

Inquiry #2: Messaging Through Music

Audience: High school-level students

Timeframe: 1 class period (40-60 minutes)

Objectives

Through this activity, students will:

- learn best practices for analyzing music, both written and recorded, as primary source
- discern how music can be used as a messaging tool and compare different messages conveyed through songs from specific era
- continue developing their understanding of propaganda as it pertains to patriotism and national identity

Materials Needed

Song A	"When You Come Home, And You Will Come Back, There's A Whole World Waiting For You" (1918) by George Cohan sheet music	"When You Come Home, And You Will Come Back, There's A Whole World Waiting For You" recording (3:08)
Song B	"It's a Long Way to Berlin, But We'll Get There!" (1917) by Leon Flatow sheet music	"It's a Long Way to Berlin, But We'll Get There!" recording (2:53)
Song C	"Lafayette (We Hear You Calling)" by Mary Earl sheet music (1918) sheet music	"Lafayette (We Hear You Calling)" by Mary Earl sheet music recording (3:11)
Song D	"When the Boys Come Home" (1915) by Oley Speaks sheet music	"When the Boys Come Home" by Oley Speaks recording (3:06)
Song E	"The Beast of Berlin (We're Going to Get Him)" (1918) by John Clayton Calhoun sheet music	"The Beast of Berlin (We're Going to Get Him)" recording (3:05)

Teaching Guide	‘Analyzing Sheet Music and Song Sheets’ Teacher’s Guide
Teaching Guide	‘Analyzing Sound Recordings’ Teacher’s Guide
Technology	Headphones for listening

Instructions

Part I - Context Lecture

approx. 10 minutes

Begin by introducing the topic of war music during WWI:



Music was used throughout the First World War for Americans of all backgrounds to convey their thoughts and feelings about the conflict. During the first three years of the war, America remained a neutral party. When he won the presidential election in 1916, Woodrow Wilson campaigned on the slogan "he kept us out of the war." Artists used music during this time to express appreciation for not being involved in the foreign conflict, while others expressed feelings of dismay at the destruction being caused in Europe and the fact the United States did not want to step in to help. When the United States committed to the war effort in April 1917, numerous songs about enlisting to go overseas to fight the Germans, save the allied nations, and embrace American duties of being heroes and harbingers of liberty were composed and recorded. Because this was long before the era of streaming or CDs, most of these songs remain available as just sheet music, often with corresponding cover art. Some that were recorded can still be heard, although the sound quality is much different from what many modern listeners are used to.

1. *World War I.* [Web.] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200197499/>.

1. Have students then consider the definition of propaganda and patriotism they created during the first activity. How might music be used as a tool to convey either of these concepts?
 - This question may be posed as an informal conversation starter to get students thinking before the sources are introduced, but no need to have them provide a response

Part II - Analysis of Sheet Music

5-10 minutes

1. Break students into groups of 2-5 people depending on class size, have them pick one of the songs listed

- Emphasize that being able to read sheet music is not necessary for this activity. The focus of this section is the lyrics, the cover of the sheet music, and anything else noticed on the presentation of the document and/or wording
- 2. Have each group begin by looking **just** at the sheet music and lyrics of the song
- 3. Using the teacher's guides, have students assess the sheet music and answer questions including:
 - ☐ What appears to be the message of the song? How do you know?
 - ☐ Are there familiar names or places referenced? Are there unfamiliar names of places referenced?
 - ☐ What does the cover art suggest about the song? What other parts of the document contribute to the meaning/feeling of the piece?

Part III - Analysis of Recording

15-20 minutes

1. With the sheet music and lyrics accessible, have the groups listen to the respective recording at least twice
2. Add any secondary commentary based on a more complete understanding of the music and its presentation

Part IV - Jigsaw Discussion

approx. 15 minutes

1. Make new groups so that representatives from each of the prior groups are present (this could also be done as a presentation by each of the original groups, though a "jigsaw"-style activity encourages more direct conversation)
2. Have students share findings and thoughts from the analyses. Make note of any similarities, differences, and interesting observations.
3. Have the groups use the sources to answer the essential questions posed in the overview:
 - ☐ What do these songs say about how Americans feel (or should feel) about the war effort?
 - ☐ How are these songs effective in presenting a specific view on the war? How are they ineffective?
 - ☐ What other songs do you know of, from this period or another, that remind you of these? How are they similar or different?