

Lesson materials acquired from:

<http://rockhall.com/education/distance-learning/digital-classroom-1960s/bob-dylan/>

Saskatchewan Grade 8 Arts Education outcome addressed through the below lesson:

CR8.2 Investigate and identify ways that today’s arts expressions often reflect concern for social issues.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Bob Dylan was a progressive singer of folk music who liked to challenge authority and break with tradition. He shocked audiences at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965 by performing “Like a Rolling Stone” (and the rest of his set) on electric guitar – an instrument mainly used for rock at that time. Despite the crowd’s boos, “Like a Rolling Stone” remains one of Dylan’s most significant contributions to popular music to this day, and is a pioneering example of folk-rock. Of course, folk purists weren’t the only ones angered by “Like a Rolling Stone.” While you listen to the song, consider the following questions:

- What are the main themes and attitudes expressed in the song? Why would “Like a Rolling Stone” become an anthem of sixties counterculture?
- To whom is the singer speaking? What issues, problems, or events are presented in the song?
- How effective is this song as an expression of the sixties’ protest movement?
- What, if any, relevance does this song have to American society today?

ACTIVITY: Analyzing Lyrics From Multiple Points of View

This activity is designed to encourage students to critically engage with the lyrical content of songs, allowing them to understand them from a wide range of perspectives.

1. After listening to, reading the lyrics of, and discussing “Like a Rolling Stone,” divide the class into small groups, and assign one of the following songs from 1965 to each group.

- “Satisfaction” – Rolling Stones
- “Eve of Destruction” – Barry McGuire
- “It’s Not Unusual” – Tom Jones
- “Hang on Sloopy” – McCoys
- “The Water is Wide” – Joan Baez
- “What the World Needs Now is Love” – Jackie DeShannon

2. Group members should listen to the song and read the lyrics before answering each of the following questions:

- What type of person would listen to and enjoy this song in 1965? Would they most likely be a young child, teenager, or adult? Would they be rich or poor, urban or rural, male or female?
- How is this song different from “Like a Rolling Stone?” Why would Bob Dylan’s song shock (and either excite or offend) the listener of our group’s song?
- What would “Like a Rolling Stone” mean to our group’s listener?

3. Have students brainstorm a list of current songs with important social messages. Do all people who hear the songs react the same way? What are some of the different interpretations listeners could apply to each song?