
Audience Level: 8th — 12th Grades
Genre/Content Overview: Social History, U.S. History, Language Arts and Speaking

Learning Objectives:
• Students will describe the role of *We Shall Overcome* in the Civil Rights Movement.
• Students will investigate the relationship between African American artists and activists in the authoring of *We Shall Overcome*.

Summary Description:
In this lesson, students will explore and examine various protests and social movements of the late 1960s and 1970s. Students will examine how these movements incorporated music into their causes. Students will also examine how the artists used music to support activism and spoke to the social, cultural, and political issues of the time. Additionally, students will analyze and discuss United States history, social conscious, citizenship, and the concept of protest, and social movements.

The passing of the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act did not end the struggle and tensions across the United States. In fact, the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s the United States experienced a lot of social, political and cultural change. The late 1960s and the 1970s social, and protest movements picked up where the Civil Rights Movement left off. The social and protest movements of the late 1960s and 1970s tapped into something deeper across the United States. These included the anti-war movement, the war on poverty, women's movement, equal rights, urban revitalization and grass roots movements. This era ushered in a new type of social revolution.

These movements and protests drew from all occupations especially the youth and urban communities who felt that the Civil Rights Movement did not end with the passing of the Civil Rights Act. An integral part of social and protest movements was the music of the revolution and the artist that supported and participated in these movements. Like songs of protest during the Civil Rights Movement the music of the new revolution gave voice to the experience, the emotions, and frustration of the youth, the labor force, women, minorities, and the LGBTQ community.

Social Movement: Are a type of group action. Large, sometimes informal, groupings of individuals or organizations which focus on specific political or social issues. They usher in, reset or undo social change.
**Protest Movement:** A statement or action expressing disapproval of or objection to something.

**Key Questions:**
1. What is a protest movement?
2. What are the elements of a protest song?
3. What role does the artist have to speak out on social and political issues?
4. How can citizens and artist work together to bring about social change?

**Instructional Plan:**

**Task 1.** Documents and music

A. The teacher will provide students with primary document resources that relate to major protest, and political and social movements during the late 1960s and 1970s. The teacher will also provide primary documents relating to the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights.

B. The teacher will lead the class in a discussion on the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights to explore topics of freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, role, and responsibility of the government to its citizens.

C. The teacher will lead the class in a discussion on social, political, and cultural issues in the 1970s. Here the teacher can provide students with primary documents such as newspapers. Here the class can discuss the concepts of protest and social movements.

D. Using riversofrhythm.org the teacher can play protest songs that correlate with the social movements and protest that the class has examined.

**Task 2.** Task for students

A. Divide the students into groups of 3-4 and have them choose a social movement or protest to research.

B. Using riversofrhythm.org students should research an artist and song that speaks to that protest or movement.

C. Students can explore a movement and artist that composed songs about these movements and how the lyrics fit the ideas, themes, and emotional aspects each movement.

D. Students should examine the themes, imagery, and language of the songs, as well as the background and history of the artist.

E. Students should present their research on their song, and movement, and thoughts to the class.

**Task 3.** Contemporary social justice and protest movements and songs

A. Students can discuss modern forms of protest and social and political movements that are happening in both the United States and in other countries. While the youth are leading protest movements in the United States, there are also youth in other countries around the globe that are participating in protest movements and calling for social justice.

B. Students can compare protest and social movements of the 1970s with those happening during the 21st century. Students can look at themes, of music and social issues from each era and compare and contrast each. Using riversofrhythm.org students can look up artist to see who they were influenced by and how each genre helped in the creation of protest songs that spoke to different ideas of each movement.
Resources:

- riversofrhythm.com (primary)
- National Archives Catalogue: https://www.archives.gov/research/topics
- Digital resource: National Digital Archives Equal Rights Amendment
  http://digitalvaults.org/#/detail/3197/?record=1772

Movements:

- Anti-Poverty
- Women's Liberation
- Anti-War
- The Environment; Anti Deforestation
- Minority Equal Rights
- Workers Rights/Labor
- Gay/LGBTQ Rights

Resources for Movements:

- www.pbs.org/wgbh/americancollection/features/timeline/stonewall/
- www.pbs.org/independentlens/sistersof77/movement.html
- tn.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/the-womens-movement/
- www.whitehousehistory.org/anti-war-protests-of-the-1960s-70s
- www.history.com/topics/1970s
- www.apa.org
- www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/history.aspx
- YouTube videos of protest movements
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzQNKkDC3mQ NBC Universal archival footage
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Dzz2vzdtLc women's protest movement

Artists:

- Curtis Mayfield (Don't Worry) If there is a Hell Below, We're All Going to Go
- Isley Brothers Fight the Power 1975
- The Sugar Hill Gang
- Jimmy Hendrix
- Bob Marley
- Neil Young
- John Lennon
- Gil Scott-Heron
- Nina Simone
- James Brown
- Kendrick Lamar
- J-Cole
- Chance the Rapper
- Beyoncé
- Solange

Possible Extension Activities:

a. Create your own song for the movement: after researching contemporary social and political movements, students can write a poem or a song that discuss their feelings and thoughts about these issues and speak to the movement.