Political Activism Through Music: Civil War Era

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Lesson Overview</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Overview:</strong> Students view an image of song lyrics from a chosen Civil War era song in order to understand the impact the political climate of the times had on the music of the same period. Students will analyze one song as a large group and one as a small group. Extension would include student research and comparison.</td>
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<td><strong>Grade Range:</strong> 9-12</td>
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| **Objective:** After completing the activity, students will be able to:  
  ● Analyze a piece of music as a historical artifact.  
  ● Analyze opinions of the time period through its music.  
  ● Compare music written in the Civil War era to music written during other periods.  
  ● Write a comparative essay about Civil War and more modern music. |
| **Time Required:** One class period of 50 minutes. |
| **Discipline/Subject:** Music, Literature |
| **Topic/Subject:** Literature, Performing Arts, Music |
| **Era:** Civil War and Reconstruction, 1861-1877 |

**Standards**

**Illinois Learning Standards:**  
Fine Arts:  
25.B-Understand the similarities, distinctions and connections in and among the arts.  
27-Understand the role of the arts in civilizations, past and present.  
Language Arts:  
1-Read with understanding and fluency.  
2-Read and understand literature representative of various societies, eras and ideas.  
3-Write to communicate for a variety of purposes.  
4.A-Listen effectively in formal and informal situations.  
5-Use the language arts to acquire, access and communicate information.  

**Materials**

**Handouts:** Thinking about Songs as Historical Artifacts Worksheet  
Folders containing one primary source from LOC  

**Analysis Tool:** Music Sheet Analysis
### Political Activism Through Music

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Slide</th>
<th>Text</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“When Pluto heard old Brown was hang / Old Topet with Hosannas rang; / For well they knew the lying thief, / Would make for them an honored chief.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“Some gentle muse and touch a strain, / ‘Twill echo back the sound again— / On scenes that pass’d we now must dwell, / When old John Brown arrived in Hell.”</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>“Brown to receive they now prepare, / All eager in the joy to share; / Old Satan from his throne came down / And left his seat for Old John Brown.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Not long, indeed, for him they wait, / For soon he thunder’d at the gate. / “Come in,” says Pluto, “Quickly come, / You’re welcome to our mighty home.”</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Three cheers roll’d forth in accents brief / To hail the Abolition chief— / Old John chim’d in, and thank the Father— / He’d safely passed the poesy gates.”</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>“While Abraham held him by the hand, / Old Satan took the Speaker’s stand— / “Boo!” cried he, “Now all sit down; / And hear me welcome brother Brown.”</td>
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<td>8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
"You're welcome John, in your reward,
Your chested Eddie and the Lord—
Though nearly set a wide open law,
Preach what not exactly my servant true.

As oft you've murdered, lied and stole,
It did rejoice my burning soul;
You've run your length in earth's career,
And we are pleased to see you here.

You'll take your seat at my left hand,
Why I do this you'll understand;
He not surprised, when I tell you,
Old Abraham is coming too.

There on my right, that vacant chair,
Long since for him I did prepare—
And soon I know that he will come—
His earthly race is almost run.

John at my left, Abe at my right.
We'll give the heavenly hosts a sight;
A triune group we then shall be,
Yes, three in one and one in three.

Abe's cabinet, it's very true,
Will soon knock here as loud as you—
In short, the negroizing clan,
Are traveling here unto a man.

I shall protest, most long and loud,
'Gainst taking in the motley crowd—
For well I know they'd me de-throned,
And swear that Tophet was their own.

Let Sumner, Stevens, and their host,
When they on earth give up the ghost—
Into a lower hell appear;
We have no room for them up here.
The-Carry, too, I much do fear.
Attraction's law will draw them here—
Their earthly teachings—though I tell,
Are doctrines long since preached in hell.

They, too, must find a lower home,
For either sure they shall not come—
We are crowded now in every spot,
'neath the sky and there a vacant lot.

Save here and there a vacant lot.

The traitor here from his own place
Can view the scene at Fort barely Chase—
Laughter at the woes of his old friends,
Till his soul's lie in horror's end.

Citations


There's other traitors I could tell,
They are too mean to come to hall—
So let each go and hunt his hole,
'For green backs here won't pay their toll.
Procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure Step #</th>
<th>Resource or Material Used</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Take student poll—“is music affected by culture and/or politics? Discuss results.</td>
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<td>2. Discuss briefly the political climate during Civil War and what issues could have affected the music of the period, i.e. slavery, abolition, North vs. South.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Show PowerPoint of “John Brown’s Entrance into Hell”</td>
<td>PowerPoint</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Discuss song stanza by stanza looking for political issues.</td>
<td>PowerPoint</td>
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<td>5. Have students look up names and places they do not know.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Discuss the song as a whole focusing on what we know about the political climate of the time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Students infer why this song was sung and who it would have been sung by.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Using what we have concluded, model completion of the Historical Artifacts worksheet with student input.</td>
<td>Historic Artifacts Worksheet</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Students will be given folders containing one of four songs and the Historical Artifacts Worksheet.</td>
<td>LOC items</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. In the groups (based on what song they have), the student will analyze the song and put their conclusions on the Music Sheet Analysis worksheet.</td>
<td>Analysis Tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Have each group present their song and conclusions to the class. Allow the class to provide additional input as needed.</td>
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Evaluation

Participation in discussion sessions. Participation in group sessions. Completion of both Historical Artifacts worksheet and Music Sheet analysis. For extension, completion of worksheets and assessment of essay.

Extension

Students will individually choose a song from the America Singing: Nineteenth-Century Song Sheets collection as well as a contemporary song they believe to have political significance. The student will analyze both songs using the Historical Artifact worksheet. Using that information the student will compose a comparative essay discussing the similarities and differences between the songs and how the songs illustrate the political climate during which they were written.

Author Credits:
S. Mitchell
Flora High School

Political Activism Through Music: Civil War Era
## Thinking About Songs as Historical Artifacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustration</th>
<th>Lyrics</th>
<th>Music</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Look at the physical format and graphical elements. What do you see?</td>
<td>What people, places, and events are mentioned?</td>
<td>What do you notice about the music (fast, slow, catchy, dull)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Looking at the Song</strong></td>
<td>What are your personal reactions to the image?</td>
<td>What are your personal reactions to the lyrics?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Responding to the Song</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>What emotions might this song produce when sung or played?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thinking About History</strong></td>
<td>Why do you think the artist(s) wrote this song? What clues do you find to suggest this?</td>
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<td>For what audience was the song written?</td>
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<td>Why is the music important to this song?</td>
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<td>What does the song tell you about what life was like during this period in history?</td>
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What more do you want to know, and how can you find out?
JOHN BROWN'S

ENTRANCE INTO HELL.

Come gentle muse and touch a strain,
'Twill echo back the sound again—
On scenes that past'd we now must dwell,
When old John Brown arrived in Hell.

When Pluto heard old Brown was hang
Old Tophet with Hosannas rang;  
For well they knew the lying thief,  
Would make for them an honored chief.

Brown to receive they now prepare,  
All eager in the joy to share;  
Old Satan from his throne came down  
And left his seat for Old John Brown.

Not long, indeed, for him they wait,  
For soon he thunder'd at the gate.  
"Come in," says Pluto, "Quickly come,  
You're welcome to your happy home."

Three cheers roll'd forth in accents brief  
To hail the Abolition chief—  
Old John chum'd in, and thank the Fates—  
He'd safely passed the pearly gates.

While Arnold held him by the hand,  
Old Satan took the Speaker's stand—  "(But)," said he, "Now all sit down,  
And hear my welcome brother Brown!"

"You're welcome, John, to your reward,  
You've cheated Riddle and the Lord—  
Though pearly gates wide open now,  
I can't catch my servant true."

As oft you've murdered, lied and stole,  
It did rejoice my burning soul;  
You've run your length in earth's career,  
And we are pleased to see you here.

You'll take your seat at my left hand,  
Why I do this you'll understand;  
Be not surprised, when I tell you,  
Old Abraham is coming too.

There on my right, that vacant chair,  
Long since for him I did prepare—  And soon I know that he will come—  His earthly race is almost run.

Balt., March, 1862.

John at my left, Abe at my right,  
We'll give the heavenly hosts a fight;  
A thrice group we then shall be,  
Yes, three in one and one in three.

Abe's Cabinet, 'tis very true,  
Will soon knock here as loud as you—  In short, the negoizing clan  
Are traveling here unto a man.

I shall protest, most long and loud,  
'Gainst taking in the motley crowd—  For well I know they'd do me harm,  
And swear that Tophet was their own.

Let summer, Stevens, and their host,  
When they on earth give up the ghost—  Into a lower hell appear;  
We have no room for them up here.

The Gerty, too, I much do fear,  
Attraction's law will draw them here—  Their earthly teachings—though I tell,  
Are doctrines long since preached in hell.

They, too, must find a lower home,  
For either sure they shall not come—  We are crowded now in every spot,  
Save here and there a vacant lot.

These I've reserved through all our fight,  
For those who have pre-emption rights;  
That corner lot's for Bockum Tod,  
A renegade accursed of God.

The traitor here from his own place  
Can view the scene at Fortress Chase—  Laugh at the woes of his old friends,  
Till his curse'd life in horror ends.

There's other traitors I could tell,  
They are too mean to come to hell—  So let each go and hunt his hole,  
For green backs here won't pay their toll.

And now, Ol John, on earth oppress'd,  
You are with us a welcome guest;  On earth you played our part; all well,  
So now with us forever dwell.

C. T. A., Printer.

Political Activism Through Music: Civil War Era
THE BLACK REGIMENT,

MAY 27th, 1863.

By GEORGE H. BOKER.

Dark as the clouds of even,
Ranked in the western heaven,
Waiting the breath that lifts
All the dread mass, and drifts
Tempest and falling brand
Over a ruined land;—
So still, and orderly,
Arm to arm, knee to knee,
Waiting the great event,
Stands the black regiment.

Or at the slippery brands
Leaping with open hands, —
Down they tear man and horse,
Down in their awful course;
Trampling with bloody heel
Over the crashing steel,
All their eyes forward bent,
Rushed the black regiment.

"Freedom!" their battle-cry—
"Freedom! or leave to die!"
Ah! and they meant the word,
Not as with us 'tis heard,
Not a mere party-shout;
They gave their spirits out;
Trusted the end to God,
And on the gory sod
Rolled in triumphant blood.
Glad to strike one free blow,
Whether for weal or woe;
Glad to breathe one free breath,
Though on the lips of death.
Praying—alas! in vain!—
That they might fall again,
So they could once more see
That burst to liberty!

"Now," the flag-sergeant cried,
"Though death and hell beside,
Let the whole nation see
If we are fit to be
Free in this land; or bound
Down, like the whining hound—
Bound with red stripes of pain
In our old chains again!"

Oh! what a shout there went
From the black regiment!

"Charge!" Trump and drum awake,
Onward the bondmen broke;
Bayonet and sabre-stroke
Vainly opposed their rush,
Through the wild battle's crush,
With but one thought allash,
Driving their lords like chaff,
In the guns' mouth they laugh;

Hundreds on hundreds fell;
But they are resting well;
Scourges and shackles strong
Never shall do them wrong.
Oh, to the living few,
Soldiers, be just and true!
Hail them as comrades tried;
Fight with them side by side;
Never, in field or tent,
Scorn the black regiment!

Published by the Supervisory Committee for Recruiting Colored Regiments.
John Brown.

By F. H. Matthews.

Oh, there is great news come from Charlestown:
"Tis all about the hanging of old John Brown;
He tried all his best to set the 'ner' free,
And for it he had to hang upon the gallows' tree.

It happened at Harper's Ferry, as you already know,
He tried all his best, but he found it was no go;
It gave to the 'ner' spaws, pistols and guns,
And in the struggle he lost his two sons.

So, all you, old men, who wish to set the 'ner' free,
Just think of John Brown and the gallows' tree;
And oh ye, abolitionists, before it is too late,
Think of John Brown and of his sad fate.

The Fate of Old John Brown.

Air: John Anderson My Jo.

John Brown, unfortunate John Brown,
You to a jail was sent,
For tampering with slaves, John
And with a bad intent.
You lately had your trial, John,
They found you guilty, very
With learning 'ner' how to shoot,
And take Old Harper's Ferry.

John Brown, unfortunate John Brown,
You reached the foot at last;
Your time upon this earth, John,
Is closing round you fast;
If the Niggers had been free, John,
What would they get to do?
They know when they are well off,
And now they laugh at you.
LINES ON THE
Proclamation
Issued by the Tyrant Lincoln,
April First, 1863.
By a Rebel.

"Are there no stones in heaven but what serve for the thunder—precious villain?"

---

We have read the tyrant's order,
And the signet to the rule,
And thought the king's jester meant
To make an April fool;
For we knew that nothing better
Than a joke in such a strain,
Could ever be made to emanate
From his degraded brain:
For he orders every man and child,
In palace or in cot,
To fast and pray on such a day—
To fast and pray for what?

To bend devoutly on your knees
To mock Almighty God,
Insult him with hypocrisy,
And court his angry god;
To ask that God be unjust
Who rules infinite space,
To ask Jehovah's blighting curse
Upon his chosen race;
To ask of God to hallow crime—
Oh, horrid, impious thought—
The tyrant asks—the heart replies—
To fast and pray for what?

To ask Almighty God to bless
A despot's roll of crime;
To ask that he will bring distress
On a more Christian clique;
To ask that murder, raping, blood
May meet with more success:
That the noblest, fairest land on earth
Be made a wilderness;
To ask that pure and holy God
May bless his guilty plans,
And with approval sanctify
The tyrant's blood-washed hands,

Pray that a mother's prayer be lost
When dragged from home in chains;
The orphan's cry ascend unheard,
When weeping it complains.
Pray that the tyrant's iron bands
May rust on maiden forms,
And that his grinning maw,
May bristle their fair white arms.
Pray that those that tarry near
Their tears in torrents pour,
And that their bleaching bones may strew
The gloomy dungeon's floor.

Pray for a rack—a guillotine—
On which to lash the free,
That the music of their torture,
And their cries of agony
May mingle with the stilled sob
Of woman's broken heart,
To save the tyrant's soul
And blunt remorse's dart.
Pray for more women-searchers,
With their coward hiking band,
To degrade all helpless people,
And insult a fallen land.

Dare you—minion though you be
Except from human laws,
Dare you ask Almighty God
To enlist in such a crew;
Dare you ask the Holy One,
To write His name in crime,
To write His name in guilt and shame,
In basely serving Time?
Oh, is there in our native State
A soul so black and base,
As to hurl such mocking insult
Into Jehovah's face?

Then, Father in Heaven! hear our pray'r,
The wall of the oppressed,
End energy to our despair,
And strength to the distressed;
And as, from dungeons damp and cold,
Thy children cry to Thee,
Oh, nerve our arms and steel our hearts
That we may yet be free!
Then teach us all some fitting words
To offer on that day,
When for success to Southern arms
We gladly fast and pray.

Oh, God! To Thee Thy people cry,
The God in whom they trust,
That Thou wilt aid them in their need,
And raise them from the dust;
And in Thy vengeance, Mighty God!
The lightning-lager thrust
Into that shameless tyrant's heart,
And drain its scalding lust;
Hurl down his broken sceptre,
And break his blood-stained throne,
And applauding worlds shall clasp their hands
To drown the tyrant's groans!

787
Young Epi's Lament

Oh, where will I go if dis war breaks de country up,
And de dar keys hab to coast-ter a-round,
Dat bob-dil-dic, na-na-pa-thon and ses-sa-sion
Am a gwine to run de nig-ger in de ground f'...
Be bob-o-bi-thon here, de ses-sa-sion dare.
And neither one nor cloth'er of oon's right,
But one says dis, de oth-er says dat,
And ody both get de coun-try in a fight,
But wata can a poor nig-ger do?

New what is de use ob dis gan-go-lot-ing fightin'?
Noth-er's fightin' to de coun-try so far-ern?
Why don't dey tend to bu-mun-ness making boats and buildin' rail-roads
While de nig-ger's raise de nat-ten and de ares,
But Mass-er ob-sets dare and South Car-o-lina here,
Dis-tens dis hap- py En-ter wit de growl.
One says dey shall, de oth-er says dey shan't,
And U-nion Sam has got to stand it all,
But what can a poor nig-ger do?

Oh, I wish de white folks ob dis great con-fed-er-a-shun,
Would on-le quit dar quar-rels and dar fight,
And stop dar ex-nos-adin', mar-chin', shootin' and bom-bardin'
And be willin' for to use each ody-er right.
For it's very plain to see dat de end would be,
But dey'd know each ody-er better dan before.
And dey'd made up dar minds, dat in all fa-ta-ten times,
Dey wouldn't go and de is ny mo'
And dat's what I want dem fer to do.

What a drud'ed shame it is dis ses-sa-sion re-er-in-
der, an' we're movin' up de hur-t-ness ob de land!
While trade an' nav-i-ga-shun, mer-chan-dis-ing spec-u-la-tion
Hab very near'ly come to a stand!
De crops wan't be growd, de meadows won't be mowd.
Kase dar's no-be-dy left for to tend 'em
Dat's a scar-cy ty it seems, ob en-bage, pears an' beans.
Kase dar's no-be-dy home for too men tur.
Den what's a hungry nig-ger gwine to do?

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Branch Office: No. 826 7th St., Washington, D.C.
**First Look**

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title of Music Sheet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date created</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there a cover page or image?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Based on what you already know, what message do you think is portrayed by this image? Are people, symbols or words used?

**The Lyrics**

Read the lyrics. Write a three sentence summary describing the main idea of the song.

Choose two phrases of lyrics that caught your attention. Why?

1. 
2. 

**Song Purpose**

What social or cultural topic is this song about?

Based on the lyrics, in your opinion, what seems to be the viewpoint expressed in the song? Why do you think it was written?

Do the images express this viewpoint? How?

At the time this song was written, who might have bought and/or sung this song? How do you think the public reacted to this song?

How can you learn more about the person that wrote this song?