



Music Lesson Plans for Social Justice

*A Contemporary Approach
for Secondary School Teachers*

LISA C. DELORENZO

MARISSA SILVERMAN

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OXFORD
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Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: DeLorenzo, Lisa C. (Lisa Carey) author. | Silverman, Marissa, author.

Title: Music lesson plans for social justice : a contemporary approach for secondary school teachers / Lisa C. DeLorenzo and Marissa Silverman.

Description: New York, NY : Oxford University Press, 2022. |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021060878 (print) | LCCN 2021060879 (ebook) |

ISBN 9780197581476 (hardcover) | ISBN 9780197581483 (paperback) |

ISBN 9780197581490 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Music—Instruction and study—Outlines, syllabi, etc. |

Social justice—Study and teaching. | Education, Secondary. | LCGFT: Lesson plans.

Classification: LCC MT10 .D387 2022 (print) | LCC MT10 (ebook) | DDC 780.71—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021060878>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021060879>

DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780197581476.001.0001

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Paperback printed by Marquis, Canada

Hardback printed by Bridgeport National Bindery, Inc., United States of America

To Don and Mali

*This book is dedicated to my remarkable siblings who have enriched my life
with their acumen, insight, and uncanny sense of humor.*

—Lisa

*To all my students, past and present.
You have been my greatest teachers.*

—Marissa

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Acknowledgments

We have written this book because we care about public school music education: its contexts, contents, peoples, and potentials. However, we could not have succeeded were it not for the support and assistance of a number of people. First and foremost, thank you to the following “tradition bearers”; each one of you supplied knowledge and understandings of musics, cultures, and peoples, without which we could not have responsibly and ethically provided the content that follows: Nani Agbeli, Shelley Axelson, Paul Berliner, Faith Conant, Jennifer Kyker, Robert Levin, David Locke, Thomas McCauley, Moyo Rainos Mutamba, Oscar Perez, and Roshnie Rupnarain.

To the students and Cali School of Music alumni who volunteered to participate and “try out” some lesson plans, we are moved by your energy and enthusiasm: Zach Clements, Pete Diamantis, Megan Falco, Jessica Finkelstein, Konstantina Kioskas, Julia Marra, Daniel Mitchell, Aaron Noriega, Julia Pennello, Kayli Roderick, and Sam Tobias.

To our editor at Oxford University Press, Norm Hirschy, our appreciation for your kindness, generosity, patience, and thoughtful reflections on the content, design, and production of this book. To the copyeditors, especially Ponneelan Moorthy, our thanks for your keen eye and attention to details. And to the anonymous reviewers of our volume—the content of our book is better because of you.

Many of our professors, teachers, and colleagues played key roles in our development as music educators and thinkers in music education. We are grateful to all of you.

Importantly, to the teachers and students who will consider the content of this book: we appreciate you.

1

Introduction

Secondary general music educators often spend a lot of time teaching students how to familiarize themselves with Western genres of music, develop skills in music reading, and learn the rudiments of “popular” or “traditional” instruments. The root of this teaching comes from a perception about the following questions: “What is important to teach?” and “What music is considered valid?” These questions provide the grounding for this book as well. It is understandable, though, that often teachers teach the way they were taught—music institutions tend to emphasize Western classical music and the theoretical structures of music, including standard notation. Consequently, many music teachers believe that these areas of study are integral for general music students.

In this book, however, we strip away such assumptions and begin with the foundation that students learn more fully when they are engaged in music making that has contextual relevance to them. In brief, we posit that music lessons are valuable when they connect with students’ lives and experiences in the local or global community. Essentially, we ask: “How does one engage adolescents in active music making that not only advances musical understanding, but also relates directly to the sociopolitical worlds in which students live?” With this in mind, we state unequivocally that all musics, whether from diverse cultures, classical, popular, jazz, and beyond, are valid and deserve prominence in the music curriculum.

What Are the Key Ingredients of Lessons for Social Justice?

We write this book for music teachers who search for meaningful ways to involve students in creating, performing, and listening experiences within a context that challenges students’ thinking about fairness, equity, and justice. To do so, we encourage lesson planning and curricular decision-making according to the following points:

1. *Relevance* is key. For this reason, we stress the importance of adjusting and shaping material in this book to fit your students’ worlds.
2. *Music of all genres*, especially popular music, establishes a sense of time and place. Social issues always have a “past,” while also remaining in the present.
3. *American education is a political enterprise* that involves decisions about curriculum, teaching, and democratic engagement. Likewise, music educators in public

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schools bear responsibility for teaching music from its social, cultural, and political perspectives.

4. *Active music making*, as reflected in composing, arranging, improvising, listening analysis, and performance, is integral to helping students think critically about the meaning of music within a sociopolitical framework. Lectures, worksheets, and textbooks, however, diminish the joy of music making in the classroom.

Please note: If and when the musical contexts and content explored in these lessons feel somehow beyond reach—for the teacher and students—feel free to “learn” alongside your students. Additionally, invite “tradition bearers” and experts from the locales and places and spaces that make such musics (whether via technology—through video conferencing—or in person). Teaching social justice through music is as much about pointing out and attempting to right inequities as it is about honoring and recognizing the voices of others and one another.

About This Book

This book is written for secondary school general music teachers. Why focus on adolescents? Unfortunately, active classroom music making often ends for students at the elementary school. In fact, many students are shepherded into courses, such as music appreciation or fundamentals of music, when they enter secondary schools. Music instruction, then, shifts from exploration and play at the elementary school level to textbooks, lectures, and worksheets at the secondary level. Imaginative and creative music experiences give way to learning music “literacy” that some music teachers perceive as reading and writing standard notation.

In this book, we hope to help music educators make music class more relevant by designing lessons that revolve around active music making. Relatedly, this book provides the materials and ideas for connecting social justice with music instruction. Neither social justice issues nor music making take precedence over one another, but instead are balanced in such a way as to create significant music experiences while also developing thoughtful citizens who reflect on important issues within a musical context.

Our book is divided into six large units that start with an introduction to the topic and related notes for the teacher. A graphic organizer follows, along with concrete lesson plans, complete with URL references, and other needed materials (see our book’s website: <https://socialjusticemusics.com>). Some graphic organizers contain “essential questions” that guide the teacher and the unit as a whole; some units do not. Also, these units are not presented in any specific order—instead, they can be used intermittently throughout the academic year. Lessons in the “American Protest Movements Unit,” for example, have four sections ranging from Introduction to Protest, Rise of the Labor Unions and Woodstock, to the Civil Rights Movement and Black Lives Matter, to School Shootings. Each section includes a cluster of two

or three 45–50-minute lessons. Additionally, a unit or a cluster of lessons ends with a culminating project. This provides students with the opportunity to create their own music based on the social justice issues and musical ideas presented in the lessons.

We well understand the challenges that face music teachers today: assessment demands, concert preparation, lack of sufficient instruments, and time constraints. We also know that lesson plans can be prescriptive and include activities that may not fit all students. For this reason, it is vital that teachers adjust or add activities in ways that may work better for specific classroom settings. The lessons are flexible enough to use alternate music listening sources or discussions.

From our communication with undergraduate students who have gone on to professional teaching jobs, lessons that focus on teaching social justice through music have been highly successful. Secondary school students are much more interested in the world around them than we sometimes give credit. In middle school and into high school, adolescents begin to question their identity and place in the world. Consequently, lessons that promote a social justice perspective often speak directly to the heart of what students want to know. It is our hope that these units serve as a model for creating your own units about social justice issues for students, regardless of the school's context and teaching-learning settings. In fact, the epilogue at the end of this book provides information and tips for creating your own socially just music lessons.

What Do We Mean by “Social Justice”?

Social justice is a form of active engagement and thoughtful inquiry about inequities in the world. In essence, social justice serves to uncover injustices, imbalances, and untruths in order to support and promote a more equitable social order. Several of the following questions serve as guidelines for understanding the nature of social justice and engaging with social justice through musical action:

- What are issues and concerns that marginalized peoples speak of with excitement, anger, fear, or hope?
- How might I enter a dialogue so I will learn from specific communities about issues and concerns they face?
- What experiences do people possess that potentially yield solutions for their own issues and concerns?
- What is missing from the “official story” that will make the issues and concerns of the oppressed more understandable?
- What current or proposed policies serve the privileged and the powerful, and how are they made to appear inevitable?
- How can the public space for discussion, problem posing, and problem solving be examined?¹

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For the past 25 years, discussions of social justice, as both a concept and a practice, have blossomed across the domains of music, music education, and community music (e.g., Woodstock, “We Are the World,” or Civil Rights and Apartheid protest songs). Despite this, we still do not have a consensus on what we mean when we say “social justice.” Why? For one thing, social justice is an extraordinarily complex concept given that “social” and “justice” have no universally agreed-upon definitions. Putting these two individual concepts together does not make things any easier. In fact, it complicates matters. So, if we want to conceptualize, understand, and then actualize social justice, we need to think in multidimensional terms. For example, one crucial dimension of social justice that is frequently overlooked in the practice of music education is *love or peace*.

Author bell hooks argues that there can be no social justice without love, and no love without justice.² Brazilian educator and activist Paulo Freire³ also saw love as a vital force in the fight for social justice.³ Like hooks, Freire asks us to take notice of those around us, for “no matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause—the cause of liberation.”⁴ And hooks explains: “Until we live in a culture that not only respects but also upholds basic civil rights for children, most children will not know love.”⁵ As Martin Luther King, Jr., confirms: “Love that does not satisfy justice is no love at all.”⁶

When we use the concept of “social justice” throughout this book, we do so willingly, knowing the difficulties inherent in enacting social change. Foundationally, it is important to acknowledge that, in order to consider affecting social change for equity and justice, we must, on some level, engage in acts of love for ourselves and those around us. Additionally, without encouraging students’ questioning of their worlds and guiding students to think through the potentials and pitfalls for social change through music, we cannot, in good conscience, say we are music educators educating the needs of the students we serve.

Why Music Teachers Avoid Provocative Issues

Music teachers are often skeptical about teaching that involves a focus on social issues. One big fear is backlash from administration or parents who often have very firm ideas about what a music class should look like and ultimately “be.” Moreover, many feel that sociopolitical discussions do not belong in the schools, especially in music classrooms. Some parents contend that “teachers have no right to teach my child beliefs that I do not espouse. Schools are neutral places that should stick to teaching content, not stirring up the kids to revolt.”

Part of the problem is the term “political,” which some connect directly to governmental structure (e.g., political parties, government officials, voting). Given this narrow definition, parents and administrators worry that teachers will impose their beliefs and ideologies on students without considering family-held beliefs and political positions. We do not support this kind of teaching, but at the same time,

we believe that teachers cannot remain completely neutral. On one hand, the role of the teacher is to challenge students with different points of view. On the other hand, teachers cannot prepare students for a democratic society without bringing social dilemmas to the table. Consequently, issues with a sociopolitical dimension can range anywhere from advocating for safe drinking water, to one's identity in the community, to factors that advantage some people over others.

What Does This Have to Do with *Music Teaching*?

It all depends on how teachers define music education. If one believes that performance is the ultimate goal of music education, then chances are the curriculum will lean heavily on reading standard notation, acquiring the technical skills for playing instruments or singing, and using repertoire-based/textbook-based music material. If one believes that Western classical music is “real” music while, say, popular musics such as rap and rock are interesting diversions but not worthy of “serious” examination, then chances are that classical music will dominate music instruction, along with the tacit message that some musics are more valid than others. And so on and so on.

All musics and the various methodologies to teach them have something to offer, and we are not suggesting that social justice issues supplant the skills needed to advance musical understanding. On the contrary, critical listening, performing, and composing, all of which require music knowledge and skills, allow students to more accurately express their musical ideas. Take, for example, writing a protest song. Such an activity involves an understanding of song form, singing/instrumental skills to share the music with others, a knowledge base of other protest songs, a sense of stylistic differences between a protest song and other types of songs, the ability to write lyrics that support the rhythmic structure of a song, and a historical framework. In fact, throughout a lesson based on social justice, *music* should remain the primary vehicle for responding. Although discussions are critical for teasing out different points of view and establishing a culture/historical framework, they are not an end in themselves, but rather an avenue for cultivating meanings in music.

Dimensions of an Active Music Class

Individual and group compositions play an essential role in the lessons throughout this book (see Appendix A). Because issues of social justice challenge students to think about themselves in relationship to the school, local community, or world-wide community, much of the critical thinking should come from the students themselves. Likewise, much of the critical thinking in music is reflected through student compositions. We espouse the philosophy of constructivism—that is, the most

meaningful learning comes from that which students construct themselves, based on questions and prompts from the teacher or other students. When composition/improvisation activities involve creating, performing, and reflecting, then these activities also involve some of the highest levels of thinking-and-doing in music.

Other forms of active music making involve analyzing recorded selections from a piece that relate to the lesson, as well as creating soundscapes through vocal, percussion, melodic, or digital formats, singing, music technology, arranging, or movement choreography. Music listening is prominent throughout the book, where students listen for the purpose of research (e.g., creating a playlist), analysis (e.g., comparing the mood of two songs), and making comparisons with music from different cultures or genres (e.g., African rhythms indigenous to jazz).

Active music making *needs* to be present in every lesson. Most important, active music making should form the basis of a culminating project, whether composing a song or formatting an original piece using *GarageBand*. Interestingly, the wide expanse of music literature includes many examples of music composed in response to social issues. From Beethoven's *Eroica Symphony* to Bob Marley's "One Love," much of music literature was inspired by issues of social justice. The arts have always been a driving force in expressing truths beyond words.

Wonderful possibilities abound across secondary school general music classrooms when instruments like guitars, ukuleles, electronic keyboards, and drums from around the globe are available. These instruments generally appeal to teenagers and allow teachers to involve students in music making with adolescent-friendly musical instruments. The inclusion of technology provides other important tools for adolescents whose, say, level of musical thinking is higher than their skills on other instruments.

Although these instruments have the potential for increasing—among other dispositions and skills—music skill development in an age-appropriate setting, much of today's current practices with these instruments emphasizes music reading, performing pre-composed songs, and instrumental/vocal technique. Improvisation and composition usually take a back seat to such skill-based lessons. Yet, students can actually improvise the first day they get their instruments. Subsequently, learning chords and melodies not only advances musical understanding, but gives students more tools to use in composing their own music.

Critical Discussions and Reflection in the Classroom

Adolescents are sometimes reticent to express their thoughts, beliefs, and opinions, partly because of the following: (a) peer pressure can quickly shut down a conversation; (b) students may not be used to free-flowing discussions in their other classes; (c) English may be a second language; and (d) music teachers have not been trained to facilitate student-centered discussion. Discussions that go beyond one-word answers, however, are essential for developing the critical thinking skills necessary for connecting music to social justice (see Appendix B). Discussions and reflection

need not last more than 5–10 minutes, but should *not* be viewed as poor music teaching if students are highly involved in talking about the issue at hand.

What is the role of the teacher? Teachers provide the prompts for encouraging students to speak honestly and in “full sentences.” To do this, teachers should plan beforehand the kinds of questions that will stimulate response. A “Do Now” activity is a good way to have students work out their thoughts through writing before sharing in a large-group conversation. Other ideas involve “pair-share” strategies where students first talk about their ideas with a partner and then share with the class. For another starter idea, the teacher could, without any pre-explanation, play an instrument relevant to the lesson and use this as a basis for asking a critical thinking question such as: “Where might you find this instrument?”; “Can you think of another instrument that works like this one?”; or “What type of environment would produce the materials needed to construct this instrument?” Along with this, a teacher can bring in visual artworks or objects that provoke discussions related to the social justice issue. For an ecology unit, bring in a clear flask of water and ask: “What does this have to do with issues in ecology? How could music play a role in sensitizing people about water pollution?”

Questions that begin with “Why, How, Imagine, What, Where, Compare, Contrast, and Which,” are good places to start. And students should do *most* of the talking. Teachers who over-explain or express their own views imply that they have a “right answer” in mind and that students should try to figure out what the teacher wants to hear, instead of creating spaces where students do their own thinking. As mentioned earlier, discussions need not last a long time; still, the teacher’s role is to prompt rather than over-explain. The ultimate goal is a “ping-pong” effect. This means that students become so engaged, they take ownership of the discussion themselves, asking questions to the class, responding productively to another student’s response, or back-and-forth conversation among the students. Here the teacher takes a back seat, interceding only when clarification is necessary or to offer a question that helps students think about another point of view.

Dynamic discussions will take time and trust to cultivate. Teachers need to create a safe learning environment by teaching students how to respond without criticizing someone else, dominating the conversation, or interrupting a student. These are not automatic behaviors. It is as much a skill to listen actively as it is to monitor oneself to avoid constant talking. Sometimes, building a community of learning takes a month or more; this is worth the effort. Clearly, these behaviors require conscientious teaching and modeling if students are going to trust the process.

How Do I Meet the Core Music Standards and Assessment Requirements?

Core music standards and assessment practices and procedures differ from state to state and school district to school district. Because of this, we cannot speak to

individual teacher/curricular needs and assessment demands in a meaningful way. However, we do refer to the *National Core Standards for Music Education* in each lesson.

According to the National Association for Music Education (or NAfME), the standards—which are not enforced, and, therefore, should be seen as guidelines—are as general as they are all-encompassing. Namely, if music teachers are teaching music well through active engagement in, with, and through music—the students will meet the standards, regardless of whether teachers aim to do so explicitly.

For example, the *National Core Standards for Music Education* (National Standards, for short) suggest that teachers should design activities in which students “create, perform, and respond” to music in developmentally appropriate ways. Notably, each of the unit plans, activities, and questions/prompts explored throughout this book invite music students to actively engage within these domains of music. These include performing, composing, improvising, arranging, leading/conducting, dancing, and active listening. Thus, students’ engagement with music is aligned with the standards both implicitly and explicitly. However, because teachers typically must show that they are, in fact, teaching toward “standards,” we include the National Standards for middle school (which can be adapted for high school) that are appropriately aligned with each plan for all classroom activities. Please note: When reading these lesson plans, you may find additional standards to be more “in line” with the ways you adapt and reshape activities and musical engagement. Feel free to choose different standards. You will know what will work best given the specific contexts and circumstances of your teaching.

Regarding assessment practices, these, too, differ from state to state and district to district. Some schools require that students take and pass “standardized tests” in music, whether in general music, instrumental music, or music technology classes. Other schools do not. Because of this, the assessment demands placed upon teachers may need to be weighed alongside the teaching and learning episodes proposed in this book, despite our belief that standardized tests in music are neither “standardized” nor actual “tests” of legitimate knowledge and deep understanding of music. Nor can such tests ever truly evaluate whether students embody and understand the values of musical engagement for social justice.

Still, please note that we believe assessment and evaluation are not identical terms, and do not reflect the same practice. Accordingly, assessment in music teaching and learning aims to give formative and summative assistance to students for developing musical understanding over time (see Appendix C). Such assessment practices can be seen as giving moment-to-moment feedback, offering students the chance for self-reflection upon their musical experiences, and culminating projects or portfolios that demonstrate the knowledge base that they have acquired throughout any given unit of study. Evaluation, on the other hand, is a “value”—or typically a “grade”—placed upon student work as stipulated by a rubric, set of criteria met, and so forth. Examining the nature and value of assessment processes and procedures, as well as the benefits of evaluative measurements, is beyond the scope of this book.

Still, it is imperative that teachers decide—with the help of their students—how best to assist students’ developing musical understanding over time as it aligns with the larger aim of this book: teaching music for social justice and teaching social justice through music.

How to Use This Book

This book serves as a guide for developing lessons that facilitate conversation and music making about social justice. No one, however, knows your students better than you. For this reason, we have tried to ensure that every part of the book is flexible and adaptable rather than a prescriptive, one-size-fits-all unit plan. The following list describes ideas for how music teachers can adapt materials to meet the needs of their students:

- The topics themselves (e.g., war, peace, heroes, and heroisms) are starter ideas. Relevance is key. For example, if the local community is grappling with a particular issue of justice and fairness, music teachers might use this book as a reference (see Epilogue) for developing a unit of lessons that have more urgency and immediacy to the students.
- Each of the lessons incorporates listening examples and music making suggestions. We encourage teachers to substitute music for listening if another piece seems more appropriate for students.
- Music making activities can be redirected from individual work to group work or from large group to small groups.
- Music making activities can be adjusted depending upon the instruments and musical resources that teachers have on hand.
- Culminating projects offer a variety of projects which all meet the same goal. The music teacher might decide to have all students work on the same project, or might give students the choice to select a particular project that plays to their strengths.

Website

To assist your work while utilizing this book with your music classrooms, we’ve created a companion website. Visit <https://socialjusticemusics.com>.

This website provides:

- A blog;
- Individual webpages connected to each unit of study;
- Links, videos, photographs, and audio recordings to utilize in teaching the content of all lesson plans;
- Supplementary readings and links to relevant websites;

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- Biographies, photos, and other related media;
- Related literature and resources about social justice and music, as well as related literature and resources showcasing connections between music and social justice.

Because online materials are often “in flux” and somewhat transitory, we will be monitoring the websites and YouTube links included in our book’s lesson plans and units. So, if and when a YouTube video is removed, we will provide a replacement on the associated webpage on our site. Because of this, if you enter a URL in your browser and it isn’t functioning, visit our website to find, say, an alternative video or audio file.

Elevating Student Work for Social Justice

The many units and lessons in this book have overlapping ideas. For example, themes from the protest unit (e.g., Black Lives Matter) could just as easily fit into the unit on “Heroes and Heroines” or “Love.” The units, in effect, are fluid, with porous boundaries. Elevating student work to a social justice level, however, means taking the message to others in the school or surrounding community. In other words, social justice depends on some degree of public awareness.

Teaching music for social justice need not involve all the “bells and whistles” of social activism. One can teach “themes” of social justice for the purpose of sensitizing students to social inequities that have an impact on their lives or the lives of others. On the other hand, teaching for social justice *does* suggest public action. This can be as straightforward as sharing student work with another class or as involved as presenting student work to the community through a fund-raising campaign or concert. In other words, music teachers might choose to teach themes of social justice that remain situated in the class itself, or to teach *for* social justice by helping others become aware of social issues through student-centered musical work.

Making students’ work public can take many forms, including short presentations for school staff (e.g., janitorial staff, cafeteria personnel); performing for the school board with an educational narrative about why and how students developed their presentation; podcasts; fund-raising efforts that create opportunities that hope to help rectify inequities; music making at supermarkets, nursing homes, and beyond. Clearly, some of these ideas take place before or after the school day and may involve transportation. Not all schools will support such activities given the cost or policies related to out-of-school experiences. Hopefully, though, there will be enough creative ways to present work through the school system to honor the students’ voices and to demonstrate their involvement with social justice issues.

An Invitation

Art plays a dominant role in bringing about change for the public good. As well, youth have historically taken the initiative to propel public awareness and action. It is not too early, then, to help secondary students recognize their right in promoting a just world through the power of music. We hope, with this book, that music teachers will rise to the challenge of incorporating social issues in their music curriculum to advance critical social commentary and growth in musicianship.

Appendix A

Facilitating Critical/Creative Thinking

There are essentially two main ways to facilitate critical thinking in the classroom. The first is through inquiry-based discussions, and the second is through the types of assignments that we give. Inquiry-based discussions are particularly challenging in large classes. One can ask excellent questions but not get a response, or the same few students may participate, rather than a more representative group of the class. Without sustained discussion, however, the teacher has little evidence for assessing the students' critical thinking.

Getting Students to Talk in Upper Grade Levels

Here are a few strategies that have helped us with large groups:

- Start with a challenging prompt and ask students to discuss their responses in pairs before opening up the discussion to the large group. This gives the student psychological safety in “testing” his/her/their idea before speaking in a large group.
- Ask students to write a response before opening up the discussion to the large group.
- Have students write an “exit” question on a small index card. The question should require some analytical thinking on the part of the student. Collect the question cards as students leave and select a few cards as a framework for a next class discussion.
- Set up a forced comparison scenario. For instance, “Which of these two recordings would you purchase?” or “Can you think of some music that is the opposite of this piece?”
- Set up a hypothesis scenario. For instance, “Given the background of this piece, what would you expect to hear?” “If you were the composer, what would be the overall mood of the piece and how would you achieve that musically?”

- Create a perplexing situation. For example, several movements of Shostakovich's Symphony #10 employ his name as a musical code (DSCH). Have students figure out the code by giving them clues about the origin of the code. "Why would Shostakovich use codes in his music?" "How does this practice reflect the life and times of Shostakovich?"

None of these strategies in and of itself is indicative of critical thinking without a lot of "rebound questions" and follow-through. The intent is to prod students into thinking about why and how things occur in music, rather than memorizing facts about the composers or the pieces.

Creating Thoughtful Assignments/Projects

Readings, writing prompts, or projects that require the student to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information are most likely to promote critical thinking. In the process of creating an assignment or project, ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I asking my students to make reasoned, criteria-based judgments about music?
- Will this assignment raise my students' levels of musical thinking?
- For creative projects: Who is engaged in the higher levels of thinking—the student or the teacher?
- For creative projects: Does the task present a challenge for students of different abilities?

Appendix B

How to Manage a Small Group Composition Project

There are many theories and published articles/books that address the creative process. A detailed overview, however, is beyond the scope of this book. For that reason, this appendix provides information that may be most expedient for the classroom music teacher. In general, the creating process involves two large parts. The first part is characterized by a lot of musical exploration. Students need to find sound materials that best fit their ideas, as well as opportunities to experiment with motivic sound bytes (much like licks in jazz improvisation or "a hook" in a pop song) that form a musical palette for the basis of their piece.

The second part has to do with students selecting and discarding musical ideas in the process of creating as a piece begins to take shape. If students are truly invested in their composition, you will see an increase of intensity as they evaluate the structure, performance skills, and overall intent of the piece. You will notice some debating about how to perform the piece and moments of excitement as the piece takes shape.

Your role is to, first, stand back for a period of time so students have space to get organized. Then visit with different groups, listen to the piece, and offer one or two challenges that the students could think about, such as: “How might a change in dynamics add something special to your music?” or “This part seems really important but I am having trouble hearing it. Can you make some adjustments?” Leave them with these questions rather than telling them what to do. They will work it out on their own.

Expect this exploration to be noisy and seemingly chaotic to someone walking into the classroom who is unaware of the task goals. Despite the sound fall-out, you can always maintain some decorum by establishing a “stop and all eyes on the teacher” signal, as well as habits for working respectfully with instruments and other students. Although there is freedom to create, this freedom does not extend to behavior that intrudes upon other working individuals/groups. Make sure that everyone understands the guidelines before sending them to their work stations.

Often music teachers have deep concerns about “losing control” when students or small groups are working independently rather than as a whole class. Actually, in small groups, you have a wonderful opportunity to become more engaged with your students. This comes from the freedom you have to visit different groups and compliment or issue warnings if needed. Practice the “stop and all eyes on the teacher” signal until you are satisfied that students are responsive to this important classroom habit. In the event that a group of students can’t seem to get along, let alone get started, you will need to sit with them and guide them more than you might with other students. Individuals who dominate the group process to the extent that others have no say in the piece need your assistance as well.

Appendix C

Assessing Creative Work

Assessing creative work is a little different from other kinds of performance measures; however, there are a number of tools that you can use to meet the guidelines of your state or school while also giving you an accurate picture of the students’ progress. In addition to the sample rubric provided, you might include writing samples of listening logs, tasks that encourage students to write about the decisions they made in the creating process, self-assessments, drafts of iconic notation, and online responses to related prompts such as “How did your piece change from when you first started to the finished composition?” With the advent of school-owned computers for students, or access to online resources, it is much easier to have students maintain an online portfolio for your review.

Sample Rubric for Group or Individual Creating Projects

	Below Standard	Meets Standard	Exceeds Standard
Exploring musical ideas	Student shows little exploration of ideas before developing the final piece.	Student explores some ideas before developing the final piece	Student explores various ideas in depth before developing the final piece.
Creating process	Student makes few or no revisions in creating the piece.	Student makes some revisions in creating the piece.	Student revises continually throughout the process. Shows constant evaluation.
Final product	Student's work lacks coherence and/or is not relevant to the task.	Student's work shows an integration of ideas throughout the piece with a clear beginning, middle, and end.	Student's work meets the intentions of the task and also shows a high level of originality.
Evaluation	Student is unable to explain his/her /their decision-making in creating the piece or to evaluate the piece as a whole.	Student shows reflection in describing decision-making or in evaluating the piece as a whole.	Student shows a high level of insight when describing decision-making or evaluating the piece as a whole.

- This rubric is a generic template and is not meant to be used without adaptations to the specific assessment needs of the teacher.

Notes

1. Ayers, William. [Adapted from] "Trudge Toward Freedom: Educational Research in the Public Interest." In *Education Research in the Public Interest: Social Justice, Action, and Policy*, edited by Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate, 81–97. New York: Teachers College Press, 2006. 89.
2. hooks, bell. *All about Love: New Visions*. New York: William Morrow, 2000.
3. Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 1990.
4. Freire, *Pedagogy of The Oppressed*, 81.
5. hooks, *All about Love*, 19–20.
6. King, Martin Luther. *Where Do We Go from Here?: Chaos or Community?* Boston: Beacon Press, 1968.

2

American Protest Unit

Introduction to the *American Protest Unit*

Protest movements are vehicles that allow people to publicly voice concern in an effort to influence political decisions about social participation in wars, governance structures, social inequities, and other issues of social justice. In this sense, protest movements are not “social justice” itself, but, rather, action taken to organize people around an issue of social justice. Peaceful protest movements are characterized, for example, by marches, sit-ins, posters, rallies and demonstrations, and music, rather than assault weapons. Nearly every protest movement involves music of some kind, ranging from percussion accompaniments for street chants to songs that create a sense of solidarity or reflective commentary. Music of the 1960s was particularly prolific in the rise of folk artists and songs that responded to the sociopolitical events at the time.

Although this unit addresses American protest movements, it is important to understand that protest movements were (and are) a global event. For instance, during the time of Civil Rights and the Vietnam War, protest movements were also taking place in China (Cultural Revolution) as well as student uprisings in Europe, Africa, South America, the Eastern Bloc, and Asia. This international cross-current of political protest not only influenced the music in other countries, but also gave rise to festivals—the Humanity Festival in Paris, and the Festival of Committed Song in Chile, and Woodstock—where singer/songwriters gathered to exchange ideas and affirm social and political values.

Youth were, and are, central to protest movements. In fact, student uprisings often provide the impetus for political change. Consider, for example, the student-led protest against the 2018 shooting deaths at Marjory Stoneman Douglas School in Parkland, Florida. Or, the outpouring of anti-war and songs for peace at Woodstock in 1969. Music played a powerful role in unifying youth and expressing raw emotion about current social issues.

Because youth play a key role in propelling protest movements, a unit on American protests hold special relevance for students today. This unit strives to not only advance critical thinking skills, but also model ways in which students can take productive action for social change through music. The series of lessons presented here provides music teachers with a historical timeline rooted in social causes and music development from a historical, evolutionary, performance, and stylistic standpoint. However, even as we write today, there are many more protest movements that merit consideration. The scenario is similar, yet the issues are constantly changing.

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In terms of this unit, some lessons can stand alone, but we suggest that “From the Rise of Labor Unions to Woodstock” provides historical context and musical grounding for the lessons that follow. It is important that teachers adjust and modify lessons to meet the specific needs and interests of their students. As always, the key to success is facilitating active music making and reflective discussion.

Graphic Organizer: American Protest

AMERICAN PROTEST

VOCABULARY
 Labor Unions
 Amendment 1 from *Bill of Rights*
 Hippie
 Psychedelic Music
 Anarchy
 Racism
 Art as Advocacy
 Rally
 Social Justice
 Peaceful Protest
 Song Form
 Social Change Through Art

CONTEXT

- Labor Unions
- Safety at work
- Fair wages
- Women in workplace
- Child labor
- Triangle Shirtwaist Fire
- Woodstock Festival
- Peaceful protest
- Civil Rights and Vietnam War

From the Rise of Labor Unions to Woodstock

LISTENING & MEDIA

- "Solidarity Forever"
- "Union Maid"
- The Labor Movement in the United States
- "Sometimes I Feel like a Motherless Child"
- Woodstock Documentary
- "Somebody to Love"
- "Freedom"
- "Star Spangled Banner"
- "The Bigger Picture"

MUSIC LEARNING

- Analysis of song form.
- Listening comparison of several songs for form, expression, and other musical devices.
- Role of lyrics in song writing.

Civil Rights & Black Lives Matter

CONTEXT

- Martin Luther King
- March on Washington
- Civil Right Act
- Voting Rights
- Fair Housing
- BLM Organization
- March on Washington
- Racism and the early recording industry
- Motown

LISTENING & MEDIA

- "Lift Every Voice and Sing"
- "Better Shop Around"
- "Dancing in the Streets"
- "Rockin' Robin"
- "Yesterme, Yesteryou, Yesterday"
- "Alabama"

FINAL PROJECTS

- Compose a protest song.
- Create a Freedom Rap.
- Write a poem and set it to music.

School Shootings

CONTEXT

- Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School
- Columbine High School
- Sandy Hook Elementary School
- Youth as activists
- Safety at School
- March for Our Lives
- Power of Internet for social change

LISTENING & MEDIA

- "Shine"
- March for Our Lives
- "Bridge over Troubled Waters"
- "Rise"
- "Imagine"
- "Don't Worry Be Happy"
- "We Are the World"
- "Glory"
- "Columbine, Friend of Mine"
- "Air on the G String"
- "Canon in D Major"
- "Sheep May Safely Graze"

MUSIC LEARNING

- Analysis of song form.
- Determining the mood of a song through analysis of the musical elements and song lyrics.
- Choosing a song, among several, that is most appropriate as background for a set of poems.

MUSIC LEARNING

- Analysis of song lyrics to enhancing the music and the message of the song.
- Sing "Lift Every Voice and Sing" to describe what musical elements create an expression of hope and joy.