



The Power of Music

An activity for use with the *Virtual Gramophone* website

In this activity, students will analyze and compare two songs from different periods, examining theme, style, and historical and technological context. This lesson explores music from Canada's past and gives students the opportunity to use sound recordings from Library and Archives Canada's (LAC) *Virtual Gramophone* website.

Subject/Age	Music and Language Arts; Ages 12-14
Learning Outcomes (WCP) Objectives (QC) Learning Outcomes (APEF) Expectations (ON)	Fine Arts Outcomes (Music): In completing this activity, students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe some aspects of the historical context of music that they sing, play, or listen to• Identify and describe the elements of music Language Arts Outcomes: R (Reading): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read and respond to non-fiction materials W (Writing): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use writing for various purposes and in a range of contexts O/V (Oral and Visual Communication): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contribute and work constructively in groups These Language Arts Outcomes correspond to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• WCP GO - R: 3.2; W: 3.2; O/V: 5.1• Quebec objectives - 3 (Reading); 1 (Writing); 1 (Oral)• APEF CGO - R: 6; W: 5; O/V: 2.1
Student Demonstration of Learning	Students will analyze and compare two songs from different periods, examining theme, style, and historical and technological context.
Materials/Resources Required	Computers with headphones and access to the Internet <u>or</u> Prerecorded music If available, old record players and gramophones <u>Student Handout 1</u> <u>Student Handout 2</u> <u>Assessment Criteria</u>



Web Links

Virtual Gramophone

URL: www.nlc-bnc.ca/gramophone/

Sheet Music from Canada's Past

URL: www.nlc-bnc.ca/sheetmusic/

Instructional Procedures

To gain full benefit from this project, students should be aware of instrument families and the elements of music. Students should also be familiar with the Internet and common browsing terms and tools.

Part 1: Music Analysis and Comparison

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
- Other issues

To introduce students to the NLC *Virtual Gramophone* site, have them listen to several songs about different subjects (love, war, remembrance, religion) from the site. Some suggestions:

- "Jesus Christ is Risen Today" (faith)
- "Jésus de Narareth" (faith)
- "C'est vous seule que j'aime" (love)
- "Laughing Water" (love)
- "Berceuse d'amour" (love)
- "All I Want is a Cottage, Some Roses and You" (love)
- "The Maple Leaf Forever" (patriotic)
- "Ô Canada, mon pays, mes amours" (patriotic)
- "Carmen Fantasy" (instrumental)
 - o 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.

- “In Flanders Fields” (war and remembrance)
- “Chœur des soldats” (war and remembrance)
- “Daddy, You’ve Been a Mother to Me” (family)
- “When Did You Write to Mother Last?” (family)
- “Sur les genoux de ta mère” (family)

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 Student Handout 1 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

Students should complete Handout 2.

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 page 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 from around 1900
- One from around 1925
- One 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](#) lesson).

**Notes on Enriching this
Activity**
