

Rock & Roll to the White House

Lesson Plan: Parody Songs on the Campaign Trail

INTRODUCTION

A parody is a work that imitates or copies aspects of another work in order to create a humorous take on the original. Parody is found in many different mediums, including poetry, literature, plays, comedy, and music. In music, a parody song takes preexisting musical material and pairs it with a new set of lyrics.

The hit tunes of rock music often serve as the musical inspiration for candidate-inspired musical parodies. We hear these parodies on talk shows, we watch them on YouTube, and we tweet them on social media. As with memes and political cartoons, musical parodies are one of the ways in which voters engage with the election process.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Explore the role of music and the arts in American presidential politics
2. Understand the concept of parody and how it is demonstrated in political campaign songs
3. Analyze the text of parodies to recognize how they communicate a point of view about a political candidate
4. Apply their knowledge of parody to create their own parody songs



Rock & Roll to the White House

Lesson Plan: Parody Songs on the Campaign Trail

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why might art be a common way to express opinions about politics?
- What type of art (literature, poetry, sculpture, painting, music, dance, theater, video, etc.) do you think is the best suited for political commentary? Why? Can you think of any examples?
- Rock music is often used both officially and unofficially on the campaign trail. Why do you think this style of music might appeal to candidates? To voters?

ACTIVITY: ANALYZING POLITICAL PARODY SONGS

Encourage your students to consider how politics and music intersect in parodies from the 2016 campaign season based on rock and pop songs. (Select those that are suitable for your class from the resource guide below.)

Play one or more of the parodies. (You may also want to listen to the original song on which the parody is based.) After watching or listening to each, ask the class:

- Do you think the creator of the parody supports or opposes the candidate? How is the candidate portrayed in the parody? What words or images from the parody can you cite to support your answers?
- What is the original song copied by the parody? Why do you think the creator of the parody chose this particular song? Does the style of music add to the meaning of the lyrics? If so, how?
- Who is the intended audience for this parody? Do you think supporters of the candidate would like the song? Opponents? What about undecided voters? Cite specific lyrics in your answer.



Rock & Roll to the White House

Lesson Plan: Parody Songs on the Campaign Trail

ACTIVITY: CREATE A PARODY

Encourage your students to flex their creative muscles while learning how the arts and entertainment industries play a role in creating the image of presidential candidates.

1. Break the class into groups of four or five students and assign a recent presidential candidate to each one.
2. Have each group research their assigned candidate's background and platform. (See the Resource Guide below for links to information on recent candidates.)
3. Next, have the groups make a list of the candidate's most important policy positions and personal attributes. After the list is complete, the students should select a topic or topics from the list serve as the theme(s) for the parody—the parody can be in support of, or in opposition to, the candidate.
4. Each group should choose a popular song to serve as the basis for their parody.
5. To make the parody, students will replace the song's original lyrics with new ones about their candidate—making sure the new lyrics line up with the old ones to fit the music.
6. Extension activities:
 - Have each group perform their parody for the class.
 - Ask the students to think about the visuals they would include if they were to create a music video to go along with their parody.



Rock & Roll to the White House

Lesson Plan: Parody Songs on the Campaign Trail

RESOURCE GUIDE

2016 Parody Campaign Songs:

For a comprehensive and up-to-date list, see <http://traxonthetrail.com/trax-filter>

Bernie Sanders

- [“We Will Bern You”](#) (set to the tune of Queen’s “We Will Rock You”)
- [“We’re Backin’ Bernie Sanders”](#) (set to the tune of The Ramones’ “I Wanna Be Sedated”)
- [“Vote for Bernie”](#) (set to the tune of Green Day’s “Know Your Enemy”)
- [“All About That Bern”](#) (set to the tune of Meghan Trainor’s “All About That Bass”)

Hillary Clinton

- [Emails, Benghazi and Bill](#) (set to the tune of Gloria Gaynor’s “I Will Survive,” Katy Perry’s “Dark Horse,” Journey’s “Don’t Stop Believin’,” and Naughty by Nature’s “O.P.P.”)
- [“Hillary Clinton Email Scandal Song”](#) (set to the tune of Elton John’s “Candle in the Wind”)
- [“Chelsea’s Mom”](#) (set to the tune of Fountains of Wayne’s “Stacy’s Mom”)
- [“I am Rodham”](#) (set to the tune of Helen Reddy’s “I am Woman”)
- [“The Hillary Song”](#) (set to the tune of Maroon 5’s “Sugar”)
- [“All I Want for Christmas Is to Be President”](#) (set to the tune of Mariah Carey’s “All I Want for Christmas Is You”)

Jeb Bush

- [“Jeb Is Ready, He’s My Brother”](#) (set to the tune of The Hollies’ “He Ain’t Heavy, He’s My Brother”)

Ted Cruz

- [“Country Songs!”](#) (set to the tune of Garth Brooks’ “Friends in Low Places”)

Donald Trump

- [“Sorry”](#) (set to the tune of Justin Bieber’s “Sorry”)
- [“Trump”](#) (set to the tune of Shawn Mendez’s “Stitches”)



Rock & Roll to the White House

Lesson Plan: Parody Songs on the Campaign Trail

Sites with Data on Candidates and Issues:

- <http://2016election.procon.org/view.source-summary-chart.php>
- <http://www.ontheissues.org/default.htm>

