

Music with a Message:  
A Study of American Songs from the Early Twentieth Century  
(Mostly with lyrics; Mostly 1900-1940)

Overview:

This project will count for both classes – Mounkhal and Maguire will grade the group section together. After the group section, you will write an essay by yourself. These essays will be marked by the teacher who did not mark your document contrast essay. Each group will present four songs from the early twentieth century (modernist period) to the class during one period. We will have five presentations over five periods. You will need to take notes during the presentations because the essay you write will be based on comparing and contrasting songs that you did not present.

Step One: Choosing the Songs

In your group of 4, you will find 4 songs from the genre you have been assigned that you believe have the following qualities:

- Lyrics that relate to at least one of our American Studies Themes (or a title and a tone and a melody and a structure that relates, if there are no lyrics)\*
- Lyrics that relate to their historical context in a meaningful way (or a title and a tone and a melody and a structure that relates, if there are no lyrics)\*
- Music that fits the genre in some kind of a representative way
- Some kind of a relationship with the other three songs chosen by your group

Mr. Maguire and Mr. Mounkhal have provided each genre with a list of songs to start you off... You are not limited to the songs from this list, but you do need to check songs that are not on this list through both Mr. Maguire and Mr. Mounkhal.

Even if the version of the song you are using was recorded after 1940, it can still be relevant to this project if it was written before 1940.

If your song is long, you will need to choose an excerpt that is no longer than about 3-5 minutes. If one of your songs is very short, you might need to do five songs for the group to reach its allotment of music. Your presentation to the class, therefore, will be about 12-20 minutes of music and 25-35 minutes of discussion.

You will notice that some artists/composers show up on more than one list; this overlap is because genres are never pure (crossover artists are not a new phenomena). In each case, however, the song that is on the specific list can work well with other songs from that list.

\*The songs without lyrics are indicated on the provided lists with an asterisk. Although interpreting music without lyrics can seem challenging, we would love to see groups try and use at least one instrumental song or to interpret the musical sections in between lyrics.

### Step Two: Doing the Research

Once you have your songs, you will need to learn about them.

You will need to read and analyze the lyrics as if they were a poem.

You will need to study the history of the song, the performer and the writer.

You will need to read about the genre and the time when the song was written.

Take careful notes – keep careful records of citations.

See attached page for sources...

### Step Three: Preparing the Presentation

You will be presenting these songs to the class and leading discussions about them, so you will need to know them well.

The group will be responsible for handing in...

- a properly cited, short (no more than a page) history of the genre, with particular attention paid to the development of this genre up to 1940.
- 4 song analysis sheets (see a sample at the end of this packet).
- A properly cited slide presentation with versions of the four songs.
- A short essay (no more than 2 pages) that explains the thematic relationships and links among the four songs.

The group should balance the work load and indicate on the Powerpoint and on the work handed in who did what (through the use of initials).

#### Step Four: Presenting

You must keep within 49 minutes.

You must balance who speaks in your group.

You must balance the presentation of context and background of the songs with questions that get the class thinking.

You must make sure that the technology will work and the song versions are appropriate.

#### Groups:

##### Jazz

Jake  
Maddie  
Christian  
Nicole Rodriguez

##### Blues

Ashton  
Sivan  
Nicole Zucker  
Niki

##### Folk/Country/Spirituals

James  
Matt  
Rachel  
Richa

##### Classical

Shiran  
Julia  
Greg  
Adam

##### Musicals/Film Soundtracks

Nick  
Vin  
Leo

## Jazz

*\*Scott Joplin Maple Leaf Rag* - performed by Scott Joplin on a piano roll - 1899

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O\\_dI6BZt06U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_dI6BZt06U)

*\*Dixieland One-Step* written by The Dixieland Jazz Band - 1920 - performed by Lopez and Hamilton's Kings of Harmony - 1920

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EdFXMc6Abek&feature=related>

*Loveless Love* -- written by WC Handy in 1926 - performed by Louis Armstrong in 1954

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTvlzl78cjl>

*Ain't Misbehavin'* - Fats Waller - 1929

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97Wwhe9Hx\\_w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97Wwhe9Hx_w)

*Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?* - Bing Crosby performing - 1931 - written by Yip Harburg and Jay Gorney

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eih67rlGNhU>

*Sophisticated Lady* - Written by Duke Ellington - 1932 - performed by Billie Holiday

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hs8w6R-Xh\\_E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hs8w6R-Xh_E)

*Reefer Man* - written and performed by Cab Calloway - 1933

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D44pyeEvhcQ&feature=BFa&list=AVGxdCwVVULXegjJNZ\\_pyiEENDSTjGEpy7&lf=list\\_related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D44pyeEvhcQ&feature=BFa&list=AVGxdCwVVULXegjJNZ_pyiEENDSTjGEpy7&lf=list_related)

*They Can't Take That Away from Me* - performed by Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong in 1956 - written by George and Ira Gershwin in 1937

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ma91kie8G3A>

*Take the A-Train* written by Duke Ellington/Billy Strayhorn - 1939 - performed by Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington's Orchestra

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQnNnPLC\\_b4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQnNnPLC_b4)

*\*Solo Flight* - written and performed by Charlie Christian and Benny Goodman - 1941

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IID2JPnGF00>

## Blues

*St. Louis Blues* – written by WC Handy in 1914 – performed by Bessie Smith - 1929  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Who6fTHJ34&feature=related>

*T'Ain't Nobody's Business if I Do* – written by Porter grainger in 1922 and performed by Bessie Smith – 1923  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cngx\\_KKiWE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cngx_KKiWE)

*Statesboro Blues* – written and performed by Blind Willie McTell – 1928  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnWxZtl3ONY&feature=related>

*Deep Moaning Blues* – written and performed by Ma Rainey – 1928  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-mRHNAeJXE>

*Avalon Blues* – written and performed by Mississippi John Hurt – 1928  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=klcDgu2f\\_pQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=klcDgu2f_pQ)

*High Water Everywhere Part One* – written and performed by Charley Patton - 1929  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=336dDZsU1Eg>

*Four Day Creep* – written and performed by Ida Cox – 1931  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZyUFxp1zDRk&feature=list\\_related&playnext=1&list=AVGxdCwVVULXcn4xiZe2tUnyqRB3lqejHh](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZyUFxp1zDRk&feature=list_related&playnext=1&list=AVGxdCwVVULXcn4xiZe2tUnyqRB3lqejHh)

*Gimme a Pigfoot and a Bottle of Beer* written by Wesley Wilson and performed by Bessie Smith - 1933  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhfPP-YUEMQ>

*You Can't Tell the Difference After Dark* – written and performed by Fats Waller and Alberta Hunter - 1935  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9qlcBk4pMI>

*All My Love's in Vain* – written and performed by Robert Johnson – 1937  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnsBIY4rKwM>

*I'd Rather See Him Dead* – written and performed by Memphis Minnie – 1938.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQwGhSiEMzE&feature=related>

*Strange Fruit* – written by Abel Meeropol and Laura Duncan - performed by Billie Holiday – 1939  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnlTHvjBeP0>

*House of the Risin' Sun* – written and performed by Leadbelly – 1939  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWNwrdnhsLM>

*Key to the Highway* – originally written in the 1940s by Big Bill Broonzy – performed by Little Walter in 1958

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0kaqj4-OGs>

### Folk/Country/Spirituals

*Can the Circle be Unbroken* - written by Ada Habershon and performed by the Carter Family in 1927

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Can\\_the\\_Circle\\_Be\\_Unbroken\\_%28By\\_and\\_By%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Can_the_Circle_Be_Unbroken_%28By_and_By%29)

*Keep on The Sunny Side of Life* – written by Ada Blenkhorn in 1899 – performed by the Carter Family 1928

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbmQQ4RfzVE>

*Irene, Goodnight* – written and performed by Leadbelly in 1932.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onUFzYvVsfM>

*I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night* – written by Alfred Hayes and Earl Robinson in 1936 – performed by Paul Robeson, probably in the early 40s

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n8Kxq9uFDes>

*Wabash Cannonball* – written in 1904 by William Kindt – recorded by Roy Acuff in 1936, probably performed here in the early 60s.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOQXyYK1FAU>

*So Long, It's Been Good to Know You* – written and performed by Woody Guthrie - 1937

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqiblXFIZuk>

*Orange Blossom Special* – written by Ervin T. Rouse in 1938 – performed in 1939

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fcgtMs0wOlw&feature=related>

*Go Down Moses (Let My People Go)* - traditional spiritual – performed by Paul Robeson – 1939

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtLcELU1brA>

*Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* – traditional spiritual – performed by Paul Robeson – 1939

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSb273c9tm4>

*Do, Re, Mi* – written by Woody Guthrie in the 1930s – performed by Woody Guthrie – 1944

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46mO7jx3JEw&feature=results\\_main&playnext=1&list=PLC30870936297E291](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46mO7jx3JEw&feature=results_main&playnext=1&list=PLC30870936297E291)

## Classical

*Thoreau* - written by Charles Ives in 1915 – performed here by soprano Veronica Lenz-Kuhn and Tan Crone on piano.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FclX5IA dwaE>

*Tom Sails Away* – written by Charles Ives in 1917 – performed here by baritone Thomas Hampson, and

Michael Tilson Thomas on piano.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czXZ3TjVOvQ>

\**Ballet Mechanique* written by George Antheil in 1924 – the performance we have is a much more recent one.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSDtjMhGjLw>

\**Rhapsody in Blue* – written by George Gershwin in 1924 – this version we have is a recording of Gershwin playing the piano with an unnamed orchestra – probably in the 1920s

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1U40xBSz6Dc&feature=related>

\**An American in Paris* – by George Gershwin – 1928 – this version is a much more recent version conducted by Andre Previn.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KU1X3Wut-k0&feature=related>

\**Polyphonica* – written by Henry Cowell – 1928 – the version we have here is a much more recent performance by the Colorado String Quartet.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNIA0uSXrms&feature=related>

\**On The Trail* – from Grand Canyon Suite – written by Ferde Grofe – 1929-1931 – performed here by a more recent Bournemouth Orchestra.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3gL\\_uXTBwQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3gL_uXTBwQ)

\**Sun-Treader* – written by Carl Ruggles – 1931 – performed by a more recent Cleveland Orchestra.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6soFIEZAMYw>

\**Allegro from Billy The Kid* – written by Aaron Copland – 1939

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYs7pKCWgWs>

\**Fanfare for the Common Man* – written by Aaron Copland – 1942 – this version is performed by the New York Philharmonic much more recently.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnzHAL4saal>

Old American Songs :The Boatmen's Dance (minstrel song from 1843); The Dodger (campaign song); Long Time Ago (ballad); Simple Gifts (Shaker song); I Bought Me a Cat

(children's song) – traditional songs arranged by Copland in 1950. Sung here by Samuel Ramey. (You may choose the best ones to present)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owUiE2mOOZM>

### Musicals/Film Soundtracks

*A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody* (from Ziegfield Follies of 1919 – Musical Revue) – written by Irving Berlin – this version is from a movie about Ziegfield's productions from 1936 and it combines several other songs into a medley within the main song and also gives you a flavor of the over-the-top kind of production values of these kinds of events.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyGhmbfd7rY>

*Second Hand Rose* (from Ziegfield Follies of 1921 – Musical Revue) written by James Hanley and performed by Fanny Brice in 1921

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NVOAhobPR6M>

*Puttin' on the Ritz* – written by Irving Berlin – 1930 – performed here by Fred Astaire in 1930 also

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BAZhHXsknd8>

*We're in the Money* (from Gold-Diggers of 1933 – Movie) – written by Al Dubin and Harry Warren – performed by Ginger Rogers and chorus – 1933

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJOjTNuuEVw>

*Anything Goes* (from Anything Goes – Musical) – written and performed by Cole Porter – 1934

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z1XAuEM02Sw>

*On the Good Ship, Lollipop* (from Bright Eyes - Movie) – by Richard Whiting and Sidney Clare – performed by Shirley Temple - 1934

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1r4bbgv1lf8>

*The Stairs Dance* (from The Little Colonel – Movie) – performed by Bill Bojangles Robinson and Shirley Temple - 1935

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjCFYpWDmfM>

*Ol' Man River* (from Showboat – Musical and Musical Film) – written by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein – performed by Paul Robeson – 1936.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eh9WayN7R-s>

*Somewhere Over the Rainbow* (from Wizard of Oz - Movie) – written by Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg – performed by Judy Garland – 1939

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HRa4X07jdE>

*Tara's Theme* (from Gone with the Wind – Movie) – written by Max Steiner in 1939

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikVeY0brtXU>



*When You Wish Upon a Star* (from Pinocchio – animated Movie) – written by Leigh Harline and Ned Washington – performed by Cliff Edwards in 1940.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6RoRRdyTxw&feature=related>

## Song Analysis Sheet

(Be sure to cite properly throughout)

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Genre: \_\_\_\_\_

Song Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date written/performed: \_\_\_\_\_

Writer/performer: \_\_\_\_\_

What do the lyrics mean (or what do the title and a tone and a melody and a structure that relates, if there are no lyrics)? Explain. Provide quoted examples.

How do the lyrics relate to at least one of our American Studies Themes (or a title and a tone and a melody and a structure that relates, if there are no lyrics)? Explain. Be specific.

How do these lyrics relate to their historical context (or a title and a tone and a melody and a structure that relates, if there are no lyrics)? Explain. Be specific.

What can you learn about the composer / lyricist / performer(s) that is interesting and related to what we are studying? Explain.

How does this song relate to your group's genre in a representative way? Explain.

What else can you find out about the song through research? For example, but not limited to, how popular was it when it was first recorded, how many times has it been recorded, how popular has it been over time, what kind of effect did it have on society when it was first released, what kinds of special instances has it been used in? Why? How?