

## Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young (CSNY)

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

“Ohio” is surprising because it is a song with a charged political message written by a group famous for its gentle and celebratory songs. It served as the starting point for a long list of pacifist protest songs by CSNY. Rock as a whole has a long history of political involvement, having begun as a rebellious and shocking movement of youth culture. The popularity of rock music allows the musicians’ messages to be widely spread.

1. How is “Ohio” different from other political songs? How is it alike?
2. Does the song still resonate with listeners today? Are there certain groups of people who would respond more strongly than others? Why or why not?
3. What are the defining traits of rock music? Why might these make rock a good genre to communicate a political message?

### ACTIVITY: *Analyzing political messages in rock*

*This activity is designed to encourage students to hear and understand the political messages expressed in many rock songs.*

1. Break the class into small groups and assign one of the following songs to each:

“Eve of Destruction” by Barry McGuire (1965)

“What’s Going On” by Marvin Gaye (1971)

“Sunday Bloody Sunday” by U2 (1983)

“Black Gold” by Soul Asylum (1992)

“American Idiot” by Green Day (2004)

“Glory” by John Legend (2014)

2. Have the groups listen to and research their songs to find answers to the following questions:\*

  - A. What are the lyrics to the song?
  - B. What were three important national/international events occurring when

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the song was released? What conflicts were occurring when the song was released?

C. How do the writers feel about the issue being debated? Which side are

they on? How do you know?

D. What attitude do the singers take? Are they objective or passionate? Are they sad or angry? Are they hopeful or despairing? How do they think we should bring about change? What in their music makes you say this? (Consider tempo, vocal timbre, instrumentation, dynamics, and lyrics.)

3. After researching, have the class brainstorm a list of current songs with political messages. How do they react to these songs? What happens when there’s a song that lots of people argue over?

\*Alternatively, the teacher could lead large-group instruction and present the information requisite for parts A-C, then play the songs for the class as whole group and have each individual provide responses for parts D and E.