

# REAGANSTOCK: THE UNSUNG PROTEST SONGS OF THE 1980s

**Lesson Overview:** Students create protest music about the 1980s and perform it (whilst dressed in the fashions of the 80s) as part of an all-day rock concert called “Reaganstock.” This lesson should take place after a cursory overview of the 1980s has taken place--this could be a lecture, skill builder, or anything that has given the students a basic knowledge of what was going on in the 1980s.

**California Social Science Standards:**

11.9.4 List the effects of foreign policy on domestic policies and vice versa (e.g., protests during the war in Vietnam, the “nuclear freeze” movement).

11.9.5. Analyze the role of the Reagan administration and other factors in the victory of the West in the Cold War.

11.11.2 Discuss the significant domestic policy speeches of Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton (e.g., with regard to education, civil rights, economic policy, environmental policy).

**Chronological and Spatial Thinking Standard:**

*Standard 1:* Students compare the present with the past, evaluating the consequences of past events and decisions and determining the lessons that were learned

*Standard 4:* Students relate current events to the physical and human characteristics of places and regions.

**Language Arts Standard:**

3.8 Analyze the clarity and consistency of political assumptions in a selection of literary works or essays on a topic (e.g., suffrage, women’s role in organized labor). (Political approach)

**California Concepts/Vocabulary:** change, justice, power, rights

**Learning Outcome/ “Big Idea” / “Essential Learning” (objective):** How is modern society different than the protest era of the 1960s/70s

**EL/Inclusion Strategies:** Increase comprehensibility by putting events into song (easier to understand); increase participation by having groups actually write and perform the music and lyrics.

**Materials:** CD with music from the 1960s/70s protest era (Bob Dylan, Aretha Franklin, etc.) to use as models for protest music (w/lyrics), CD player to play the music, clips from the movie “Woodstock” to show, a keyboard for the students to use in instrumental composition.

**TCI Materials:** Interactive Notebook, Quiz on Multiple Intelligences (Bring Learning Alive book)

**TCI Strategy:** Experiential Exercise (the concert) and Writing for Understanding (the reaction)

**Technology Component:** A VCR, an overhead projector and a CD Player. Rock ain’t about technology, brother.

**THE PREVIEW ASSIGNMENT**

1. Prior to the day of the lesson, request that the students choose their favorite (appropriate) song and write out the lyrics in their notebooks. This would be a sort of homework assignment, I suppose.
2. Ask students to share their lyrics; after a few, ask students to identify what kinds of songs they like. Look for commonalities between bands, themes, styles of music, etc.

### **PROCEDURE FOR ACTIVITY**

1. Lie and say that your favorite music is protest music. Play a few examples that you happen to have on a CD located in the CD player at the front of the room. Project lyrics to these protest songs for the kids to see. While the music plays, have the kids do a free-write in their notebooks reacting to the music. Ask them to focus on these questions: 1) what is the music about? 2) what is the music's style? 3) when was the music written?
2. Review the time period in which the music was written. This lesson is intended for use after you've already discussed Vietnam and the Counterculture, so this should be a true review. Make connections between the time period and the lyrics, in case they haven't clued in yet.
3. Tell the kids that they are going to make protest songs about another era, the 1980s. The guidelines for the songs should be as follows:
  - The songs must contain a verse, a chorus, another verse, and another chorus (could be the same one)
  - There is no mandatory length for the songs, but if they are under two minutes, they should contain a solo on a musical instrument or at least some dedicated chanting, humming, or other vocalization of tune.
  - No school-inappropriate lyrics (must be approved by teacher prior to performance)
  - The lyrics should contain at least five references to Reagan or Bush's 80s speeches, policies, or foreign-policy actions. These lyrics should be critical of the conservative presidents, but not necessarily hateful. Sarcasm and/or analogies in the lyrics are encouraged.
4. The students should be placed in groups that each contain at least one musically-inclined member. This would be determined by the TCI-influenced learning style quiz given earlier in the year (which was kept and filed by the teacher for use in a situation like this!)
5. The groups should have a few class periods to form their songs and what not. The week should be laid out like this:
  - Monday – Assignment explained and groups given
  - Tuesday and Wednesday – Groups have time to work
  - Thursday – Dress Rehearsal (kids encouraged to bring costumes and practice, but no formal performance in front of the class)
  - Friday – PERFORMANCE!
6. On the day of the concert, students will be handed an assignment sheet (see appendix). This assignment is partly completed in class, and the rest serves as homework and should be completed by the following school day (Monday, using the sample schedule above).

### **ASSESSMENT**

As this is part of an ongoing unit, the assessment will take multiple forms:

- NOTEBOOK – The notebook will be evaluated by the teacher to see if critical thinking/student responses are occurring.
- MATERIAL – The processing assignment (music and lyrics) will ask students to put the information into a usable format. There is also a follow-up writing for understanding assignment.
- EXAM – Ultimately the material will be tested in exam format, with visual elements incorporated into the multiple-choice.

**RUBRIC**

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>Excellent (5 pts)</b>	<b>Good (4 pts)</b>	<b>Needs Work (3 Pts)</b>	<b>Deficient (2 Pts)</b>
Amount of Information	All topics are addressed and all questions answered with at least 2 sentences about each.	All topics are addressed and most questions answered with at least 2 sentences about each.	All topics are addressed, and most questions answered with 1 sentence about each.	One or more topics were not addressed.
Quality of Information	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It includes several supporting details and/or examples.	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It provides 1-2 supporting details and/or examples.	Information clearly relates to the main topic. No details and/or examples are given.	Information has little or nothing to do with the main topic.
Mechanics	No grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors.	Almost no grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors	A few grammatical spelling, or punctuation errors.	Many grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors.

APPENDIX: STUDENT HOMEWORK FOR REAGANSTOCK

WELCOME TO REAGANSTOCK!

Copy down some of the lyrics to the songs you hear in the space below in the left hand side of your paper. On the right hand side, describe the event that the lyrics are describing.

Lyrics	Events that are described by the lyrics

**HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT—WRITING FOR UNDERSTANDING**

Pretend that you are a newspaper reporter covering the Reaganstock Concert. Describe the types of songs that you heard and the feeling of the concert. Compare the mood of the lyrics and music that you heard with Reaganstock with the mood and lyrics of Woodstock. How were they different? How were they similar? Why is this? Were the issues of the 60s and 70s similar to the issues of the 80s? How?