

Popular Music Goes to War over Vietnam

Lesson Question

How was America divided over the Vietnam War?

Lesson Task

After reading and listening to two popular songs from the 1960s, students write a three-paragraph essay explaining the different points of view each song represents. Students begin the essay by providing some details about the Vietnam War and how it divided the American people.

NAEP Era: 8. Contemporary America (1945–Present)

Focal Skill: Identify key details in documents that reveal how authors convey point of view and purpose

Number of Documents: 2

Number of Days: 3–4

Common Core Standards

- CC reading standard (primary): RHSS.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose
- CC reading standard (secondary): RHSS.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of primary sources
- CC writing standard: WHSS.6-8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts

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[Suggested time: 1 session]

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[Suggested time: 2 sessions]

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[Suggested time: 1/2 session]

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[Suggested time: 1–2 sessions]

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OVERVIEW

[Suggested time: 5 minutes]

Content Objectives

Students will understand in what ways the American public was deeply divided over the Vietnam War.

Pro-War Americans believed the government was right to fight against Communism there.

Anti-War Americans believed that the war represented a tragic and unnecessary loss of American and Vietnamese lives.

Historical Thinking Objectives

- Sourcing
- Through Their Eyes

Skill Objectives

- Identifying key details in the songs that reveal each creator's point of view on the Vietnam War
- Writing an explanatory essay using evidence from the documents

Instructional Sequence

Before you begin the lesson you should share a brief agenda with students:

HOOK	Together, we will look at and discuss a political cartoon from 1970.
CONTEXT	We'll then review some background context about the Vietnam War and how it divided Americans.
DOCUMENTS	On your own, you will examine two popular songs from the time. Each had a different point of view on the Vietnam War.
CONNECT	We'll compare the songs and discuss how they connect to the Context and the lesson question.
WRITE	You'll write a three-paragraph explanatory essay in response to the lesson question.

Lesson Background

In 1945, nationalist leader Ho Chi Minh led an uprising of Vietnamese against the French colonial rule that had dominated the Southeast Asian country since the mid-nineteenth century. France, with help from the U.S., fought to defeat the nationalists but was ultimately defeated in 1954. The country was partitioned into North Vietnam (led by a Communist government and allied with China and the Soviet Union) and South Vietnam (led by an authoritarian regime with little popular support and allied with the U.S.). By 1960, the two Vietnamese states were engaged in a civil war with each other, and the U.S. sent military advisors and weapons to aid the South Vietnamese. Deep in the Cold War and convinced that it had to defeat the Communist North Vietnamese, the U.S. government gradually escalated its military involvement in the war. In 1964, after a skirmish between a U.S. destroyer and North Vietnamese torpedo

boats, President Lyndon Johnson received Congressional authorization (known as the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution) to “take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force” to aid South Vietnam.

After the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, the number of U.S. soldiers sent to Vietnam rose sharply. Any male U.S. citizen aged 18 or older was eligible to be drafted into military service, and with an increased commitment of troops to Vietnam, the number of young men being sent off to war rose sharply as well. Until the end of the 1960s, most Americans supported the war. But its length, cost, and character generated a growing opposition, particularly as U.S. casualties mounted. Antiwar demonstrations, many of them organized by students, grew in size and frequency. The political divisions caused by the war found social and cultural expression as well, and this lesson explores two songs that capture the era’s deep divides.

Student Background Knowledge

Students should understand the basic context of the Cold War rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States and their respective systems of government and economics. Students should be familiar with the concepts:

- Superpower
- Communism
- Cold War
- Containment

THE HOOK

[Suggested time: 10 minutes]

Chopping Block

Purpose

To introduce the idea that the Vietnam War was an enormously divisive issue to the American public.

- The cartoon does not provide any information about *why* the war was divisive, so it should lead students to want to learn more.

To spark student interest in a dramatic image, and the topic it covers.

Process

- Have students **observe** the slide image for a few moments.
- After students have had some time to observe and think, **ask**:
What do you see?
 - Encourage students to simply name details that they observe, without yet discussing the message and meaning.

Chopping Block, 1970



- Students may gravitate towards the text. Support them in looking for all of the sources of text on the image, but also encourage a careful “reading” of the image itself. For example:
 - The axe: In particular, its size and position in the image
 - The crack through the United States
 - The small cracks radiating out from the larger crack
- Then, help them begin to make sense of the words on the image and what this image is. **Ask:**
 - What kind of image is this? [Political cartoon]
 - What do we know about political cartoons?
 - When was it published?
 - What does the “Vietnam issue” mean?
 - What’s a chopping block? What does that refer to in this image?
- Once students have done an initial “read” and mini-sourcing of the image, direct them towards the slide **Think About It** questions:
 - What is happening to the United States in this picture? Why?
- Some students may think in literal terms and say that the country was divided by west and east. Help students to understand that the division shown here is metaphorical and not geographical.
- As you discuss this image with students, you may want to **provide** some additional background information.
 - This political cartoon portrays the divisive impact of the Vietnam War on American society.
 - When this cartoon was published in May 1970, 64% of Americans thought the U.S. had made a mistake sending troops to fight in Vietnam. (In contrast, just five years earlier 61% of Americans *supported* the decision to send U.S. troops to Vietnam).
 - Even though a clear majority of Americans opposed the Vietnam War by 1970, they disagreed bitterly about how the U.S. should end the war.
- Finally, be sure to **ask** students:
 - What don’t we know from looking at this image? What more do we need to know about the divisions in the United States at this time?
- **Tell** students that during this lesson they will explore the question: **How was America divided over the Vietnam War?**

TRANSITION TO CONTEXT-SETTING

Transition students to the Context slides by letting them know that they are now going to learn more about the Vietnam War. This will help them to understand the two lesson songs better.

Context slides are intended to serve as a support for a relatively quick “interactive lecture” with students. The goal is to both provide essential background information and engage students’ prior knowledge and thinking.

While you can certainly slow the process down according to your students’ needs, Context is not intended to be a “deep dive” into slide images. Documents in the Context slides serve the role of illustrating content, sparking quick observations and reactions, and making abstract ideas more concrete.

CONTEXT

[Suggested time: 25–30 minutes—to be completed in the first session]

Context Overview

The purpose of these slides is to provide the background information that students need in order to understand the point of view each song takes on the Vietnam War.

The four Context slides focus on these ideas:

Cold War Fight Against Communism—Many supported the Vietnam War as a way to “contain” Communism and stop it from spreading to other regions of the world

War in Vietnam Escalates—Troop levels in Vietnam increase, leading to the draft

Protesting the War and the Draft—The draft rallied opposition, as did the length, cost and character of the war

The U.S. and Vietnam, 1954–1973—The timeline charts public opinion about the war over time

Slide 1: COLD WAR FIGHT AGAINST COMMUNISM

Purpose

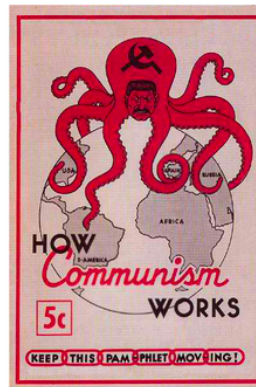
To help students understand the “domino theory” as a reason why the U.S. got involved in a civil war more than 8,000 miles away from its shores.

To establish why some people strongly supported the war.

Suggested Process

- **Guide** students in reading the slide text and decoding the image.
- **Ask** students:
 - What was happening in Vietnam at this time? What’s a civil war?
 - What’s going on in this cartoon? What’s the octopus supposed to be? How do you know?
 - What’s the octopus doing? How is this cartoon supposed to make you feel about communism? Why do you say that?
 - > Fearful/anxious/angry
- Let’s **read** this quote: What was Trainor saying? What fears does he address here?
 - Fear of spread of communism, fear of the system of communism as “godless”
- **Ask:** What does Trainor think the U.S. should do?
 - The quotation reflects the understanding of U.S. soldiers and many Americans about why the U.S. was getting involved in Vietnam.

Cold War Fight Against Communism



This anti-Communist pamphlet was published in 1938.

"We were on a holy crusade to stop the spread of godless Communism and to give the budding democracy in South Vietnam a chance to take root."

—Bernard Trainor, Marine officer

- After students have decoded the various details of the slide, **ask** them the **Think About It** questions:
 - Why did the U.S. intervene in Vietnam’s war?
 - Why did some people support the war so strongly?
- As students discuss the slide, you should **explain** (or remind them of) the following points:
 - After World War II, the balance of world power changed. The United States and the Soviet Union emerged as superpower nations, with the most military power and influence over other nations.
 - Each side saw the other country as wanting to expand and win other countries over to its system. The Cold War began, and U.S. foreign policy focused on containing the spread of communism to nations in Africa, Asia, and South America.
 - In 1954, Vietnamese independence forces led by Ho Chi Minh defeated French colonial rulers and gained independence for the northern half of Vietnam. Ho was a Communist and North Vietnam established a communist government.
 - The United States stepped in to replace France as a supporter of the anti-communist government of South Vietnam.
 - *Domino Theory*: President Dwight Eisenhower likened the establishment of a communist government in North Vietnam as the first tip of a domino in a line of dominos (i.e., other countries such as Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, etc.) that would result in many countries in Southeast Asia establishing communist governments.
 - American politicians and policymakers subsequently justified increasing U.S. military involvement in Vietnam as being justified by the “domino theory.”

Slide 2: WAR IN VIETNAM ESCALATES

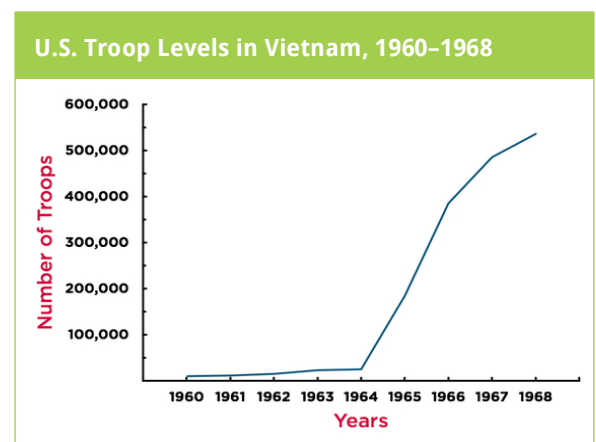
Purpose

To help students see the impact the escalation of the war had on both the number and type of troops the U.S. sent to Vietnam.

- In 1964, President Johnson authorized the use of armed combat soldiers, which in turn led to the draft.

Suggested Process

- **Read** the slide title and introduction with students.
- **Support** them in carefully reading the graph.
 - Many students have poor graph-reading skills, so it may be useful to model what information the graph title, and y- and x- axes tell them about the change in troop numbers over time.
- **Ask** students the **Think About It** question: What happened to the number of U.S. troops in Vietnam after 1964?



As students discuss the slide, be sure to **explain** the following information:

- In 1962, 1963, and most of 1964, the U.S. military personnel in Vietnam were “special advisors,” i.e. Green Berets.
 - On August 10, 1964, Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which asserted that the U.S. was prepared “to take all necessary steps including the use of armed force” to support and defend South Vietnam against North Vietnam. This authorized President Johnson to escalate the war.
 - In order to be able to deploy more troops to Vietnam, the U.S. began drafting large numbers of men aged 18-26 years. Men could defer (put off) military service if they were enrolled in college or graduate school, or they could be exempt if they had certain medical conditions or criminal records.
 - Ultimately, 2.2 million men were drafted into the military during the Vietnam era. Many other young men, knowing they would probably be drafted, enlisted in the military in order to have more control over their assignment.
- **Ask:** What do you think the range of responses to the draft might have been?

Slide 3: PROTESTING THE WAR AND THE DRAFT

Purpose

To provide students with some background knowledge about the growing protest movement and the divisions the war in Vietnam was creating within American society.

Suggested Process

- **Read** the slide text with students.
- **Ask** the **Think About It** questions: Who do you see in the photo? Why do you think they are protesting the war?
- **Ask** students: Why do you think opposition to the war started to grow at the end of the 1960s?
 - Help students think about the impact the draft and rising numbers of combat troops abroad (in dangerous conditions) might have had on the public.
- As students discuss the slide, **provide** the following information:
 - The Vietnam War was fought at home as well as abroad. Until the end of the 1960s, most Americans supported the war. But its length, cost, and character generated a growing opposition.
 - Some Americans opposed the war because they believed that using the U.S. military to interfere in another country was wrong, while others opposed the war because the U.S. was spending increasing amounts of money and sending more and more troops with no end in sight.
 - Many who opposed the war were young people who refused to be drafted into military service and urged others to resist the draft as well.

College Students Protest the War



Students at the University of Wisconsin protesting the Vietnam War.

Slide 4: THE U.S. WAR IN VIETNAM, 1954–1973

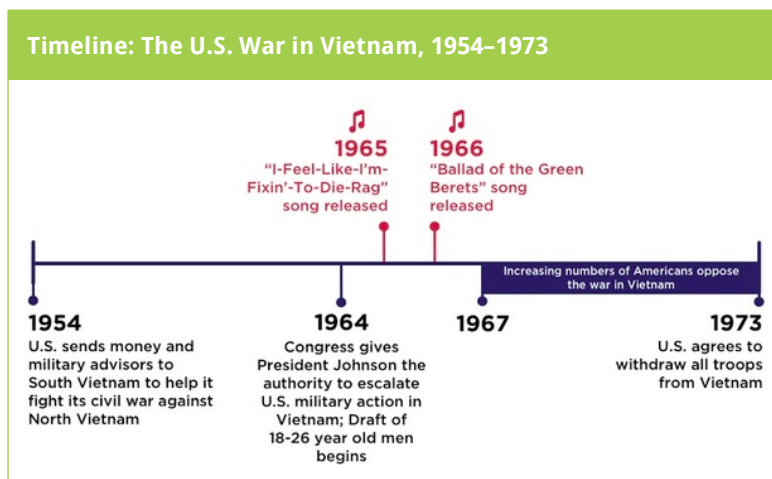
Purpose

To review a basic sequence of events related to public opinion about the Vietnam War.

To situate the songs within this sequence.

Suggested Process

- **Read** through the timeline events with students (noting the titles of the two songs).
- **Ask** the **Think About It** question:
What happens in 1964, right before the songs are released?
 - Support students in thinking about how the U.S. change in approach to the war might have intensified the public debate.



Slide 5: Context Review: Vietnam War

Purpose

To summarize the essential information from the Context that students will need for understanding the two songs.

- Students will draw on their notes from Context when writing their essays.

Process

- Look at the image on this slide and **remind** students that they will need some of the information they've just learned (or reviewed) about what was happening at the time that these songs were written in order to understand the point of view of the songs' creators.
- **Guide** students in remembering the most important information to answer the three **Take Notes on Context** questions:
 - Why did the U.S. enter the war in Vietnam?
 - How did the U.S. involvement change over time?
 - Why did some people begin to protest the war?
- If necessary, return to past slides to jog students' memories.
- Allow students to **discuss** their answers at table groups or with a partner.
- Each student should **record** his/her own notes.



TRANSITION TO DOCUMENTS

After reviewing the Context slides say to students:

The context information we just discussed will help you to better understand the information in the two songs you are about to listen to and read. The Context and the Documents will help you to answer the lesson question: **How was America divided over the Vietnam War?**

DOCUMENTS

[Suggested time: 2 sessions]

Note: In this lesson, students analyze the lyrics and music of two songs. Use audio speakers to listen to the songs as a class, or have students listen individually on headphones.

Documents: Overview

Students listen to and read the lyrics of two popular songs from the mid-1960s to understand the ways in which public opinion was divided over the Vietnam War. Both songs were written by men who had served in the U.S. military, but one is strongly anti-war and the other is a patriotic ode to the sacrifice of the Green Berets.

I Feel Like I'm Fixin' to Die Rag

Position: Anti-war

Big Idea: The war is not being fought for a good reason, and we should not support an anti-Communism agenda. Many young American men are dying in the war, and only Wall Street, and the businesses that supply the military, will benefit.

Ballad of the Green Berets

Position: Supports the war

Big Idea: The Vietnam War is being fought to liberate the South Vietnamese from oppression by the Communist North. It is a patriotic cause being fought by brave young men.

The central reading skill is to identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view.

A secondary reading skill is to determine the Big Ideas of the documents.

Note: Students can work on these documents independently while you circulate and support their work. (See PD Doc on Supporting students during document work.)

Document 1: I FEEL LIKE I'M FIXIN' TO DIE RAG

Purpose

To help students uncover the anti-war perspective of the song.

To help students understand how McDonald used satire to convey his point of view.

Key Reading Challenge

“I-Feel-Like-I’m-Fixin’-to-Die-Rag” is a complex song that uses satire to communicate dark messages about the Vietnam War. Therefore, the song’s lyrics are not meant literally, and students may need support in uncovering McDonald’s actual point of view.

Modeling this song with students will help you to teach about the concept of satire.

Also, the style of the music, rag (a loose, jazz dance music popular at the turn of the century) contrasts with the lyrics about the devastation of war (though it supports the satirical tone of the lyrics), and serves as a sharp rebuke to what McDonald saw as blind patriotic fervor.

Suggested Process

- We anticipate that this will be engaging for middle school students, but that they may need significant support to unpack the layers of meaning here. For this reason, we strongly suggest that you explore “I-Feel-Like-I’m-Fixin’-to-Die-Rag” with the whole class. This will allow you to model close listening and reading skills and will support students in having a more independent experience with “Ballad of the Green Berets.”
- Use the questions in the tool and in the teacher notes to support whole and small group discussion as you work through this song.
- If students read independently, move around the room to diagnose difficulties and offer coaching. When you note several students struggling with particular passages or questions bring them to the attention of the class as appropriate.
- Use your Teacher Dashboard to scan and assess student responses to specific Document questions (such as the Big Idea question) once a majority of students have finished reading the document. This will prepare you for the class discussion.

Document 1: Class Discussion

It is critical for students to briefly discuss each document after they have read it.



Purpose

Check for and deepen students’

- comprehension of the document
- grasp of the “Big Idea”—i.e., McDonald’s perspective on the Vietnam War

Process

Engage students in discussing one or two key questions they have answered in the tool.

- *Zoom In* provides Source It, Read Closely, Gather Evidence, Big Idea and Think About It questions and prompts alongside this document. Depending on your class's needs, you may choose to focus on certain question types over others.
- We strongly recommend using structures such as turn-and-talk and table group discussions as you engage students in these questions.
- Most important, be sure to follow up on student comments by *pressing for reasons and evidence*, and *for accountable talk*. Use the prompts for the extension questions below.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

Select student responses to the “Big Idea” question, and use them to guide discussion

- Ahead of time, use the Lesson Dashboard to quickly scan your students' responses to the “Big Idea” question:
 - What was McDonald's point of view on the Vietnam War?
 - What is strong evidence in the song for your answer?
- Identify student responses that reflect understanding of the Big Idea, and good use of supporting evidence, and those that reflect confusion or misunderstanding.
- Select and project a range of student responses to the summary questions. You can choose model responses as well as responses that need development as a way to spark student discussion. (See the PD document and video on “Discussion Phase 1: Formative Assessment of Student Comprehension of Individual Documents” for more support on using students' responses to analyze their reading strengths and needs.)

Discuss the Source It Questions

- Why might the date this song was written be important?
 - Help students think back to the 1964 Tonkin Gulf Resolution and its impact on the protest movement.
- What does the headnote tell us about the song's creator and his purpose?
 - Here you may want to focus on the significance of McDonald having served in the military.
 - This is also an opportunity to talk about what the word “satire” means, an essential concept for understanding the song.

Discuss the Read Closely Questions

Music:

Have students **share** the adjectives they chose to describe the music.

Follow-up questions to **ask** include:

- What is the mood of this music?
- What does your body want to do when you hear this music?
- Does this music make you think of anything? Does any image come to mind when you listen to it?

- **Share** with students, or ask students familiar with musical language to share, some words often used to describe music:
 - Tempo
 - Volume
 - Timbre
 - Rhythm, etc.
- **Ask** students: Does anyone know what a rag is? Share some background information on rag music as a style.
 - A rag is a song with an upbeat, jazzy rhythm.

Lyrics

The lyrics of this song are satirical, but students will likely need to understand the literal meaning before they decode the irony.

Start by exploring the song's structure and literal meaning:

- There are 4 verses, each addressed to a different audience (big strong men, Wall Street, generals and mothers). McDonald asks each to serve the war in some way.
- The chorus, repeated after each verse, is written from the perspective of a soldier marching off to war preparing to die, with no sense of why he is making this sacrifice.

Questions to **ask** include:

- Why do you think he starts each verse: "Come on_____"?
- Who is he talking to?
- What's he asking them to do?
- How is the chorus different from the verses? Why do you think?

Once students have a good sense of what the words are saying at a literal level, have them **start to unpack the satire**.

They will find specific examples of language in the Gathering Evidence questions, so at this stage it is OK for them to simply identify this idea in a general way.

- **Ask:** When McDonald wrote "We're gonna have a whole lot of fun" do you think he actually meant it? Why or why not?
- **Say:** Remember we read that this song is satire. How do we know from reading these lyrics that he is being satirical? How is he trying to shock the listener?

Finally, have students think about the connection between the tone of the lyrics and the tone of the music. **Ask:**

- Why would he have chosen this style of music to go with his words?
- How does the music help create the tone of satire (or help to startle the listener)?

These are complex ideas, ones many middle school students may struggle to answer. It is fine to let students wrestle with them. Don't drive towards a "right" answer; rather, take this as an opportunity to allow students to deepen their thinking.

Discuss the Gather Evidence Questions

Have students **share** quotes they gathered for the Gathering Evidence question, “Where does he use language to shock the listener?”

- At this stage students will drill down into the language, looking for specific examples of satirical language. We have framed this as “shocking the listener” in the tool to make the task more accessible for middle school students.

As students share their observations of the language, follow-up questions could include:

- Did anyone notice another phrase?
- Why did that stand out to you?
- What do those words mean?
- In what way are these words meant to be shocking/satirical?

Make sure students discuss the quotes *in their own words*, and understand how those words are different from what McDonald actually means.

Discuss the Big Idea Questions

Students move at this stage from connecting the specific details in the song to the Big Idea about McDonald’s perspective on the war. McDonald has three big critiques of the war (his “Big Ideas”):

- The Vietnam War is not being fought for a good reason and we should not support anti-communism.
- The Vietnam War is a bad idea because it will only benefit businesses who supply the military (Wall Street).
- The Vietnam War is bad because many young American men are dying.

Anticipate that students will struggle to identify and articulate the Big Ideas clearly:

- In their responses, students may focus on smaller details and have a harder time articulating the Big Ideas (for example: *The Vietnam War is bad because he said we are all going to die*).
- Or, conversely, they may articulate their ideas quite generally, without staying connected enough to the document details (for example: *McDonald is against the Vietnam War because of the words he uses*).

Questions to **ask** to help students more clearly *identify and articulate the Big Ideas* include:

- We noticed a lot of important details. How do these details connect? Is there another way to think about this?
- Did anyone else write a different Big Idea? Why? What evidence do you see/hear in the song for that idea? Is there more than one Big Idea?
- OK, we have several thoughts here about McDonald’s perspective on the war. Which ideas seem to have the strongest evidence from the song? What makes this evidence stronger?

The idea here is not to push students towards the “right” answer, there are many possible ways to articulate the Big Idea, but to push them to **engage in a rich discussion** with one another in which they have to articulate their ideas and ground their thinking in the document.

Discuss the Think About It Question

Ask the **Think About It** question: Why do you think McDonald used satire to get his message across?

- You may want to spend some time helping students think about satire as a political tool. What might the purpose and impact of satire be? These are complex questions, particularly for middle school students, so support a range of thinking in your discussion.

Have students revise their notes. Allow students time to revise their notes after and/or during the discussion. Students may need to be prompted to revise how they have articulated the song's Big Ideas.

Document 2: BALLAD OF THE GREEN BERETS

Purpose

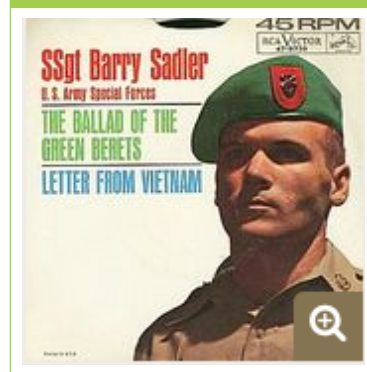
To deepen students' understanding of the pro-war perspective of the song.

To understand how Sadler used music and lyrics to convey his point of view.

Key Reading Challenge

The lyrics of the song never explicitly mention the Vietnam War. Students will need to infer what this song is about.

Pro-War Song



Suggested Process

- As students listen/read independently, move around the room to diagnose difficulties and offer coaching. When you note several students struggling with particular passages or questions bring them to the attention of the class as appropriate.
- Use your Teacher Dashboard to scan and assess student responses to specific Document questions (such as the Big Idea question) once a majority of students have finished reading the document. This will prepare you for the class discussion.

Document 2: Class Discussion

It is critical for students to briefly discuss each document after they have read it.

Purpose

Check for and deepen students'

- comprehension of the document
- grasp of the "Big Idea"—i.e., Sadler's perspective on the Vietnam War



Process

Engage students in discussing one or two key questions they have answered in the tool.

- *Zoom In* provides Source It, Read Closely, Gather Evidence, Big Idea and Think About It questions and prompts alongside this document. Depending on your class's needs, you may choose to focus on certain question types over others.
- We strongly recommend using structures such as turn-and-talk and table group discussions as you engage students in these questions.
- Most important, be sure to follow up on student comments by *pressing for reasons and evidence*, and *for accountable talk*. Use the prompts for the extension questions below.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

Select student responses to the “Big Idea” question, and use them to guide discussion

- Ahead of time, use the Lesson Dashboard to quickly scan your students' responses to the “Big Idea” question:
 - What was Sadler's point of view on the Vietnam War?
 - What is strong evidence in the song for your answer?

Discuss the Source It Questions

- What does the headnote tell us about the song's creator and his purpose?
 - Here you may want to focus on the significance of Sadler's connection to the Green Berets.
- No mention is made of the Vietnam War in the lyrics of this song, but how might we infer that this is a subject of the song?
 - Prompt students to think about the date the song was written and the relationship of the song's creator to the war.

Discuss the Read Closely Questions

Music:

Have students **share** the adjectives they chose to describe the music.

Follow-up questions to **ask** might include:

- What is the mood of this music?
- What does your body want to do when you hear this music?
- Does this music make you think of anything? Does any image come to mind when you listen to it?
- **Ask** students if they can use some of the vocabulary you used when discussing "I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die-Rag" when talking about this song.

Lyrics:

Have students **discuss** what Sadler says the Green Berets are trained to do. Make sure students mention key details, including:

- They parachute into combat
- They are trained in hand-to-hand combat and survival

- They fight day and night

You may also want to support students in noticing that they are an elite force, only a few men who test qualify to serve.

- Finally, have students think about the connection between the tone of the lyrics and the tone of the music. Ask them to think about what picture is being painted of the Green Berets (heroic, brave, strong, etc.) and whether this picture matches the tone of the music.

Discuss the Gather Evidence Questions

Ask the first **Gathering Evidence** question: How did Sadler describe the Green Berets?

- Students must make inferences about Sadler's perspective on the Vietnam War based on his view of the Green Berets.
- This song does not mention the Vietnam War by name, so students will need to draw on their context knowledge (specifically, the role of the Green Berets in the Vietnam War) as well as their sourcing information.
- Make sure students mention key details, including:
 - Fearless men who jump and die
 - Men who mean just what they say
 - Brave men of the Green Berets
 - These are men, America's best
 - One hundred men will test today / But only three will win the Green Beret

As students are sharing the words Sadler uses to describe the Green Berets you can **ask**:

- What do we know about the role of the Green Berets in the Vietnam War?
- Let's think back to our sourcing discussion: What made us think that this song was also about the Vietnam War?
- What inferences can you make from these words about Sadler's perspective on the war? Why did you make that inference?

Ask the second **Gathering Evidence** question: For what cause did the Green Beret in the song die?

- Focus on the key quote: "He has died for those oppressed"
- This question points students to a crucial line in the song. It is here that Sadler gives his most explicit justification for the war: To liberate the South Vietnamese, who were being oppressed by the communist North.

You may need to spend some time unpacking this language with students. Questions to **ask** include:

- What does it mean to die "for those oppressed"?
- Who were the oppressed?
- Who was doing the oppressing?
- How do you know?
- What more does this tell us about Sadler's perspective on the war?

Discuss the Big Idea Questions

Students move at this stage from connecting the specific details in the song to the Big Idea about Sadler's perspective on the war. Ways to articulate Sadler's Big Ideas about the war include:

- The Vietnam War is being fought to liberate the South Vietnamese from oppression by the communist North.
- The Vietnam War is a patriotic cause being fought by brave men.

Anticipate that students might struggle to *identify and articulate the Big Ideas*.

- In their responses, students may focus on Big Ideas about the Green Berets, or even the families of the Green Berets. It may be important to remind them that their job is to articulate Big Ideas about the war (and this is tricky because Sadler does not directly mention the war).

Questions to **ask** to help students more clearly *identify and articulate the Big Ideas* include:

- How do these details about what the Green Berets are dying for connect to a Big Idea? How might the music connect?
- Did anyone else write a different Big Idea? Why? What evidence do you see/hear in the song for that idea?
- Is there more than one Big Idea?
- OK, we have several thoughts here about Sadler's perspective on the war. Which ideas seem to have the strongest evidence from the song? What makes this evidence stronger?

The idea here is not to push students towards the "right" answer, there are many possible ways to articulate the Big Idea, but to push them to engage in a rich discussion with one another in which they have to articulate their ideas and ground their thinking in the song.

Discuss the Think About It Question

Ask the **Think About It** question: Why do you think this song was so popular?

- There isn't a "right" answer here, but discussing this question should lead students back the idea that the Vietnam War caused deep divisions.

Have students revise their notes. Allow students time to revise their notes after and/or during the discussion. In particular, students may need to be prompted to revise how they have articulated the song's Big Ideas.

CONNECT

[suggested time: ½ session]

Purpose

Before students write in response to a historical question, they need opportunities to talk. They need to clarify their understanding of the documents and how they connect with the larger context and the question they are answering. Your job as a *Zoom In* teacher is to create these discourse opportunities.

Cross-Document Discussion

Discuss with students the ways in which the major divisions about the Vietnam War are represented through these two songs. The main goal is to help students to connect back to the historical context and to compare the point of view of each song. In this discussion the main goal is to help students to synthesize their learning across documents and connect back to the context and the larger historical question under investigation. This supports the historical thinking skills of corroboration and contextualization.

Three major moves should happen here:

- Re-engage students in the historical inquiry
- Support students in comparing Big Ideas and details across documents
- Support students in articulating their own thinking, while listening and responding to their peers

A) Re-engage students in the historical inquiry

Begin by reminding students of the lesson question and the larger historical context. Do an initial informal assessment of what “big picture” students have walked away with. **Say** to students:

- What do these songs tell us about the ways Americans felt about the Vietnam War?
- Let’s think back to the Context. What reasons did Americans have for supporting and opposing the war?
- We have to think about these songs in the context of what was occurring when they were written.

In turn-and-talk or table groups, have students discuss the following questions to help them connect the songs to the historical context:

- Why did the United States enter this war? What were the larger goals at the time and why did many people support these goals?
- When and why did the opposition movement begin to gain strength?

The purpose of this initial phase is to prime students’ thinking and to give you an initial assessment of their general level of understanding. You do not need to spend a long time on these questions because you will dig in deeper in the next phases.

B) Support students in comparing big ideas and details across documents

Display the Connect Tab.

Tell students:

- Let’s look across these two documents at the Big Ideas you identified.

The Connect tab will display the key discussion questions:

- How are these songs’ perspectives on the Vietnam War different?
- Why do you think they were both so popular at this time?

Connect will also display a t-chart labeled “I Feel Like I’m Fixin’ To Die Rag” and “The Ballad of the Green Berets” that displays student notes on the Big Idea question, and their supporting evidence. You can choose one student’s work to project to guide the discussion, or you can project notes you’ve “starred” while using the Teacher Dashboard to review students’ Big Idea notes.

I Feel Like I'm Fixin' To Die Rag	The Ballad of the Green Berets
<p>Big Idea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> McDonald thinks American men are dying for no reason. <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only Wall Street gains anything in the war, and the U.S. does not have a good reason to fight against communism in Vietnam. 	<p>Big Idea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sadler thinks the soldiers are very brave and are helping the Vietnamese. <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The U.S. needs to help free the South Vietnamese from communism.

Engage students in the “Connect” questions. Again, we recommend using turn-and-talk or table group structures to have students engage in these discussions with their peers.

Follow-up questions you could **ask** include:

- How do these perspectives connect to the reasons the United States entered the war? The growing protest movement?
- Do these songs hold any perspectives in common?
- What kind of impact do you think divisions about the Vietnam War might have had on people at this time?

Give students time to **edit** their responses in *Zoom In* based on class discussion.

C) Support students in articulating their own thinking

Finally, be sure to allow students time to speak with each other about their own thinking. This can happen at any stage of the discussion through turn-and-talks or small group discussion. Questions to support this kind of thinking include:

- What's important here? Surprising?
- Why do you think people used popular music to express their feelings about the war?
- Why do historians study sources like this? Why not just read newspaper articles?

WRITING

[suggested time: 1–2 sessions]

In this three-paragraph essay, students must use two popular songs from the mid-1960s to explain how the Vietnam War divided public opinion in America. The focal writing skill is for students to analyze the differences in point of view between the two songs, and cite details from the music and lyrics to support their explanations. In the introduction, students use historical context to explain what the Vietnam War was all about, and the different perspectives Americans had about U.S. involvement.

Teacher's Roles During Writing

As students are writing, support them in these key ways according to their needs:

- Circulate and observe students' progress through the template or outline. Take some notes to help you think about mini-lessons in writing you may want to teach to the whole class.

- Conference individually with students on their writing. Support their development through asking probing questions:
 - You seem stuck; where might you find that information?
 - If you don't remember what that quote means, where can you go?
 - Tell me why you introduced that evidence that way? What more do you think the reader might want to know?
 - Can you tell out-loud what the Big Idea is here? OK, how could you put that into writing?
- If you see patterns, pull together small groups of students for mini-lessons, or to review instructions.
- Support students in being peer editors.
- Help students move on to polished writing.

Preparing Students to Write

Tell students that the next stage of the lesson will be their writing. Remind them they will be writing a three-paragraph explanatory essay. The key elements of historical essay writing you will help them with are:

- Further develop historical thinking skills
- Use evidence from documents to support historical ideas
- Analyze how authors communicate their message

Project the Essay Outline View. Use this to review the writing prompt and preview the essay structure with students. Review explicitly each part of the essay and the role it serves in developing an answer to the historical question. Making these elements of the essay explicit for students will help them to develop the skills to construct essays more independently down the road.

Essay Outline View

Prompt: Write a three-paragraph essay to explain the ways in which America was divided over the Vietnam War by examining the differences in point of view between two popular songs of the day.

Paragraph-by-paragraph guidance: In your essay you must have the following sections:

- **An introduction in which you**
 - State the topic of your essay.
 - Provide some historical context about the U.S. role in the Vietnam War, and how it changed over time.
 - Introduce your thesis.
- **A first body paragraph in which you describe one song's perspective on the Vietnam War**
 - Provide 2–3 topic sentences that introduce the position the song took on the War, information about the song's creator, and the main goal of the song.
 - Provide 2 supporting details that reveal the perspective of the song's creator on the Vietnam War.
 - > Detail 1. How the creator used the song's music to communicate his message.
 - > Detail 2. How the creator used the song's lyrics to communicate his message.

- **A second body paragraph in which you describe the other song's perspective on the Vietnam War**
 - Provide 2–3 topic sentences that introduce the position the song took on the War, information about the song's creator, and the main goal of the song.
 - Provide 2 supporting details that reveal the perspective of the song's creator on the Vietnam War.
 - > Detail 1. How the creator used the song's music to communicate his message.
 - > Detail 2. How the creator used the song's lyrics to communicate his message.
 - Provide a concluding sentence.

Setting the Level of Writing Support

Using the Teacher Dashboard, you can set the level of students' writing support. (Note: Do this before they begin drafting their essays, or essay writing will be lost.) *Zoom In* offers two levels of writing support. High Support (the default) gives all students sentence-level tips, optional sentence-starters, and guidance in selecting and using evidence. As students show progress as historical writers – especially in using evidence from documents to support their ideas – teachers can set writing support for individual students to Low Support. The system will provide these students with paragraph-level tips only, meaning students will shape and support their essays substantially on their own.

Preparing Students to Write with Low Supports

If most of your students are writing with Low Supports (meaning with outline only, rather than the detailed Writing Template), you may wish to give them more up-front preparation to write their historical essays. The following outline may help.

Overview

- Let students know that the next stage of the lesson will be their writing.
- Remind them that they will be explaining how two popular songs from the 1960s communicated different perspectives on the Vietnam War.
- Their final product will be a three-paragraph explanatory essay.

Introduction

- Remember, what are you trying to explain here? That's right, how the two songs we listened to shows the different views Americans had about the Vietnam War.
- What needs to go into this introduction? [Topic sentence, context and thesis.]
- What is the historical context you'll want to include?
- What is the thesis statement in an essay like this? Right, you are explaining the ways Americans were divided and you're also introducing the two songs. You may need two sentences for this thesis statement.

Body Paragraphs

- OK, now that we have a sense of what needs to go into the introduction, let's think about the body paragraphs.
- In the first paragraph you will need to describe information about one song and its creator, and its perspective on the Vietnam War. In the second body paragraph, you will need to describe the other

song's perspective on the war.

- Your big job here is to explain how the details from the songs' music and lyrics communicate a message and connect back to the larger perspective each song writer had on the Vietnam War.
 - Connecting evidence back to the larger historical ideas is typically the hardest move for students to make, and may be worth spending some time discussing and/or modeling.
- At the end of the second paragraph, you'll also need to end with a concluding sentence about what we can learn from studying popular music at this time.

Allow students time to ask questions for clarification before they move on to independent writing.

Sample Student Essay

The music of the 1960's showed how divided Americans were over the Vietnam War. The United States wanted to help the South Vietnamese win their war against the North and prevent the spread of communism. At first, the U.S. sent money and advisers to help the South Vietnamese army, but in 1964 the U.S. started to send soldiers. The U.S. had to draft young men to serve in the army. This draft led more people to start opposing the war. While some people supported the war because they wanted to stop the spread of communism, others opposed the war and felt that we should not be sending American soldiers. The popular music of the time reflected these different perspectives.

One song that showed strong support for the war in Vietnam was the "Ballad of the Green Berets." This song was written in 1966 by Sergeant Barry Sadler. Sadler had been wounded in Vietnam and wrote this song to show his support for the work of the Green Berets. One way that Sadler communicated his message was through the music. In the song the music sounds very patriotic. This was meant to make people feel proud of the U.S. and the role of the military in the war. Another way that Sadler communicated his message was through his words. He wrote, "He has died for those oppressed." This means that the soldiers died to support the South Vietnamese who were being oppressed by communism.

Another popular song at the time, "I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die-Rag," had a very different message and was a protest song against the war. This song was written in 1965 by Joe McDonald, who was also in the Navy. This song used sarcasm to show how pointless and terrible all the killing in the war was. One way that McDonald communicated his message was through the music, which was cheerful. The words in the song are about sending soldiers off to die, so the cheerful music was meant to shock people and to make them question the war. Another way that McDonald communicated his message was through his words. He wrote, "Well there ain't no time to wonder why, Whoopee! we're all gonna die." This was also meant to be sarcastic. He is using shocking words to convince people that the war had no good point and was only leading people to die. Both of these songs were popular at that time and this shows how divided Americans were about the war.

Assessing Student Writing with the Essay Rubric

For information on assessing student writing, see these documents:

- "Zoom In Essay Rubric" (PDF)
- "Tracking Students' Progress and Assessing Student Work" (PDF)