

Grade 9 Arts Ed - Social Justice Music Project

Lessons do not indicate one day. Each lesson may take several days to complete

Lesson 1: Examining our backgrounds

Have the students take a moment to make a word map about themselves, which in this form will be for their knowledge only. This can include age, gender, race, religious views, family background, socio-economic status, etc. Students will use this to help frame the lens with which they view the world (AKA their positionality).

Once the students have completed the word map, allow them time to look at their positionality and decide what they are willing to voice in a pair and share. Open the classroom up for dialogue on what it means to view other people's perspective. Why is it important to acknowledge differing views and learn to be open to discussion?

Using a mentimeter, have students identify areas associated with social justice (www.menti.com). These may range from the environment to racism. After the students have placed their answers, look at each one and ask, "Why is it important?" and "What more do we need to know?" Open the class for discussion on where we see these kinds of social justice issues and what we see as a way to create change and inclusivity.

Watch: "Completely Normal" from the Global Oneness Project. What kind of stereotypes might be placed on Jordan and Toni? How is this an issue of social justice? What can we learn from their shared experiences? How does Jordan use music to help others?

(<https://www.globalonenessproject.org/library/films/perfectly-normal>)

Following this discussion and to help develop understanding, have students return to their pair and share partners to hypothesize definitions of the following (dictionary definitions for teacher-reference only):

- **social justice** - equal rights, equal opportunity, equal treatment
- **perspective** - a particular way of considering something (merriam-webster.com)
- **positionality** - the social and political context that creates your identity in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability status. Positionality also describes how your identity influences, and potentially biases, your understanding of and outlook on the world. (dictionary.com)
- **discrimination** - prejudiced or prejudicial outlook, action, or treatment (merriam-webster.com)
- **racism** - a belief or doctrine that inherent differences among the various human racial groups determine cultural or individual achievement, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has the right to dominate others or that a particular racial group is inferior to the others. (dictionary.com)
- **classism** - differential treatment based on social class or perceived social class; the systematic oppression of subordinated class groups to advantage and strengthen the

dominant class groups. It's the systematic assignment of characteristics of worth and ability based on social class. (classism.org)

- **sexism** - attitudes or behavior based on traditional stereotypes of gender roles; discrimination or devaluation based on a person's sex or gender, as in restricted job opportunities, especially such discrimination directed against women. (dictionary.com)
- **ableism** - discrimination or prejudice against individuals with disabilities (merriam-webster.com)

Lesson 2: Music and Social Justice

Guiding question: Are there ways in which music perpetuates stereotypes or oppressive behaviours?

Have students make groups of 3. Give each group a set of lyrics which perpetuate stereotypes. Examples: *Milkshake* by Kelis; *Blurred Lines* by Robin Thicke; *It's Hard Out Here for a Pimp* by Three 6 Mafia; *I'd Don't Mind* by Usher; *Where Have All the Cowboys Gone* by Paula Cole; *Kung Fu Fighting* by Carl Douglas; *Brown Sugar* by the Rolling Stones; *Ur So Gay* by Katy Perry; *I'm an Indian Outlaw* by Tim McGraw; Use other top 50 hit lists for examples. Use the following prompts: In what ways are the lyrics problematic? What is discriminatory about them? Is there evidence of a social belief in the song? Are there hidden meanings in the lyrics? Ask if they can think of any others to add to the list. Are there other ways that music oppresses those we view as "different" or the "other"?

Now think of songs that are written to encourage a social justice stance. Be ready to play their chosen songs. Have a list of examples with lyrics and recordings ready (examples below):

- *Imagine* – John Lennon
- *For What It's Worth* – Sergio Mendes and Brasil '66
- *Strange Fruit* – Billie Holliday
- *Changes* – Tupac Shakur
- *Same Love* – Macklemore and Ryan Lewis
- *Powerless* – Nelly Furtado
- *Formation* – Beyoncé

Why is it important to question the lyrics of the music to which we listen? How can we make informed choices in what music we choose and how it shapes our world view?

Lesson 3: Creating our own Social Justice Lyrics

Assignment:

Search for songs with a social justice theme. Find and use at least three songs, although more is also acceptable. Read the lyrics. Choose words or phrases that jump out at you. Copy them

down. Make sure you keep track of what pieces you borrow lyrics from as they will need to be cited (remember we've got to give credit where credit is due).

Once you've found the words/phrases, rearrange them into a new set of lyrics. You are writing your own social justice anthem with a little inspiration. Use the information you have on writing lyrics from our melody lesson.

When you have a set of lyrics that you are pleased with, read them aloud onto a Flipgrid video (www.flipgrid.com). You may choose to either have this open to the class or have it set to be viewed by the teacher only. After reading your lyrics, give a one-two minute explanation on why you choose the words or lines and how you arranged them.

Lesson 4: Putting the lyrics to music

Prior knowledge:

Before beginning the Soundtrap portion of the assignment, review music possibilities with students. At this point, they will understand basic rhythm and notes, key signatures and chords. They will have also completed several improvisation tasks, which they can draw on for their assignment if they wish.

Play "Rise Above" spoken word as an example of how text can work in rhythm. Ask students what they hear in the lyrics of this example. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmWKXYP2tSI>

Using Soundtrap (www.soundtrap.com), record the lyrics into a song form of your choice. Play around with the program and find a method that works for you. Take into consideration some of the musical processes that you've learned. This can be done as spoken word over a beat, you can create a melody with chords, etc. It is up to you if you use pre-recorded loops or your own composition.

Your final Soundtrap assignment will be shared with the class. Think back to your Flipgrid video. What led you to choose the text? How does your song reflect a social justice issue? To whom does your piece give a voice?

Lesson 5: Reflection

How has your view and understanding of music and social justice been enhanced or changed as you discovered the music? How do the lyrics you wrote give social justice a voice?

Lyric Poem Example (lyrics from songs listed above) Flipgrid example:



Strip away the fear
Strip away the fear and learn to see me as a brother
Misplaced hate makes disgrace to races
A strange and bitter crop
Strip away the fear and imagine
Imagine changes
I see no changes
No freedom 'til we're equal
Strip away the fear and imagine
Young people speaking their minds
We gotta make a change
Strip away the fear and dream
You may say I'm a dreamer
Everybody look what's going down
Strip away the fear