Vietnam War Protest Song Analysis

Suggested Grades
6-12

Overview
Creativity was an important asset to protesting the Vietnam War. Many popular musicians of the 1960s and 1970s wrote and performed songs in order to express opposition to the violence in Vietnam. These songs are still played today, which serves as a reminder of the power of music.

Objective
Learn about the antiwar movement, discuss the reasons for opposing the war in Vietnam and reflect.

Time needed
About thirty minutes: fifteen to discuss the antiwar movement, five minutes to listen to the song, and ten minutes for reflection and discussion.

Materials needed:
A computer with speakers
Handouts of song lyrics
A piece of paper

Instructions
1. Give a summary of the antiwar movement to the students and be sure to include examples of why the individuals chose to protest.
2. Hand out a copy of the lyrics of the chosen Vietnam protest song.
3. Aloud, play the song for the students and give some time after the song is finished for the students to write a reflection of the song.
4. Together, have the class discuss the reason why the musician might have written the song as well as different examples and issues brought up in the antiwar movement that they heard in the song.

Examples:
What’s Going On – Marvin Gaye
Give Peace a Chance – John Lennon
Fortunate Son – Creedence Clearwater Revival
Alice’s Restaurant - Arlo Guthrie (son of Woody Guthrie)


Questions
1. What is the tone of the song?
2. What is the message the artist is trying to convey to the listener?
3. What lyrics stand out to you?
4. What images come to mind while listening to the song?
5. What aspects of the Vietnam War does the song mention?