed third is the remake by Ochs as an anti-Nixon song).
3. Have students use their textbooks (or online) to define the fifteen key words/phrases that are in bold. They should be able to describe the historical significance of the words/phrases.
4. After defining the key words have the class discuss the two songs with the leading questions below.

## here's to the state of mississippi- pearl jam cover (2006)

Here's to the judges of **John Roberts**,  
Who wear the robe of honor in a **phony legal form**,  
And justices are stranger when the partisans report,  
When the court elected a president it was the beginning of this war,

Here's to the land you tore out the heart of,  
John Roberts find yourself another country to be part of

Here's to the government of **Dick Cheney**,  
With criminals posing as advisors to the crown,  
And they hope that no one sees the sites or that no one hears the sounds,  
Cause the speeches of our president are the remains of a clown

Here's to the land you tore out the heart of,  
Dick Cheney find yourself another country to be part of

Here's to the churches of **Jerry Falwell**,  
Oh the cross once made of silver now is turned to rust,  
And the sunday morning services preach in fear of men in love,  
And God only knows in heaven they must trust

Here's to the land you tore out the heart of,  
Jerry Falwell find yourself another country to be part of

Here's to the laws of **Alberto Gonzalez**,  
Congress will pass an act in the panic of the day,  
And the Constitution's drowning in an ocean of decay,  
And freedom of speech is dangerous i've even heard them say,

Here's to the land you tore out the heart of,  
Gonzalez find yourself another country to be part of

Here's to the businessmen of George W,  
Who'll want to change the focus from **Halliburton** to **Enron**  
And their profits like blood money spilled out on the white house lawn,  
To keep their hold on power they're using terror as a con,  
While the bombs they fall on children dont know which side...dont care which side that they're on

Here's to the land you tore out the heart of,  
George W find yourself another country to be part of

Here's to the land you've torn out the heart of,  
George W find yourself another country to be part of

## Here's to the State of Mississippi by Phil Ochs (1960's)

Here's to the state of Mississippi,  
For Underneath her borders, the devil draws no lines,  
If you drag her muddy river, nameless bodies you will find.  
Whoa the **fat trees of the forest have hid a thousand crimes**,  
The calender is lyin' when it reads the present time.

Whoa here's to the land you've torn out the heart of,  
Mississippi find yourself another country to be part of!

Here's to the people of Mississippi  
Who say the folks up north, they just don't understand  
And they tremble in their shadows at the thunder of the **Klan**  
The sweating of their souls can't wash the blood from off their hands  
They smile and shrug their shoulders at the murder of a man

Oh, here's to the land you've torn out the heart of  
Mississippi find yourself another country to be part of

Here's to the **schools of Mississippi**  
Where they're teaching all the children that they don't have to care  
All of rudiments of hatred are present everywhere  
And every single classroom is a factory of despair  
There's nobody learning such a foreign word as fair

Oh, here's to the land you've torn out the heart of  
Mississippi find yourself another country to be part of

Here's to the cops of Mississippi  
They're chewing their tobacco as they lock the prison door  
Their bellies bounce inside them as they knock you to the floor  
No they don't like taking prisoners in their private little war  
Behind their broken badges there are murderers and more

Oh, here's to the land you've torn out the heart of  
Mississippi find yourself another country to be part of

And, here's to the judges of Mississippi  
Who wear the robe of honor as they crawl into the court  
They're guarding all the bastions with their phony legal fort  
Oh, justice is a stranger when the prisoners report  
When the black man stands accused the trial is always short

Oh, here's to the land you've torn out the heart of  
Mississippi find yourself another country to be part of

And here's to the government of Mississippi  
In the swamp of their bureaucracy they're always bogging down  
And criminals are posing as the mayors of the towns  
They're hoping that no one sees the sights and hears the sounds  
And the speeches of the governor are the ravings of a clown

Oh, here's to the land you've torn out the heart of  
Mississippi find yourself another country to be part of

And here's to the laws of Mississippi  
Congressmen will gather in a circus of delay  
While the Constitution is drowning in an ocean of decay  
**Unwed mothers should be sterilized**, I've even heard them say  
Yes, corruption can be classic in the Mississippi way

Oh, here's to the land you've torn out the heart of  
Mississippi find yourself another country to be part of

And here's to the churches of Mississippi  
Where the cross, once made of silver, now is caked with rust  
And the Sunday morning sermons pander to their lust  
The fallen face of Jesus is choking in the dust  
Heaven only knows in which God they can trust

Oh, here's to the land you've torn out the heart of  
Mississippi find yourself another country to be part of

### **Here's to the state of Richard Nixon. Phil Ochs (late 1960s)**

Here's to the state of Richard Nixon.  
Where underneath his borders  
The Devil draws no lines.  
If you drag his **muddy rivers**  
Nameless bodies you will find  
And the fat trees of the forest  
Have hid a thousand crimes,  
And the calendar is lying  
When it reads the present time.

Oh here's to the land you've torn out the heart of.  
Richard Nixon: find yourself another country to be part of.

And here's to the schools of Richard Nixon.  
Where they're teaching all the children  
That they don't have to care,  
All the rudiments of hatred  
Are present everywhere,  
And every single classroom  
Is a factory of despair.  
There's nobody learning  
Such a foreign word as "fair."

And here's to the laws of Richard Nixon.  
Where the **wars are fought in secret**,  
Pearl Harbor every day.  
He **punishes with income tax**  
That he don't have to pay,  
And he's **tapping his own brother**  
Just to hear what he would say.  
But corruption can be classic  
In the Richard Nixon way.

And here's to the churches of Richard Nixon (and Billy Graham).  
Where the cross once made of silver  
Now is caked with rust,  
And the Sunday morning sermons  
Pander to their lust,  
And the fallen face of Jesus  
Is choking in the dust,  
And Heaven only knows  
In which God they can trust.

And here's to the government of Richard Nixon.  
In the swamp of their bureaucracy  
They're always bogging down,  
And criminals are posing  
As advisors to the crown,  
And they hope that no one sees the sights  
And no one hears the sounds,  
And the speeches of the president  
Are the ravings of a clown.

## Discussion Questions:

- \* Phil Ochs originates this song as a civil war protest song about Mississippi. Summarize the civil rights movement in the 1960s using examples from the song and your knowledge of the time period.
- \* What is the significance of Ochs re-wording this civil rights song into an anti-war protest song aimed at Richard Nixon? How does the possible memory of the first song add credibility to the second?
- \* Why do you think Pearl Jam re-works this song again as an anti-war protest song about George Bush? How does using this song add credibility to their message?
- \* Can you give other examples of songs that have been re-written? For example, “Thanks to “To Washington,” by John Cougar Mellencamp. Originally written in 1903 as “White House Blues,” a commentary on the 1901 assassination of President William McKinley, the folk classic has previously been updated as political commentary by the Carter Family and Woody Guthrie. Information from Salon.com Also, Another one that’s been adapted for various topical events is The Ship That never Returned which was changed into Charlie on the MTA by the Kingston Trio. Links for info on this song [here](#) and [here](#).
- \* Students may also want to try their hand at rewriting a modern song into a protest song.

## National Standards for History/Social Studies

### National Center for History in the Schools

1. **Era 9** Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970s)
  1. Standard 3: Domestic policies after World War II
  2. Standard 4: The struggle for racial and gender equality and the extension of civil liberties
2. **Era 10** Contemporary United States (1968 to the present)
  1. Standard 1: Recent developments in foreign and domestic politics
  2. Standard 2: Economic, social, and cultural developments in contemporary United States
    1. (2E) Evaluate the continuing grievances of racial and ethnic minorities and their recurrent reference to the nation’s charter documents. [Explain historical continuity and change]



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