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**EDU 6710 C15- The Enduring Legacy of the American Revolution - Equality**

**Title**

Pete Seeger/Woody Guthrie: Peaceful Protest and Song

**Date**

April 8, 2010

**Grade Level**

Fifth and Sixth grade

**Seminar Impact**

The summer seminar had a tremendous impact on my content knowledge of twentieth century American History, particularly in reference to the concepts of civil rights, women's rights and the labor movement. I now have a deeper understanding of the struggles of the underprivileged during the twentieth century. I also gained insight into the many perspectives that dominated American culture in this era.

The myriad resources, lectures, field trip experiences, and teacher networks that I was privileged to during that week widened my knowledge, and increased my comfort level for teaching the history of that era. Finally, as a direct result of the research time and the ability to collaborate with my support leader and peers about my project, I discovered some great resources for further research as well as for use in the classroom.

**Milestones**

Teaching American History 2010- Heroes of Equality has reintroduced me to the importance of the individual in studying history. While trends and the big picture are key to historical inquiry, so too are the lives and actions of the trend setters and the big picture makers. There were times that the seminar hit the mark and times that it came up a bit short for me. However, my overall feeling is that the seminar added to my general knowledge of twentieth century history.

Some of the presenters during the week long summer session felt a bit out of place or unfocused. Tuesday's lecturer spoke to the Peace and Justice Center, and honestly it felt more like an infomercial than a lecture steeped in historical content, thought, and meaning. I'm sure this is a fine organization, but I have to question if the

summer session was the right venue. Likewise, Thursday's speaker from the Department of Education seemed to simply ramble on with no clear direction. I'm sure that he is a truly sincere man, but his presentation left me more confused than I was before I entered the lecture hall.

Now on the other hand, William Chaffee was a great beginning to the week. He was knowledgeable, pertinent, and clear. I walked away from his lecture wanting more, he put me in the era and had me empathetic to the needs of those who struggled for equality. His knowledge of the topic made me want to dig deeper into that era of history. Also, the gentleman with the guitar was a great addition. Anytime song is part of the learning process, I feel, the group becomes more invested and involved. It was inspiring to have protest songs be a part of the learning.

The reading material for the class was, as always, enriching and thought provoking. While the Bella book was a bit disjointed at times, it gave me great insight into her life and rational. I have a greater respect for what she stood for and how she did it. The Twain readings was great, but it would have been helpful if we had an order in which to read them, the book sections should have been last - I think. That being said, the Twain book is on my summer reading list.

Finally, my project on "Peaceful Protest" gave students a hands on experience of what peaceful protest is, and how to go about enacting change. I think that the best part of the experience was the research. First students researched the life and times of Pete Seeger; here they learned who he was, what he believed in, and how he protested. Students came away from this experience with a deep understanding of a lesser known American hero. Next, students researched the Greensboro sit-ins, with a focus on peaceful protest. After we made connections between the two we looked at Woody Guthrie and his song "This Land is Your Land". Through this students identified what was being protested and what the suggested solutions were. All in all this was a valuable experience for students, as they saw that protest is not in a vacuum for the sole purpose of simply protesting.

### **Proposal number**

Final

### **Proposal**

Students will first briefly explore the times that Pete Seeger/Woodie Guthrie lived in, with a vision towards developing a worldview that these men would have developed. Students will consider concepts like the location that these men lived in,

their specific and generic occupations, as well as aspects of their personal lives. Students will also consider what was happening locally, nationally, and globally during these men's lives. Once a worldview has been established, students will begin to explore the types of and examine the meaning of some of the protest songs that these men authored. In order to allow students to gain further understanding about peaceful protest, they will explore the Greensboro sit-ins as a further means of peaceful protest.

Throughout their exploration and examination students will develop an understanding of the different elements of protest songs. Once students have a solid understanding of the elements of a protest song they will use a Google Doc to collaborate with other students to either compose a protest song, or create a presentation that highlights some aspect of protest songs and/or their authors.

### **Central Questions**

- Why would someone write protest songs?
- What audience did Pete Seeger and Woodie Guthrie write for?
- What was their intent?
- What are elements of a protest song?
- What is peaceful protest?

### **Challenge Questions**

- How can protest songs be used to enact change today?
- How would you go about creating and using the elements of protest songs?
- Are protest songs/peaceful protest the most powerful means of protest? Why or why not?
- Is it essential for the general public to understand the nature and intent of protest songs? Why or why not?

### **Lesson Length**

The duration of this study could be up to three 60 minute class periods per week for two to three weeks.

### **Key Ideas**

- Pete Seeger and Woodie Guthrie sang out against the wrongs that they saw in society.
- Pete Seeger and Woodie Guthrie were instrumental in making protest songs popular.
- Pete Seeger and Woodie Guthrie inspired others to write protest songs.
- Peaceful protest can enact long lasting change.

### Intended Learning Outcomes

- Protest songs and peaceful protest exposed the wrong in society.
- Protest songs and peaceful protest enacted social change.
- Protest songs served to motivate the public for a greater good.
- Protest song and peaceful protest often unified a group or sub-group of society.

### National History Standards

- **Era 9** Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970's)
  - **Standard 1** The economic boom and social transformation of postwar United States.
    - § **1B** Explore the influence of popular culture and analyze the role of the mass media in homogenizing American culture.
  - **Standard 4** The struggle for racial and gender equality and the extension of civil liberties.
    - § **4A** Explain the resistance to civil rights in the South between 1954 and 1965.

### Vermont Grade Expectations

- H&SS5-6:6

Students make connections to research by...

- Explaining the relevance of their findings (So what?) to themselves, their community, and/or history (e.g., by asking follow-up questions, by proposing additional research).
- Explaining how their research has led to a clearer understanding of an issue or idea.
- Proposing solutions to problems based on their findings, and asking additional questions.  
Identifying what was easy or difficult about following the research plan, and making suggestions for improvement.

- H&SS5-6:13

Students analyze how and why cultures continue and change over time by...

- Identifying expressions of culture in the U.S., and the world through analysis of various modes of expression such as poems, songs, dances, stories, paintings, and photographs (e.g., investigating cultural expressions of the Harlem Renaissance).

- Describing the contributions of various cultural groups to the world, both past and present.
- Identifying how location influences cultural traits (e.g., comparing clothing, food, religion/values, government, and art across four ancient cultures in relation to location).
- Identifying ways in which culture in the United States and the world has changed.

### **Preparation for Teaching**

In order for students and teachers to be successful, they will need to understand:

- The social climate during the time of Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie;
- The perspectives of Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie on society;
- The role of music on popular culture;
- What it means to protest peacefully;

### **Activities**

- Students work together to write a protest song (see appendix III);
- Use Google Docs to share protest ideas;
  - This could also be accomplished the old school way: paper and pencil. Google Docs simply allows students to integrate technology with collaborative group work.
- Use Google Docs/Sites to research, and then record learning;
  - See appendix I & II for more on what this looks like. Again this is simply a way to integrate technology with history. The same outcome can be achieved with paper, pencil, and books. However, the internet does provide some useful resources that are difficult to come by any other way.
- Analyze the elements of a protest song (see appendix III);
- Study the timeframe that shaped Seeger (see appendix II);
- Research peaceful protest (Greensboro sit-ins - appendix I)

### **Assessments**

- Constructed response
- Student written protest songs (see appendix IV)
- Student generated Google Docs

### **Annotated Resources (Bibliography)**

#### **Primary Sources**

- Bella Abzug: How One Tough Broad from the Bronx Fought Jim Crow and Joe McCarthy, Pissed Off Jimmy Carter, Battled for the Rights of Women and

Workers, Rallied Against War and for the Planet, and Shook Up Politics Along the Way. An oral history

Levine, Suzanne Thom, Mary, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007

While Bella Abzug may not have been quite, nor did she always make friends, she most certainly was peaceful and appropriate in her means of protest. Excerpts from this book would serve well in an elementary classroom. While Bella didn't use song as a means of protest, she is a great example of how those of us who may have missed that day in music class can enact a change in our community.

- Pete Seeger At 89

Seeger, Pete, Appleseed Recording, 2008

This CD is a good choice because it is a snapshot of the Pete Seeger legacy. This CD has songs from the Great Depression, The Red Scare, The Civil Rights Movement, The Vietnam Era, and The Environmental Movement. While Mr. Seeger does not sing on all tracks the listener/reader has a thorough look at Pete Seeger, as well as what and how he protested.

- Pete Seeger For Kids And Just Plain Folks

Sony Entertainment Music Inc., 1962

This collection of songs is the one to have because of the way they are presented. The lyrics, and music are no different than any other recording, but they are live. This CD shows how the audience and the artist interact with each other. This example shows how one person can move many through song and spoken word.

- Pete Seeger The Power of Song

Brown, Jim, PBS American Masters, 2007

This film chronicles the life and times of Pete Seeger. It may be a bit long to view in its entirety, but viewing sections would be very appropriate. The film does a fine job showing the role of protest through song during the Civil Rights Era. This is a great primary resource because it uses both song and the spoken word to depict the life, times and protest methods that Mr. Seeger used.

- This Land is Your Land

Guthrie, Woody, Little, Brown Young Readers, 2002

This illustrated volume of the Woody Guthrie song is perfect for the elementary classroom. The whole song is portrayed in pictures and lyrics; there is a CD with "This Land is Your Land" and other Guthrie favorites. The rich illustrations provide opportunity for classroom discussion that allows the struggling readers (or those who are still working on making inferences) to participate on equal footing. This is a must have book for teaching protest songs.

## Secondary Sources

- Civilities And Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom

Chafe, William, Oxford University Press, 1980

This is the book to have for the history of Greensboro and its struggle for equal rights. This volume is not for the elementary classroom, unless used as excerpts. Here the reader will gain insight into the grassroots movement that Greensboro went through to provide a community that was as equitable as possible.

- A History of US: All the People

Hakim, Joy, Oxford University Press, 2006

Joy Hakim is a great narrative writer, and her narrative ability shines through in history class. This volume is very readable, and tells the story behind history. In it the reader will find protest laden throughout, both peaceful and violent. This is a great work to use to be able compare the different types of protest.

- Mark Twain A Life

Powers, Ron, Free Press, 2005

While this book is about Mark Twain, the mindful reader will soon pick out how Twain protested the mistreatment of slaves Americans. This book is not for the elementary classroom, but to be used as background for the teacher. Excerpts of this volume could be used in conjunction with excerpts of Huck Finn with a view towards peaceful protest.

- <http://www.sitins.com/multimedia.shtml>

This site is great; it is one of the best sources for all things pertaining to the sit-in movement. Here the reader will find interviews of the original protesters, as well as other important figures. Also, there is an extensive multimedia library with both video and audio recordings. There are many primary source photos (many that are not often used or seen), as well as more current photos. Finally, this site has an extensive timeline of the events and background on the key players, as well as links to other important sites.

- <http://www.sitinmovement.org/>

This site is dedicated to the 1960 Greensboro lunch counter sit-in. The site is part of the Greensboro museum that opened in 2010 at the location of the original Woolworth's sit-in. Here the reader will find a smattering of primary sources (mostly photos) and some timelines. There is also a section that more current history of the

location. This is a fine site for the Greensboro sit-ins, but not much else, and is a bit limited.

- <http://www.peteseeger.org/>

This is a great source for an overview of Pete Seeger's life and career. There are links to the radio series, "Pete Seeger: How Can I Keep from Singing", as well as other quality links for more information on Pete Seeger. This site includes both primary and secondary sources.

### **Accommodations**

- Use of visual arts materials, such as genre paintings;
- Audio recordings of song lyrics;
- Teacher read -a-loud to the students;
- Untimed writing time;
- Individual, partner and/or group activities;
- Scaffolds for writing.

## **Appendix I**

This is how I set up my Google Doc so that students could respond to my guiding questions. However, a Google Doc can be edited by all who are invited to add to it. This means that students can accidentally delete other student work or the original. Be sure to keep a back up of the original somewhere. The only real benefit to using a Google Doc like this is that the teacher can view and comment anytime from any computer.

### **THE GREENSBORO SIT-INS**

#### Guiding Question:

Were the Greensboro Sit-ins a form of protest?

If they were, what type of protest were they? Why?

Research these sites to learn about the Sit-ins:

<http://www.sitins.com/>

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=18615556>

<http://www.sitinmovement.org/>

[http://www.core-online.org/History/sit\\_ins.htm](http://www.core-online.org/History/sit_ins.htm)

Consider this a constructed response question; include an introduction with a thesis statement, supports to back up your thesis, and a conclusion with an extension. As you discover answers to your solutions begin to type your essay below your name.

## Appendix II

This is how I set up my Google Site. The benefit to having a site is that students can be invited to view only, which means that they cannot accidentally delete the original. However, students now need a vehicle to record their research on. This can be done with a Google Doc (like above), or pencil and paper.

### **Just who is Pete Seeger, and why are we learning about him?**

#### **Guiding Questions:**

Who is Pete Seeger?

What was happening in the world during Pete Seeger's life and times?

What did Pete Seeger protest?

Why did he protest?

Search these sites to find the answers to these questions.

1. <http://www.peteseeger.org/>
2. <http://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/unitarians/seeger.html>
3. <http://www.peteseegermusic.com/>
4. <http://www.nobelprize4pete.org/>
5. <http://www.mudcat.org/pete.cfm>
6. <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/pete-seeger/the-power-of-song/50/>
7. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pete\\_seeger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pete_seeger)

## Appendix III

### Analyzing and writing a protest song

1. Give students each a copy of the lyrics to "This Land is Your Land", listen to it and have students just read along with the song.
2. Read the picture book This Land is Your Land (see bibliography for more details about the book) to students, taking time to stop and discuss some of the illustrations.
3. Listen to the song again, this time have students highlight or underline the sections of the song that are specifically about protest.
4. Have students share their thoughts about what Guthrie was protesting and why. A list on chart paper is helpful so that students can refer back to it as they work on their own protest songs.
5. If it doesn't come up in class discussion point out that Guthrie always offered a solution to the thing that he was protesting. Have students discuss the importance of offering a solution. It may also be useful to discuss the difference between protesting with a solution in mind and protesting without a solution in mind.
6. Group students in groups of three to four and have them brainstorm different things to protest. If ideas like longer recess or longer lunch surface acknowledge them, but try to move students beyond their own needs to the needs of a greater cause. It may be useful to have groups share ideas so the whole class can benefit from the thinking of the group.
7. In the same groups students now pick an idea and write a song protesting the injustice they have agreed on. The song should have a short chorus and at least two verses
8. This is when I would have students set up a Google Doc for themselves so they can share their work.

## Appendix IV

# Protest Song Rubric

Score	Above and beyond	Hits the mark	Approaches the mark	Not quite there yet
<b><u>Motivation</u></b> Why are you protesting, is it realistic to protest for this?				
<b><u>Solution</u></b> Is your solution reasonable, does it make sense to ask for that?				
<b><u>The Reader</u></b> Have you considered the needs and views of the reader, and not simply forced your ideas on the reader?				
<b><u>Chorus and verse</u></b> Do you have at least two choruses and three verses?				
<b><u>Spelling and GUM</u></b> Have you edited your work?				