

The 1960s: Youthful Optimism, Activism, and Joan Baez

Overview

Bob Dylan's meteoric rise was aided by the most popular figure in the new folk movement, Joan Baez. Her pure soprano with its otherworldly vibrato, her earthy beauty, and her passionate convictions made Baez the ideal figurehead for a musical movement with hopes of changing the world. When she met Dylan, Baez realized she had found a poet whose words could lift her voice even higher. She became his champion, momentary lover, and lifelong friend. Dylan eventually turned away from Baez along with the folk scene, and as the 1960s wore on Baez became intensely focused on anti-war activism and other causes. Yet the pair have continued to play an important part in each other's lives.

The following lesson looks at Joan Baez and the role of women in the protest music movement, both in the 1960s and present day. Students will examine the issues that were important to women in this movement in the 1960s and how the issues and delivery have changed or remained the same.

Objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Recognize the importance of Joan Baez to the evolution of Bob Dylan's career as a musician.
- Discuss the involvement of Joan Baez and other musicians in the anti-war activism of the 1960s.
- Form an opinion about Baez's acts of civil disobedience and protest against the draft for the Vietnam War.
- Discuss the role of women in the music of protest throughout history.
- Communicate using verbal and written means.

Materials

- CD player
- Music from Joan Baez and Ani DiFranco
- Internet access or printed newspaper articles
- Learning Journals

Introductory Exercise

Instruct students to visit Joan Baez's official website at <http://baez.woz.org/> and make note of the various acts of protest that she has participated in throughout her life (listed in her biographical information).

A major issue for Baez was protesting the draft for the Vietnam War. Have students share what they know about the draft and the war in Vietnam and speculate as to why she was protesting both.

A possible draft for the war in Iraq was a hot topic in the 2004 election. It is also a topic that is important to youth--if there were a military draft, they and their peers would be the ones to be drafted. Students should be able to understand the various perspectives on this issue and form strong opinions as to whether they believe a draft is necessary and productive in times of war.

Have students research in the *Seattle Times* archive (<http://archives.seattletimes.nwsource.com/web/>) articles from the past several years about the possibility of a military draft or editorials or letters that talk about a possible draft. Emphasize that they should read several different articles and opinions in order to have a variety of perspectives on the issue. If

student Internet access is not available, print several articles and provide them for students to read. Possible discussion questions could include:

- Do you think that there will ever be a draft again in the United States? Why or why not?
- Does the draft discriminate against people that have more money or a higher education? Explain your answers.
- What is a back door draft? From the articles you have read, did one happen in Iraq? Explain your answers.
- Is refusing to pay your taxes an effective way of protesting something your government is involved in? Explain your answers.

Follow up by assigning students an opinion paper on whether they believe that a draft is ever necessary. If so, when? If not, then why not? Their opinions should be backed with specific examples and facts. These papers can be read aloud in small groups and discussed as a class.

Focus Exercise

Women have been making music as protests for many years and continue to do so to this day. This exercise compares music made by politically active women in the 1960s and thirty years later in the 1990s.

Listen to or read the lyrics provided at the end of this lesson for two examples of songs that would be considered protest music by women. From the 1960s: Joan Baez, "All the Weary Mothers of the Earth" (from her album, *Come from the Shadows*) and from the 1990s: Ani DiFranco, "Lost Woman Song" (from her album, *Ani DiFranco*).

Begin a discussion with the following questions:

- What is each woman singing about?
- How are their approaches similar and how are they different?
- Do you think that both of these women are feminists?
- What does this word mean to you?
- How has the definition of feminism changed over time?
- How is this reflected in music?

Give students the following assignment:

Research and compare women's roles in the protest music movement in the 1960s with their roles in the 1990s Riot Girl movement.

Write about the following questions in your learning journals:

In what ways are the women in protest music from these two time periods similar and in what ways are they different (examples could include fashion, type of music, singing style, political issues)? In what way do these differences reflect the changing roles of women in our society over time?

In conclusion, as an entire class, create a Venn diagram (see example below) illustrating the similarities and differences between the protest music made by women in the 1960s and the 1990s. The diagram can be drawn on the board or on an overhead projector.

Sample Venn diagram can be found at:

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/lessonplans/graphicorg/pdfs/venndiagram.pdf>

Follow up

Have students read and discuss chapter three of Joan Baez's memoir, *And a Voice to Sing With*, entitled "Winds of the Old Days." This chapter focuses on her relationship with Bob Dylan and contrasts her commitment to political activism with his sense of frustration with being labeled a political folk singer. Please be aware that the chapter contains several expletives.

Lyrics to Joan Baez, "All the Weary Mothers of the Earth" and Ani DiFranco, "Lost Woman Song"

"All the Weary Mothers of the Earth"	"Lost Woman Song"
Music and words by Joan Baez	Words and Music by Ani DiFranco
<p>All the weary mothers of the earth will finally rest We will take their babies in our arms and do our best When the sun is low upon the field To love and music they will yield And the weary mothers of the earth shall rest</p>	<p>I opened a bank account when I was nine years old I closed it when I was eighteen I gave them every penny that I'd saved and they gave my blood and my urine a number now I'm sitting in this waiting room playing with the toys</p>
<p>And the farmer on his tractor and beside his plow Will stand there in confusion as we wet his brow With the tears of all the businessmen Who see what they have done to him And the weary farmers of the earth shall rest</p>	<p>and I am here to exercise my freedom of choice I passed their handheld signs went through their picket lines they gathered when they saw me coming they shouted when they saw me cross I said why don't you go home just leave me alone I'm just another woman lost</p>
<p>And the aching workers of the world again shall sing These words in mighty choruses to all will bring "We shall no longer be the poor For no one owns us anymore" And the workers of the world again shall sing</p>	<p>you are like fish in the water who don't know that they are wet as far as I can tell the world isn't perfect yet his bored eyes were obscene on his denim thighs a magazine I wish he'd never come here with me in fact I wish he'd never come near me</p>
<p>And when the soldiers burn their uniforms in every land The foxholes at the borders will be left unmanned General, when you come for the review The troops will have forgotten you And the men and women of the earth shall rest</p>	<p>I wish his shoulder wasn't touching mine I am growing older waiting in this line some of lifes best lessons are learned at the worst times under the fierce flourescent she offered her hand for me to hold she offered stability and calm and I was crushing her palm through the pinch pull wincing my smile unconvincing on that sterile battlefield that sees only casualties never heros my heart hit absolute zero</p>
	<p>Lucille, your voice still sounds in me mine was a relatively easy tragedy now the profile of our country looks a little less hard nosed but that picket line persisted and that clinic's since been closed they keep pounding their fists on reality hoping it will break but I don't think there's a one of us</p>

	leads a life free of mistakes
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