

Music: A Sign of the Times

Overview

Description

Victor Hugo once said, “Music expresses that which cannot be put into words and cannot remain silent.” The most memorable songs are the ones that capture an unspoken truth and make people see their world in a different light. Yet the truths needing this intense exposure are often a product of the times in which they are generated, making music a lens for observing a generation’s triumphs and trials, almost as if through a time capsule. Therefore, this assignment asks students to examine two different songs, one a remake of the other, to uncover the “truths” captured by that songwriter about his era.

Final Product: Students will write a 3-5 page paper comparing the purpose, message, time period, influencing events, and social considerations for two songs, Stevie Wonder’s “Pastime Paradise” and Coolio’s “Gangsta’s Paradise.” Specifically, they will research the factors that influenced each song’s conception and the social statement made about its time and place. They will then use the results of their research to compare the “who, what, when, where, how, and why” behind the creation of the songs.

Subject

Social Studies

Task Level

Grades 10-12

Objectives

Students will:

- Critically read the lyrics of each song and any supporting texts that provide insight into its creation.
- Identify the social context of the song and draw inferences about prevailing public opinions or concerns.
- Analyze the culture, climate, and concerns that may have influenced the creation of the song.
- Analyze the effectiveness of the songs’ purposes, messages and lasting impacts.
- Discuss effective research practices by consulting online sources and/or the library.

- Evaluate sources for quality of content, validity, credibility, and relevance.
- Participate in activities that will prepare them for a comparative analysis.
- Write a multi-paragraph essay with a clear, organized focus, effective introduction, conclusion, and thesis, and a convincing command of the concepts associated with a comparative essay.
- Appropriately cite sources used.

Preparation

- Obtain audio versions of *Pastime Paradise* and *Gangsta's Paradise* to play for the students. These can usually be found easily on YouTube, iTunes, or other music program.
- Read the Instructor Task Information and the Student Notes.
- Prepare student copies of the Student Notes pages.
- Review the material provided within the handouts, and develop any additional discussion questions or activities as needed.
- Find and distribute any materials about the social events surrounding the release of the two songs in 1976 and 1995, if desired.
- Prepare to model basic comparative analysis essay construction and source evaluation as needed.

Prior Knowledge

Students should be familiar with the following:

- The idea that music is a product of its time, place, culture, surrounding events, and influential factors and that writers create songs to make social statements and increase public awareness.
- Appropriate reading strategies to decipher a text's meaning and understand how these same strategies apply to determining a text's purpose and impact.
- The basic knowledge behind good practices for conducting research.
- Writing an essay utilizing word processing software with spell check, grammar check, and any other necessary elements.

Key Concepts and Terms

- Culture
- Ethnicity
- Governmental response
- Imagery
- Influence

- Justice
- Philosophical and intellectual influence
- Political conflict
- Racial prejudice
- Social structure and strata
- Socioeconomics
- Viewpoint, beliefs, and bias
- Writer's purpose and message

Time Frame

This assignment will require approximately ten 60-minute periods to complete. A 60-minute class period will be required to introduce the assignment and discuss the nature of songs as political and social instruments. On Day 2, distribute and discuss the *Pastime Paradise* handout, considering its meaning and the factors that influenced its creation. Students will then answer Reflections Questions 1-6 and review the basic principles of conducting research and the kind of information students should look for as evidence. For homework, students should complete Reflection Questions 7-9. Day 3 begins with a collaborative review of the homework and the individual completion of Analysis questions 10-14. On Day 4, discuss the *Gangsta's Paradise* handout, considering its meaning and the factors that influenced its creation. Students should answer Reflection Questions 1-8 and discuss their answers. For homework, students will complete Reflection Questions 9-10. On Day 5, after reviewing the homework collaboratively, students will individually complete Analysis questions 11-15.

For Day 6, the class will complete the *Sample Song Research* handout and its accompanying Reflection Questions. Ask students to check the depth of their research and spend the remainder of the day collecting additional research. Day 7 consists of the individual completion of the *Comparative Questions Prompt* handout. On Day 8, read and discuss the *William Blake and Radiohead Comparative Analysis* handout as a group. Discuss the content you expect them to include in constructing their comparative essays and how their essays will differ from the provided model. Each student will then complete a rough draft of their essay.

Students will need two additional class periods to engage in the writing process: drafting the essay, reviewing it with a peer, and composing a final draft. This assignment can be modified to meet the needs of different classroom schedules and student ability levels.

Instructional Plan

Getting Started

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Critically read the lyrics of each song and any supporting texts that provide insight into its creation.
- Identify the social context of the song and draw inferences about prevailing public opinions or concerns.
- Analyze the culture, climate, and concerns that may have influenced the creation of the song.

Procedure

1. As a class, discuss the assignment and the nature of songs as products of their time and social surroundings.
2. Distribute *Pastime Paradise* by Stevie Wonder. Listen to the song, if possible, and discuss its meaning and the factors that influenced its creation.
3. Have students answer Reflections Questions 1-6 and discuss their answers with the class.
4. Review the basic principles of conducting research and what kinds of information students should look for as evidence.
5. For homework, ask students to complete Reflection Questions 7-9 in detail.
6. Review the results of the homework collaboratively.
7. Ask students to complete Analysis questions 10-14 on their own. Discuss results as needed.
8. Distribute *Gangsta's Paradise* by Coolio. Listen to the song, if possible, and discuss its meaning and the factors that influenced its creation.
9. Have students answer Reflections Questions 1-8 and discuss their answers with the class.
10. For homework, ask students to complete Reflection Questions 9-10 in detail.
11. Review the results of the homework collaboratively.
12. Ask students to complete Analysis questions 11-15 on their own. Discuss results as needed.

Investigating

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Analyze the effectiveness of the songs' purposes, messages, and lasting impacts.
- Discuss effective research practices by consulting online sources and/or the library.
- Evaluate sources for quality of content, validity, credibility, and relevance.
- Participate in activities that will prepare them for a comparative analysis.

Procedure

1. Collaboratively complete the *Sample Song Research* handout and its accompanying Reflection Questions.
2. Ask students to check the depth of their own research. Allow students to spend the remainder of the day and their homework time collecting additional research as needed.
3. Have students individually complete the *Comparative Questions Prompt* handout. Review any unanswered questions as a group.
4. As a group, read and discuss the *William Blake and Radiohead Comparative Analysis* handout. Make sure to thoroughly answer all of the questions.
5. Discuss the construction of a comparative essay, the content you expect them to include and how their essay will differ from the provided model.
6. Distribute additional models if needed.
7. Wrap up any necessary discussion.

Drawing Conclusions

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Write a multi-paragraph essay with a clear, organized focus, effective introduction, conclusion, and thesis, and a convincing command of the concepts associated with a comparative essay.
- Appropriately cite sources used.

Procedure

1. Have students complete their rough drafts.

2. Set up the room so that following the completion of the draft, students can share in pairs or small groups and receive advice on the content of the essay and their writing.
3. Be prepared to offer advice on areas needing attention following each round of peer review.
4. After the revision process, have students turn in a final essay.
5. Be prepared to revisit the ideas behind song influences and comparative analysis as necessary.

Scaffolding/Instructional Support

The goal of scaffolding is to provide support to encourage student success, independence, and self-management. Instructors can use these suggestions, in part or all together, to meet diverse student needs. The more skilled the student, however, the less scaffolding that he or she will need. Some examples of scaffolding that could apply to this assignment include:

- Provide an additional exemplar paper and instruction on what constitutes exemplary writing.
- Allow students to work in pairs when practicing the analysis components.
- Provide opportunities for students to receive feedback on their essays and write multiple drafts.
- Provide instruction for students who need help with research or with answering the conceptual questions.
- Consider using different music samples for comparing songs that might be more relevant to students.

Solutions

The information below is intended to help you assess students' final work products. It may not represent all possible strategies and ideas. The accompanying scoring guide provides specific examples of ways a student might demonstrate content understanding and mastery of cross-disciplinary skills.

Necessary Elements

- Effective and thoughtful demonstration of course concepts and their connection to the songs.
- Strong, clear, interesting, and useful thesis statement.
- Clear and detailed arguments and text support for the handouts and the essay.
- Logical organization of the essay.

Key Connections

- Clear understanding of research and analysis.
- Clear understanding of each song's message, purpose, and impact.
- Well-developed reasoning as to the "who, what, where, when, how, and why" of each song's construction and social contribution.

Common Misconceptions

- This assignment is not a reflection of how the student feels about the song. Rather the goal is to analyze the song's construction and longevity. The student may or may not be a part of a song's "audience," but he or she should still be able to objectively consider whether or not the writer successfully achieved his creation goals.
- This assignment is also not a summary of the songs. While students will want to say what each song is about, that portion of the paper is only meant to describe the message and should not be the paper's focus. This resulting essay should analyze the songs, their influences, and their similarities and differences. Instructors should check frequently to make sure the students understand the difference.

TCCRS Cross-Disciplinary Standards Addressed

Performance Expectation	Getting Started	Investigating	Drawing Conclusions
<i>I. Key Cognitive Skills</i>			
A.1. Engage in scholarly inquiry and dialogue.	✓	✓	✓
B.1. Consider arguments and conclusions of self and others.	✓	✓	✓
B.2. Construct well-reasoned arguments to explain phenomena, validate conjectures, or support positions.	✓	✓	✓
D.1. Self-monitor learning needs and seek assistance when needed.	✓	✓	✓
D.2. Use study habits necessary to manage academic pursuits and requirements.	✓	✓	✓
D.3. Strive for accuracy and precision.	✓	✓	✓
D.4. Persevere to complete and master tasks.	✓	✓	✓
E.1. Work independently.		✓	✓
E.2. Work collaboratively.	✓	✓	✓
F.1. Attribute ideas to source materials and people.	✓	✓	✓
F.2. Evaluate sources for quality of content, validity, credibility, and relevance.		✓	
F.4. Understand and adhere to ethical codes of conduct.			✓
<i>II. Foundational Skills</i>			
A.3. Identify the intended purpose and audience of the text.	✓	✓	✓
A.4. Identify the key information and supporting details.	✓	✓	✓
A.5. Analyze textual information critically.	✓	✓	✓
A.6. Annotate, summarize, paraphrase, and outline texts when appropriate.	✓	✓	✓
A.7. Adapt reading strategies according to structure of texts.	✓	✓	✓
A.8. Connect reading to historical and current events and personal interest.	✓	✓	✓

B.1. Write clearly and coherently using standard writing conventions.			✓
B.3. Compose and revise drafts.			✓
C.4. Evaluate the validity and reliability of sources.		✓	✓
C.5. Synthesize and organize information effectively.			✓
C.6. Design and present an effective product.			✓
E.1. Use technology to gather information.		✓	
E.4. Use technology appropriately.		✓	✓

TCCRS Social Studies Standards Addressed

Performance Expectation	Getting Started	Investigating	Drawing Conclusions
<i>I. Interrelated Disciplines and Skills</i>			
A.2. Analyze the interaction between human communities and the environment.	✓	✓	✓
A.3. Analyze how physical and cultural processes have shaped human communities over time.	✓	✓	✓
B.2. Identify and evaluate sources and patterns of change and continuity across time and place.	✓	✓	✓
B.3. Analyze causes and effects of major political, economic and social changes in U.S. and world history.	✓	✓	✓
C.2. Evaluate changes in the functions and structures of government across time.	✓	✓	✓
E.2. Define the concept of socialization and analyze the role socialization plays in human development and behavior.	✓	✓	✓
E.4. Identify and evaluate the sources and consequences of social conflict.	✓	✓	✓
<i>II. Diverse Human Perspectives and Experiences</i>			
A.2. Evaluate the experiences and contributions of diverse groups to multicultural societies.	✓	✓	✓
B.1. Explain and evaluate the concepts of race, ethnicity, and nationalism.	✓	✓	✓

B.4. Evaluate how major philosophical and intellectual concepts influence human behavior or identity.	✓	✓	✓
B.6. Analyze how individual and group identities are established and change over time.	✓	✓	✓
<i>III. Interdependence of Global Communities</i>			
A.3. Analyze how and why diverse communities interact and become dependent on each other.	✓	✓	✓
B.1. Apply social studies methodologies to compare societies and cultures.	✓	✓	✓
<i>IV. Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation of Information</i>			
A.1. Identify and analyze the main idea(s) and point(s)-of-view in sources.	✓	✓	✓
A.2. Situate an informational source in its appropriate contexts.	✓	✓	✓
A.3. Evaluate sources from multiple perspectives.		✓	✓
A.4. Understand the differences between a primary and secondary source and use each appropriately to conduct research and construct arguments.		✓	✓
A.5. Read narratives critically.	✓	✓	✓
A.6. Read research data critically.		✓	
B.1. Use established research methodologies.		✓	
B.3. Gather, organize, and display the results of data and research.		✓	✓
B.4. Identify and collect sources.		✓	
D.1. Construct a thesis that is supported by evidence.			✓
<i>V. Effective Communication</i>			
A.2. Use conventions of standard written English.			✓
B.1. Attribute ideas and information to source materials and authors.			✓

TEKS Standards Addressed

Music: A Sign of the Times - Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS): Social Studies, United States History Studies Since 1877

113.41.c.9. History. The student understands the impact of the American civil rights movement. The student is expected to:

113.41.c.9.A. trace the historical development of the civil rights movement in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries, including the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 19th amendments;

113.41.c.9.B. describe the roles of political organizations that promoted civil rights, including ones from African American, Chicano, American Indian, women's, and other civil rights movements;

113.41.c.9.D. compare and contrast the approach taken by some civil rights groups such as the Black Panthers with the nonviolent approach of Martin Luther King Jr.;

113.41.c.9.F. describe presidential actions and congressional votes to address minority rights in the United States, including desegregation of the armed forces, the Civil Rights acts of 1957 and 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and

113.41.c.9.H. evaluate changes and events in the United States that have resulted from the civil rights movement, including increased participation of minorities in the political process.

113.41.c.10. History. The student understands the impact of political, economic, and social factors in the U.S. role in the world from the 1970s through 1990. The student is expected to:

113.41.c.10.F. describe significant societal issues of this time period.

113.41.c.11. History. The student understands the emerging political, economic, and social issues of the United States from the 1990s into the 21st century. The student is expected to:

113.41.c.11.B. identify significant social and political advocacy organizations, leaders, and issues across the political spectrum; and

113.41.c.11.E. discuss the historical significance of the 2008 presidential election.

113.41.c.14. Geography. The student understands the relationship between population growth and modernization on the physical environment. The student is expected to:

113.41.c.14.A. identify the effects of population growth and distribution on the physical environment.

113.41.c.17. Economics. The student understands the economic effects of World War II and the Cold War. The student is expected to:

113.41.c.17.A. describe the economic effects of World War II on the home front such as the end of the Great Depression, rationing, and increased opportunity for women and minority employment;

113.41.c.17.B. identify the causes of prosperity in the 1950s, including the Baby Boom and the impact of the GI Bill (Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944), and the effects of prosperity in the 1950s such as increased consumption and the growth of agriculture and business; and

113.41.c.17.D. identify actions of government and the private sector such as the Great Society, affirmative action, and Title IX to create economic opportunities for citizens and analyze the unintended consequences of each.

113.41.c.21. Government. The student understands the impact of constitutional issues on American society. The student is expected to:

113.41.c.21.B. discuss historical reasons why the constitution has been amended; and

113.41.c.21.C. evaluate constitutional change in terms of strict construction versus judicial interpretation.

113.41.c.23. Citizenship. The student understands efforts to expand the democratic process. The student is expected to:

113.41.c.23.A. identify and analyze methods of expanding the right to participate in the democratic process, including lobbying, non-violent protesting, litigation, and amendments to the U.S. Constitution; and

113.41.c.23.B. evaluate various means of achieving equality of political rights, including the 19th, 24th, and 26th amendments and congressional acts such as the American Indian Citizenship Act of 1924.

113.41.c.24. Citizenship. The student understands the importance of effective leadership in a constitutional republic. The student is expected to:

113.41.c.24.A. describe qualities of effective leadership.

113.41.c.25. Culture. The student understands the relationship between the arts and the times during which they were created. The student is expected to:

113.41.c.25A. describe how the characteristics and issues in U.S. history have been reflected in various genres of art, music, film, and literature;

113.41.c.25.B. describe both the positive and negative impacts of significant examples of cultural movements in art, music, and literature such as Tin Pan Alley, the Harlem Renaissance, the Beat Generation, rock and roll, the Chicano Mural Movement, and country and western music on American society;

113.41.c.25.C. identify the impact of popular American culture on the rest of the world over time; and

113.41.c.25.D. analyze the global diffusion of American culture through the entertainment industry via various media.

113.41.c.26. Culture. The student understands how people from various groups contribute to our national identity. The student is expected to:

113.41.c.26.A. explain actions taken by people to expand economic opportunities and political rights, including those for racial, ethnic, and religious minorities as well as women, in American society;

113.41.c.26.C. explain how the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic, gender, and religious groups shape American culture.

113.41.c.28. Science, technology, and society. The student understands the influence of scientific discoveries, technological innovations, and the free enterprise system on the standard of living in the United States. The student is expected to:

113.41.c.28.A. analyze how scientific discoveries, technological innovations, and the application of these by the free enterprise system, including those in transportation and communication, improve the standard of living in the United States.

113.41.c.29. Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to:

113.41.c.29.A. use a variety of both primary and secondary valid sources to acquire information and to analyze and answer historical questions;

113.41.c.29.B. analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing and contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations, making predictions, drawing inferences, and drawing conclusions;

113.41.c.29.C. understand how historians interpret the past (historiography) and how their interpretations of history may change over time;

113.41.c.29.D. use the process of historical inquiry to research, interpret, and use multiple types of sources of evidence;

113.41.c.29.E. evaluate the validity of a source based on language, corroboration with other sources, and information about the author, including points of view, frames of reference, and historical context;

113.41.c.29 identify bias in written, oral, and visual material;

113.41.c.29.G. identify and support with historical evidence a point of view on a social studies issue or event; and

113.41.c.29.H. use appropriate skills to analyze and interpret social studies information such as maps, graphs, presentations, speeches, lectures, and political cartoons.

113.41.c.30. Social studies skills. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. The student is expected to:

113.41.c.30.A. create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information;

113.41.c.30.B. use correct social studies terminology to explain historical concepts; and

113.41.c.30.C. use different forms of media to convey information, including written to visual and statistical to written or visual, using available computer software as appropriate.

113.41.c.32. Social studies skills. The student uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings. The student is expected to:

113.41.c.32.A. use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution; and

113.41.c.32.B. use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision.

Music: A Sign of the Times

Introduction

Victor Hugo once said, “Music expresses that which cannot be put into words and cannot remain silent.” The most memorable songs are the ones that capture an unspoken truth and make people see their world in a different light. Yet the truths needing this intense exposure are often a product of the times in which they are generated, making music a lens for observing a generation’s triumphs and trials, almost as if through a time capsule. Therefore, this assignment asks you to examine two different songs, one a remake of the other, to uncover the “truths” captured by that songwriter about his era.

Ultimately, you will write a 3-5 page paper comparing the purpose, message, time period, influencing events, and social considerations for Stevie Wonder’s “Pastime Paradise” and Coolio’s “Gangsta’s Paradise.” By researching each song and its release date, you will answer “who, what, when, where, why, and how” to reveal a comparative analysis between the life and times of 1976 and 1995.

Directions

Getting Started

1. As a class, discuss the assignment and the nature of songs as products of their time and social surroundings.
2. Discuss *Pastime Paradise* by Stevie Wonder. Consider its meaning and the factors that influenced its creation.
3. Answer Reflections Questions 1-6 and discuss your answers with the class.
4. Review the basic principles of conducting research and what kinds of information you should use as evidence.
5. For homework, complete Reflection Questions 7-9 in detail.
6. Review the results of the homework collaboratively.
7. Complete Analysis questions 10-14 on your own.
8. Discuss *Gangsta’s Paradise* by Coolio. Consider its meaning and the factors that influenced its creation.
9. Answer Reflections Questions 1-8, and discuss your answers with the class.
10. For homework, complete Reflection Questions 9-10 in detail.
11. Review the results of the homework collaboratively.

12. Complete Analysis questions 11-15 on your own.

Investigating

1. Collaboratively complete the *Sample Song Research* handout and its accompanying Reflection Questions.
2. Check the depth of your own research and collect additional research for the remainder of the day.
3. Individually complete the *Comparative Questions Prompt* handout.
4. As a group, read and discuss the *William Blake and Radiohead Comparative Analysis* handout and thoroughly answer all of the questions.
5. Discuss the construction of a comparative essay, the content you need to include and how your essay will differ from the provided model.
6. Wrap up any necessary discussion.

Drawing Conclusions

1. Complete your rough drafts.
2. Complete the peer review process with your peers, being open to what your fellow writers have to say and practicing the conventions of constructive and respectful feedback.
3. After revising your drafts, turn in a final essay.

*Pastime Paradise***By Stevie Wonder, 1976**

They've been spending most their lives,
Living in a pastime paradise.
Been spending most their lives,
Living in a pastime paradise.
Been wasting most their time,
Glorifying days long gone behind.
Been wasting most their days,
In remembrance of ignorance oldest praise.
Tell me, who of them will come to be?
How many of them are you and me?

Dissipation; Race Relations; Consolation; Segregation; Dispensation; Isolation;
Exploitation; Mutilation; Mutation; Miscreation; Confirmation to the evils of the world

Been spending most their lives,
Living in a future paradise.
Been spending most their lives,
Living in a future paradise.
They've been looking in their minds,
For the day that sorrow's lost from time.
They keep telling of the day,
When the Savior of love will come to stay.
Tell me, who of them will come to be?
How many of them are you and me?

Proclamation of Race Relations; Consolation; Integration; Verification of Revelations;
Acclamation; World Salvation; Vibration; Simulation; Confirmation to the peace of the
world

Been spending most their lives,
Living in a pastime paradise.
Been spending most their lives,
Living in a pastime paradise.
They've been spending most their lives,
Living in a future paradise.
They've been spending most their lives,
Living in a future paradise.
We've been spending too much of our lives,
Living in a pastime paradise.

Let's start living our lives,
Living for the future paradise.
Praise to our lives,
Living for the future paradise.
Shame to anyone's life,
Living in a pastime paradise.

Reflection Questions

1. Who is “they” in this song? How do you know?

2. What is a pastime paradise?

3. What is the purpose of the one-word statements or phrases in stanzas 2 and 4?

4. What is the future paradise?

5. What messages, both stated and unstated, does this song convey?

6. State the overall purpose of this song. What clues from the text support your conclusion?

Complete the next section on your own as homework:

7. Using the Internet, discover what was going on in 1976 that relates to this song. List three events or facts from this time period, along with the source you used for information.

Event/Fact	Source
1.	
2.	
3.	

8. Decide which of the words or phrases in stanzas 2 and 4 you think are the most powerful. Choose two and research the background on them. What can you find out about those concepts? How do the concepts affect the song?

Word/Phrase	Supporting Information	Source	Relationship to the Song

9. How do the following concepts apply to this song?

Concepts	Application	Proof
Culture		
Ethnicity		
Multicultural society		
Philosophical influence		
Political climate		
Prejudice		
Social conflict		
Socioeconomics		
Stereotyping		

Analysis

10. Based on your research, what do you think this song was trying to say?

11. Do you think the song succeeded in its purpose? Why or why not?

12. How does this song relate to current events?

13. What is the lasting impact of this song? Why are we still talking about it today?

14. What aspects of your research will be most helpful to you in proving your statements in questions 10-13?

Gangsta's Paradise By Coolio, 1995

As I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I take a look at my life and realize there's nothin' left.
'Cause I've been blastin' and laughin' so long,
That even my momma thinks that my mind is gone.
But I ain't never crossed a man that didn't deserve it.
Me be treated like a punk? You know that's unheard of.
You betta watch how ya talking,
And where ya walking,
Or you and your homies might be lined in chalk.
I really hate to trip, but I gotta, loc'.
As they croak, I see myself in the pistol smoke, fool.
I'm the kinda G that little homies wanna be like,
On my knees in the night,
Sayin' prayers in the street light.

1-Been spending most their lives living in a gangsta's paradise (2)
Keep spending most our lives living in a gangsta's paradise (2)

They got this situation, they got me facin'.
I can't live a normal life; I was raised by the state,
So I gotta be down with the hood team,
Too much television watchin', got me chasin' dreams.
I'm a educated fool with money on my mind,
Got my ten in my hand and a gleam in my eye.
I'm a loc'd out gangsta, set trippin' banger,
And my homies is down, so don't arouse my anger, fool.
Death ain't nothing but a heart beat away.
I'm living life do or die, what can I say?
I'm twenty-three now, but will I live to see twenty-four?
The way things is going I don't know.

2-Tell me why are we so blind to see,
That the ones we hurt are you and me?
(rpt 1)

Power and the money, money and the power,
Minute after minute, hour after hour,
Everybody's running, but half of them ain't lookin'.
What's going on in the kitchen,
But I don't know what's cookin'.
They say I gotta learn,
But nobody's here to teach me.
If they can't understand it, how can they reach me?
I guess they can't. I guess they won't. I guess they front.
That's why I know my life is out o' luck, fool!
(rpt 1, 2, 2)

Reflection Questions

1. To what is the first line referring?
2. Summarize the first stanza. What is it saying?
3. What is the message in the stanza beginning with “They got this situation...”?
4. How would you summarize the stanza that states “Power and the money...”?
5. What is a gangsta’s paradise?
6. What seem to be the major components that make up a gangsta’s paradise?
7. What messages, both stated and unstated, does this song convey?
8. State the overall purpose of this song. What clues from the text support your conclusion?

Complete the next section on your own as homework:

9. Using the Internet, discover what was going on in 1995 that relates to this song. List three events or facts from this time period, along with the source you used for information.

Event/Fact	Source
1.	
2.	
3.	

10. How do the following concepts apply to this song?

Concepts	Application	Proof
Culture		
Ethnicity		
Multicultural society		
Philosophical influence		
Political climate		
Prejudice		
Social conflict		
Socioeconomics		
Stereotyping		

Analysis

11. Based on your research, what do you think this song was trying to say?
12. Do you think the song succeeded in its purpose? Why or why not?
13. How does this song relate to current events?
14. What is the lasting impact of this song? Why are we still talking about it today?
15. What aspects of your research will be most helpful to you in proving your statements in questions 11-14?

Sample Song Research

“Smells Like Teen Spirit” by Nirvana

(<http://rock.nuvvo.com/lesson/5862-famous-musical-pieces-smells-like-teen-spirit>)

As clichéd as it sounds, this song truly did define a generation and the whole grunge rock movement. It was dubbed "the anthem for apathetic kids" for Generation X and brought alternative rock into mainstream music.

Information

Written and performed by: Nirvana

Album: Nevermind

Released on: September 1991

Band members:

Kurt Cobain - singer, guitarist

Krist Novoselic - bass

Dave Grohl - drummer

The Song's Inspiration: *The Pixies*

In a 1994 *Rolling Stone* magazine interview, Kurt Cobain, the songwriter for the song, said he tried to create a song that would sound like one of his favorite bands—The Pixies. "I was trying to write the ultimate pop song. I was basically trying to rip off the Pixies. I have to admit it. When I heard the Pixies for the first time, I connected with that band so heavily that I should have been in that band—or at least a Pixies cover band. We used their sense of dynamics, being soft and quiet and then loud and hard."

A Ridiculous Song

Today, people around the world hold this song in high regard. But in its early stages, Krist, the bassist, had dismissed the song, calling it "ridiculous." At the time it simply consisted of the main riff and the chorus melody. Cobain made the band play this riff for over an hour, and bassist Krist suggested that they slow it down.

Smells Like Deodorant!

Cobain decided to call the song "Smells Like Teen Spirit" during a conversation with his friend Kathleen Hanna—a singer from the punk band Bikini Kill. She had spray painted "Kurt Smells Like Teen Spirit" on his wall. Cobain thought this was a slogan which had a revolutionary meaning. But Hanna actually meant that he smelled like Teen Spirit, a deodorant that was marketed to teen girls at the time. Cobain had no idea of this until months after the single was released.

Musical Analysis

For those of you who know a little about music theory, you might find this section of interest. The song was written in the key of F minor, and the main guitar riff uses four basic power chords: F5, Bb5, Ab5, and Db5. These chords were double-tracked so it would sound more powerful. The main riff in this song was similar to a 1976 song by Boston, "More Than a Feeling." Even Cobain admitted that the song "was such a clichéd riff. It was so close to a Boston riff or 'Louie Louie.'"

The song begins with Cobain only, and distortion is added when the other band members join Kurt's strumming. This song really did emulate Kurt's original intention—to be soft and quiet, then loud and hard. By the end of the song, Cobain's voice becomes extremely strained and his voice is almost shot from the force of yelling. The song ends with guitar feedback.

Lyrical Analysis

The words sung are actually quite difficult to understand at first. Widely regarded as a teenage revolution anthem, author Michael Azzerad has said this song is "a sarcastic reaction to the idea of actually having a revolution, yet it also embraces the idea." "The entire song is made up of contradictory ideas. It's just making fun of the thought of having a revolution. But it's a nice thought." — *Kurt Cobain*

"Just seeing Kurt write the lyrics to a song five minutes before he first sings them, you just kind of find it a little bit hard to believe that the song has a lot to say about something. *You need syllables to fill up this space or you need something that rhymes.*" — *Drummer Dave Grohl*

The chorus, which says "Here we are now—entertain us!" was a phrase which Cobain often said when he entered parties in order to break the ice. This song and its meaning has a punk anger and feelings of alienation—but at the same time it also has catchy pop hooks and riffs. This contradiction of ideas is probably the reason why the song managed to gain so much popularity while still being so far away from the typical notion of what "popular" was at the time.

Impact on Music History

The band felt tortured to play this song over and over again once it had become popular. Uncomfortable with how successful it had become, they often excluded from playing it at their concerts. By 1994, Kurt's thrust into popularity and his natural instincts to avoid it had collided. He killed himself in 1994 by shooting himself in the head.

"Smells Like Teen Spirit" was incredibly successful—both by critics and by audiences. It allowed for alternative music to enter mainstream popularity. It has been named one of the best pop songs of all time. It started a new generation of young kids with a type of music which would appeal to them. It made the "grunge" rock sound from Seattle popular across the country. You can watch the original music video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPQR-OsH0RQ>.

Reflection Questions

1. This sample offers an opinion. What is it?
2. What different aspects of this one song does it discuss?
3. How does the author use research?
4. If you had to "grade" this paper, what grade would you give it? Why?
5. How does this sample relate to your current assignment?
6. What strategies will you want to use?
7. Which ones won't apply?

Comparative Questions Prompt

Directions

Independently answer the following questions. Use your response as the basis for your comparative essay.

1. Look at each of the songs we examined. Are they intended for the same audience? Why or why not?
2. Compare the purpose for each argument. How were they similar? Different?
3. Compare the way each one presented its message. What was similar about each presentation? What was different?
4. Now consider the content of each song. How would you characterize each one? How were they similar? Different?
5. Which song is the most effective? Why?
6. Which song do you like more? Why?
7. Are your answers to #5 and #6 similar or different? What does that mean?
8. What conclusions can you draw about song purpose and construction?
9. How do songs reflect their times?
10. Which of the two songs do you think has had a bigger impact? Why?

William Blake and Radiohead Comparative Analysis

Posted on: <http://www.unc.edu/~elgoodin/ComparativeAnalysis.html>

William Blake's poem, "To Tirzah," parallels Radiohead's song, *Prove Yourself*. The lyrics of the song clearly exemplify the tone of the poem. "To Tirzah" is a poem about life and death after Jesus comes to Earth to save humankind from sin, while *Prove Yourself* is a song doubting the value of life. Both question the purpose of life and death and reflect on human worth.

From the title of Radiohead's *Prove Yourself*, it is apparent the song will be about human worth and meaning. People search for ways to make themselves unique or special, but why is this necessary? Many people try so hard to be the best possible in their short lifetime. Why? From the first line, the lyricist, Thom Yorke, is noticeably someone who is not pleased with his life and feels it would be easier to give up. In Blake's "To Tirzah," the first lines ignite a similar mood. "Whate'er is born of mortal birth/Must be consumed with the earth," implies Blake's feelings towards life and its triviality.

The second line of the song reiterates the writer's intentions to end life. The gun symbolizes death and suicide. However, it can also represent sin, the sin of killing. It may also infer that there is nowhere he feels he can go without sinning. Sin is also a major part of the poem. The story of Adam and Eve, represented as Shame and Pride in the poem, is indirectly told. Adam and Eve, the ancestors of humankind, sinned and were therefore banished from the Garden of Eden. They had to learn to work and suffer as a consequence.

In *Prove Yourself* the line, "Hooked back up to the cathode ray," is referring to the writer showcasing himself and highlighting his talents. In order to continue living, Yorke feels he has to prove his worth. Then, when he writes that he is better off dead, he is referring to the emptiness of life once again, directly paralleling the meaning behind the poem. The bursts of music energy occur at lines, "Prove yourself/Prove yourself/Prove yourself" to create the idea that in order to be anything special, a person must stand out. The song fluctuates back and forth between hopelessness and the need to "prove yourself."

Ironically, the rhythm and overall music sounds mostly upbeat and happier after the first verse, while the lyrics imply otherwise. It is deceiving and can mislead the listener. The poem exemplifies deception, as well. In Blake's illustration, the word "deceiving [sic]" is spelled incorrectly. Also, Blake writes about the unreliable attitudes people exhibit with phrases like "cruelty didst mould my heart," "false self-deceiving tears," "blind my nostrils, eyes, and ears," "close my tongue in senseless clay," and "mortal life betray." These lines demonstrate the trickery of living a mortal life on earth.

In the second verse of *Prove Yourself*, Yorke continues with the determined mindset that he can overcome life. He wants to do what he can to keep going, but he already starts questioning his ability to persist by the next line. In "To Tirzah," the line, "bowed in the morning, in the evening died," demonstrates the lyricist's frustration in figuring out a solution. He comes up with an idea, but before long it fades and dies, like the hope of a new day in the morning and disappointment and surrendering at night.

The next line, “I work, I bleed, I beg, and I pray” parallels Blake’s line “the sexes rose to work and weep.” When Adam and Eve sinned, they were forced to survive alone, and it was not easy. Cruelty is mentioned in the poem, and the song also illustrates the cruelty and hardships in life. The words, “I’m better off dead,” come up again in the song. It all comes down to the fact that life is pointless. However, it changes direction again when words, “Prove yourself,” are repeated.

Just as the poem, the song ends with a question. In the poem, “Then what have I to do with thee?” demonstrates an apathetic tone and questions the need to know more. While Jesus’ grace and mercy is wiping away sin, the question is continuing to be asked. The movement of the poem shows that, at first, man is wondering what his purpose is on Earth, and by the end, man questions the purpose of life after death. Radiohead's song ends with “Why?” emphasizing the uselessness of proving yourself to anyone, with the belief that life is too short to try.

Blake and Radiohead have similar views and opinions about life, as demonstrated in the comparative analysis. The song and poem are both short and to the point, highlighting the brevity of life and ultimately life’s worthlessness.

Reflection Questions

1. What two entities does this article compare?
2. What are the stated similarities?
3. What are the differences?
4. If you had to “grade” this paper, what grade would you give it? Why?
5. How does this sample relate to your current assignment?
6. What strategies will you want to use?
7. Which ones won’t apply?