SYNTHESIS THROUGH SONG
LESSON PLAN

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
© Audiam, Inc
“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

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)