

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

Civil War Music—Irish Folk Songs

Grade - 7-8

Length of class period – **one class period**

Inquiry – (What essential question are students answering, what problem are they solving, or what decision are they making?)

What was life like for Irish-American soldiers during the American Civil War?

Objectives (What content and skills do you expect students to learn from this lesson?)

- **The students will analyze traditional Irish folk songs.**
- **The students will describe and make inferences about the conditions and experiences of the soldiers before and during the American Civil War.**

Materials (What primary sources or local resources are the basis for this lesson? – (please attach)

See the attached list of materials and resources.

Song Analysis Worksheet

General Information:

Title of Song: _____

Where was the song written? _____

When was it written? _____ Author: _____

Observations/Descriptions/Analysis:

What is the mood of the song? What emotion(s) does it evoke? _____

Why do you think this recording was made? _____

What audience is the song intended for? _____

Describe / Explain what this song said about life for Irish Immigrants or life in general, in the United States during the American Civil War.

Is there a message the song is trying to convey? If so, what? _____

Historical Significance:

What historical event does this song portray? _____

When did the event take place? _____

Where did this event take place? _____

Who were the major participants in this event? _____

What was its significance relative to the American Civil War? _____

How well did the song reflect the meaning and feelings of the American Civil War? _____

Inferences:

Write down three inferences about life during the time period of the American Civil War.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Questions:

Write down three questions you still have after analyzing these songs.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

The recordings and lyrics that I used for this lesson came from the following two CD's:

- **Gallant Sons of Erin: No Irish Need Apply.** Copyright: 2003, Gallant Sons Music. Produced by Rand Heath and William Meehan. Recorded and mixed by Randy Heath at Waxmine Studios, Leominster, MA
- **Long Journey Home, Original Soundtrack.** Copyright: 1998, Unisphere Records. Manufactured and distributed by BMG Entertainment, New York, NY

Websites to look for information and resources:

<http://www.28thmass.com>

<http://www.stamfordhistory.org>

<http://www.archives.gov>

<http://www.history.org>

<http://www.historyworksohio.org>

<http://dcmoboces.com>

<http://www.bergen.org>

Books of Interest (as possible resources)

The Military and Civil History of Connecticut During the Recent War of 1861-1865.

Author: Ledyard Bill (1868)

Civil War Volunteer Sons of Connecticut. American Patriot Press: 2002. (207)354-9200

History of the Ninth Regiment CT Volunteer Infantry, The Irish Regiment.

Author: Thomas H. Murray, New Haven, CT: 1903.

Activities (What will you and your students do during the lesson to promote learning?)

Activity:

Pass out song analysis worksheets (this analysis sheet can be modified to fit different songs and time periods). There are many different examples of song analysis worksheets on the internet. Then play the song, "Paddy's Lamentation/Ships Are Sailing." Have the students follow along with a copy of the lyrics. Have the students complete the document analysis worksheet.

NOTE: There are at least two different versions to this song. The other version is called "Pat in America." The lyrics are slightly different. An adaptation to this or any similar lesson might be to have students compare both versions to see if there are any major differences, and to have them speculate on why the versions differ. The order of the two activities can be reversed, or one left out all together. These activities also fit well with a unit on immigration.

Discuss:

What details does the song offer about the war? What is the mood of the song? What is the message of the song? Who is the intended audience? What message is the author of the song trying to send? For whom is the message intended? Why do you think so many Irish immigrants signed up for the army? Do you think the experience of the Civil War was the same for all immigrant / ethnic / racial / gender groups? What about other American Wars? Given a choice, would you have left Ireland for the United States? Given the choice, do you think most young men at that time, would have refused to sign up or even removed themselves from the army? Do you think the Irish were mistreated? Why do you think the Irish were mistreated? Can you think of other examples where the United States government has promised something (i.e.: to veterans) and then not followed through? Was this a problem just for the Irish, or was it prevalent for all veterans, regardless of ethnicity, race, gender? If you played both versions for the students: Did you find one version to be more useful / interesting / entertaining than the other?

- ***After discussing the previous song with students, you may be asked the question: “Why would people want to come to America to fight in a war?”***
- ***You might pose the same question to the students. You might also say to the students that they are now going to examine the events that led many Irish people to immigrate to the United States. In this way you can show cause and effect.***

Activity:

Pass out song analysis worksheets. Pass out a copy of the lyrics to “Skibbereen” and “White Potatoes.” Play each song and have the students complete the analysis worksheets.

Discuss:

What details do these songs offer about the Potato Famine? What is the mood of these songs? What is the message of these songs? Who is the intended audience? What does the potato represent to the Irish? Can you think of a staple food that Americans rely on for survival? Can you imagine what it is like to be that hungry? Besides death, what other consequence did the potato blight have on Irish society? What questions do you still have about the Potato Famine or the role the Irish played in the Civil War? Did you find one song more useful / interesting / entertaining than another? If so, then why?

Closure:

Have students complete an exit card with:

1. A brief written description of one of the hardships faced by the Irish either in the Potato Famine or in the Civil War.
2. One line from one of the songs and why they connected to it.
3. Their favorite song from the 3 or 4 they heard and why.

Note: This lesson can be extended to include letters, diaries, journals, rosters, newspaper clippings, and other documents from Connecticut and New England regiments comprised primarily or entirely of Irish soldiers. You could use examples of diaries or rosters in place of or in addition to the songs referring to the Irish Potato Famine. Students can analyze the songs and then analyze the diaries / rosters to make connections and comparisons between the different resources (and the information they contain).

Connections:

- Invite Civil War Re-enactors into your school and classroom.
- Research why the Irish came to the United States during this time period.
- Research Irish regiments in the North and South.
- Research the medical techniques and knowledge of the time, including hospitals.
- Research the treatment of veterans at the time.
- Research the role that discrimination played in the army / society at this time.
- Research other Civil War music.
- Research other ethnic groups and their experiences during the Civil War period.
- Research journals, diaries, death notices, cemeteries, newspaper clippings and photographs from this time period that might relate to the music or ethnic group.
- Research the treatment of immigrant / ethnic / racial / gender groups in the Civil War and other wars.
- Research racism, discrimination, segregation and persecution (all its forms) in the military. Make a time line comparing reforms in the military to those in society.
- Research the treatment of veterans after the Civil War and other wars.

How will you assess what student learned during this lesson?

- Have students create a poem or song lyrics using a diary entry or photograph.
- Have students create a series of diary entries that describe experiences from the song, "Paddy's Lamentation." The diaries might include events prior to and following those portrayed in the song
- Have students look for a song that gives a different perspective on the war (preferably a song from the point of view of an Irish soldier.) Or, find an example of a different / opposite perspective on the war from a diary or photo.
- Draw a picture describing the situation of the soldier in the song. It may be a series of pictures showing the different parts of the song.

Other Ways to Utilize Music in Social Studies:

- General study of music from an era or specific unit of study
- Researching the role of music in the lives of African American slaves
- Researching the role of music in the Underground Railroad
- Researching the connections between music and major movements – Civil Rights, Vietnam War protests, workers’ rights movements, The Great Migration and Jazz
- The role of music as a communicator of feelings and ideas
- Create a musical timeline of events and/or concepts
- Relate music to the different immigrant groups arriving in the United States

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards –

- formulate historical questions based on primary and secondary sources, including documents, eyewitness accounts, letters and diaries, artifacts, real or simulated historical sites, charts, graphs, diagrams and written texts;
- interpret data in historical maps, photographs, art works and other artifacts;
- explain how roles and status of people have differed and changed throughout history based on gender, age, class, racial and ethnic identity, wealth, and/or social position;
- describe examples of how societies throughout history have used various forms of visual arts, dance, theater, myths, literature and music to express their beliefs, sense of identity and philosophical ideas;
- identify and analyze the various causes and effects of movements of groups of people;
- explain how economic factors influenced historical events in the United States and other regions of the world; and
- initiate questions and hypotheses about historic events being studied;
- display empathy for people who have lived in the past;