

## Overview:

Synthesis Through Song is a think-pair-share/small group activity where students work together to analyze and discuss song lyrics through the lens of cultural norms. The activity simulates the process of synthesizing resources.

## Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Analyze two texts to identify cultural norms projected in contemporary selections.
2. Synthesize the main themes in a small body of music, thereby considering and inferring relationships between concepts.
3. Engage with a song via their worldview and the worldview of others.
4. Organize and discuss the ideas of the songs to create theme groupings.

## Time:

30 minutes

## Group Size:

Small group

## Materials:

2 similarly-themed song lyrics, stapled together. Provided here are the pairs "Daughters" by John Mayer and "Brown Sugar" by The Rolling Stones, and "Times They Are A-Changin'" by Bob Dylan and "A Change Is Gonna Come" by Sam Cooke.

A whiteboard or chalkboard for recording student responses.

Optional: scrap paper & writing utensils for students

*Note:* The lyrics for "Brown Sugar" contain references to slavery and sexual assault, which may be sensitive topics for some students.

## Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization
- Acceptance

## AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication:

- To articulate a complex understanding of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication (e.g., demonstrates understanding of the degree to which people use physical contact while communicating in different cultures or use direct/indirect and explicit/implicit meanings).
- To skillfully negotiate a shared understanding based on these differences.

## Empathy

- To interpret intercultural experience from the perspectives of own and more than one worldview.
- To demonstrate ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group.

## Curiosity:

- To ask complex questions about other cultures.
- To seek out and articulate answers to these questions that reflect multiple cultural perspectives.

## Other Skills:

Teamwork; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

## Activity Instructions:

### *Introduction (1 min):*

1. Introduce the activity using the following language: "Today we are going to work through an exercise about how to synthesize two texts."

### *Context (1 min):*

1. Read the following statement to set the scene for the activity: "Imagine you are taking a musicology class and you've been asked to write a paper about how culture is shared through music. For this project, culture is defined broadly as the customs, traditions, social institutions, and manifestations of the human experience."

### *Group Exercise (10-15 minutes):*

1. Have students work in groups to identify the three main ideas of each song.
2. Distribute 4 of the same song packets to a group of 4.
3. Have each group take 3-7 minutes to read each song and be prepared to discuss at least 3 main ideas of each song.
4. Each group then shares the main ideas and the instructor records them on the board.
5. As a class, they will then identify the main themes that can be inferred by grouping the main ideas of the two songs together. For example, a main theme of the "Brown Sugar" and "Daughters" packet is the role of women.
6. Then, explain how the students might use these themes and synthesize them in an academic paper using the following language: "These themes are what could be written when writing about culture in music. For your own writing, you pull out the key points of the articles and then you group them to form clusters of information. This process will help you identify themes. You can then go on to create an outline for your paper using those themes as major points in your discussion. You'd cite the song lyrics to demonstrate and support your assertions/inferences."

## "The Times They Are a Changin'" by Bob Dylan

Come gather 'round, people  
Wherever you roam  
And admit that the waters  
Around you have grown  
And accept it that soon  
You'll be drenched to the bone  
If your time to you is worth savin'  
And you better start swimmin'  
Or you'll sink like a stone  
For the times they are a-changin'

Come writers and critics  
Who prophesize with your pen  
And keep your eyes wide  
The chance won't come again  
And don't speak too soon  
For the wheel's still in spin  
And there's no tellin' who  
That it's namin'  
For the loser now  
Will be later to win  
For the times they are a-changin'

Come senators, congressmen  
Please heed the call  
Don't stand in the doorway  
Don't block up the hall  
For he that gets hurt  
Will be he who has stalled

The battle outside ragin'  
Will soon shake your windows  
And rattle your walls  
For the times they are a-changin'

Come mothers and fathers  
Throughout the land  
And don't criticize  
What you can't understand  
Your sons and your daughters  
Are beyond your command  
Your old road is rapidly agin'  
Please get out of the new one  
If you can't lend your hand  
For the times they are a-changin'

The line it is drawn  
The curse it is cast  
The slow one now  
Will later be fast  
As the present now  
Will later be past  
The order is rapidly fadin'  
And the first one now  
Will later be last  
For the times they are a-changin'

Source: LyricFind  
Songwriters: Bob Dylan  
"The Times They are A Changin'" lyrics  
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## **"A Change Is Gonna Come" by Sam Cooke**

I was born by the river in a little tent  
Oh and just like the river I've been running  
ev'r since

It's been a long time, a long time coming  
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it  
will  
It's been too hard living, but I'm afraid to die  
'Cause I don't know what's up there, beyond  
the sky  
It's been a long, a long time coming  
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it  
will

I go to the movie and I go downtown  
Somebody keep tellin' me don't hang around  
It's been a long, a long time coming  
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it  
will

Then I go to my brother  
And I say brother help me please  
But he winds up knockin' me  
Back down on my knees, oh

There have been times that I thought I  
couldn't last for long  
But now I think I'm able to carry on  
It's been a long, a long time coming  
But I know a change is gonna come, oh yes  
it will

Source: LyricFind  
Songwriters: Sam Cooke  
"A Change Is Gonna Come" lyrics © Abkco  
Music, Inc

## "Daughters" by John Mayer

I know a girl  
She puts the color inside of my world  
But, she's just like a maze  
Where all of the walls all continually change  
And I've done all I can  
To stand on her steps with my heart in my  
hand  
Now I'm starting to see  
Maybe it's got nothing to do with me  
Fathers, be good to your daughters  
Daughters will love like you do  
Girls become lovers who turn into mothers  
So mothers be good to your daughters, too

Oh, you see that skin?  
It's the same she's been standing in  
Since the day she saw him walking away  
Now she's left cleaning up the mess he  
made  
So fathers, be good to your daughters  
Daughters will love like you do  
Girls become lovers who turn into mothers  
So mothers be good to your daughters, too

Boys, you can break  
You'll find out how much they can take  
Boys will be strong  
And boys soldier on  
But boys would be gone without warmth  
from  
A woman's good, good heart  
On behalf of every man  
Looking out for every girl  
You are the God and weight of her world  
So fathers, be good to your daughters  
Daughters will love like you do  
Girls become lovers who turn into mothers  
So mothers be good to your daughters, too  
So mothers be good to your daughters, too  
So mothers be good to your daughters, too

Source: LyricFind  
Songwriters: John Clayton Mayer  
"Daughters" lyrics © Reach Music  
Publishing

## **"Brown Sugar" by The Rolling Stones**

Gold Coast slave ship bound for cotton fields  
Sold in the market down in New Orleans  
Scarred old slaver knows he's doin' all right  
Hear him whip the women just around midnight

Brown Sugar, how come you taste so good  
Brown Sugar, just like a young girl should

Drums beatin' cold, English blood runs hot  
Lady of the house wonderin' when it's gonna stop  
House boy knows that he's doin' all right  
You should have heard him just around midnight

Brown Sugar, how come you taste so good  
Brown Sugar, just like a young girl should

Brown Sugar, how come you dance so good  
Brown Sugar, just like a black girl should

I bet your mama was a Cajun Queen,  
And all her boyfriends were sweet sixteen  
I'm no school boy but I know what I like  
You should have heard them just around midnight

Brown Sugar, how come you taste so good  
Brown Sugar, just like a black girl should

I said, yeah, yeah, yeah, wooo  
How come you, how come you dance so good  
Yeah, yeah, yeah, wooo  
Just like a, just like a black girl should  
Yeah, yeah, yeah, wooo

Source: LyricFind  
Songwriters: Keith Richards / Mick Jagger  
Brown Sugar lyrics © Abkco Music, Inc

## Related Tools:

### Similar tools:

- [Changed or Not?](#)
- [Music and Memories](#)
- [We Americans by The Avett Brothers \(song\)](#)