



# The power of music—teacher handout

## Subject and ages

Music and language arts; 12-14

## Summary

In Part 1, students will analyze and compare two songs from different periods. In Part 2, students will examine historical and technological context.

## Materials or resources required

- Computers with headphones and access to the Internet **or** pre-recorded music
- If available, old record players and gramophones
- Music analysis guide for students
- Student handout for power of music

## Instructional procedures

To gain full benefit from this project, students should be aware of instrument families and the elements of music.

## Part 1: Analyzing and comparing songs

### Large-group work

Facilitate a whole-class brainstorm to identify the topics, issues and themes that are the focus of the students' current popular songs:

- War/pacifism
- Patriotism
- Role of women
- Racial tolerance/intolerance
- Family
- Politics
- Love and relationships
- Remembrance



Introduce students to the [RSS Feeds](#) page on the Virtual Gramophone site. Have them listen to several songs about different subjects. Some suggestions:

- "The Maple Leaf Forever" (anthems and patriotic songs)
- "Ô Canada, mon pays, mes amours" (anthems and patriotic songs)
- "Carmen Fantasy" (instrumental by Kathleen Parlow)
  - This is an appealing piece of instrumental music that students can easily identify with. It exemplifies timbre by contrasting the sound of a violin with that of a piano, and by its use of harmonics. Pitch range is very noticeable as the violin has great range in this work. The violin also demonstrates the idea of chords and harmony. The music is very programmatic so it would be easy for a student to think of a story or visualize colours or ideas.

Briefly discuss the differences between music from the past and music today. Students should be prepared to bring a piece of recently produced music to class for the next lesson to begin the work of the unit.

### **Song 1**

Choose a recently produced song that the students will enjoy. After listening to it carefully, the class should complete the song analysis on "[Music analysis guide for students](#)" together. A class note-taker could record the various student responses.

## **Small-group work**

### **Song 2**

Students should choose a song from the Virtual Gramophone website that has the same theme as their first song (love, heartbreak, happiness). After listening to it carefully they should complete the analysis as for song 1.

Students should then complete a chart of similarities and differences between the two songs. For each similarity or difference, they should think of reasons these elements have remained the same or changed.



## Part 2: Historical and technical context

**History:** Students should consider the following questions:

- How does the world around us affect the music we make?
- How do you think historical and cultural conditions affected tastes at the time the students' chosen pieces were recorded?

Students should research and make a chart of major events around the time of the two songs they have chosen.

See the History section on the Virtual Gramophone for help.

**Technology:** Students probably noticed the different sound qualities of the old and new recordings. They should compare the recording qualities of three songs:

- One song from around 1900
- One song from around 1925
- One song from modern times

Following this, they should visit the [Technical notes](#) page of the Virtual Gramophone website and research or brainstorm reasons for these differences. Consider:

- How the sound might be distorted on an old recording
- How the recording artist's proximity to the recording device might affect the sound quality. (The electrical microphone was not invented until the 1920s so early artists had to stand close to the recording equipment.)

### Possible extension

Students could create cover art for the songs they have chosen (see the [Musical Art--teacher handout](#)).