

# Civil War Music

**Grades:** 5-8

**Approximate Length of Time:** One 50-minute class period

**Goal:** Students will understand how different groups of Americans used similar types of music to express opposing opinions, and gain an appreciation for Civil War music.

## Objectives:

Students will:

- Understand and discuss the lyrics to different Civil War era songs.
- Interpret the lyrics to figure out who was likely to have written, or sang, each song during the war.
- Understand how different groups of Americans used popular music to express themselves and their opinions during the Civil War.

## Materials:

Copies of lyrics to:

- Battle Cry of Freedom (Northern)
- Battle Cry of Freedom (Southern)
- Weeping, Sad, and Lonely
- When Johnny Comes Marching Home
- No More Auction Block for Me
- Marching Song of the First Arkansas

Dulcem Melodies: 2nd South Carolina String Band CD

The Songs of the Civil War: Irwin Silber CD

Investigating Song Lyrics Assessment Sheets

**Set Hook:** Ask students what their favorite songs are, and why these are their favorites. How does music help people express themselves? What kinds of things do people write songs about? Love, friendship, happiness, sadness, loss? Can they think of any patriotic songs, or songs about conflict?

**Introduction:** Instructors will explain that music has always been a popular way for Americans to express themselves during wartime. Americans used music in many different ways during the Civil War. Music was used to recruit soldiers, keep their morale high, and gave them a way to express their feelings about the hardships they were facing. Women and

children on the home front utilized music to express their fears about their loved ones fighting in the war, and their hopes that they would come home. Music was also used by African-American slaves, who often wrote and sang songs that expressed their suffering, and their hopes for freedom as a result of the war. Music is one way that people today can relate to Americans that lived during the Civil War, and come closer to understanding the emotions that the war inspired.

**Procedure:**

1. Divide the class into three groups.
2. Explain that the United States was bitterly divided during the Civil War, and that the music of the period expressed the viewpoints of many groups of Americans, particularly Union soldiers, Confederate soldiers, Northern and Southern civilians on the home front, freed slaves, and African American soldiers. Teachers should write these groups on the board.
3. Distribute lyrics and Investigating Lyrics worksheets to the class. The students will get copies of every song.
4. Assign each group of students one pair of songs to examine (both Battle Cry of Freedom's; Weeping, Sad, and Lonely with When Johnny Comes Marching Home; and No More Auction Block with The Marching Song of the First Arkansas.) Have students quietly and independently read the lyrics to their assigned songs. Then, in 10-15 minutes, the groups will determine:
  - Which groups of Civil War Americans would have sang what song
  - What the songs have in common
  - How the songs are different
5. In their groups, the students will fill out the Investigating Song Lyrics worksheet that corresponds with each of their two songs.
6. During this time, the teacher will prepare the CD player and CD's.
7. When all the groups have finished working, the teacher will explain that each of the six songs represents a different viewpoint. Each will take a turn presenting explaining the meaning of their songs to the class, and the class will discuss them.
8. Before the first group presents, the teacher will play their songs and ask the students to follow along by looking at the lyrics. With the teacher acting as a facilitator, the group will explain the answers to Investigating the Song Lyrics, and the class will have a short discussion about the meaning of the song.

**Closure:** Hold a short discussion about how Americans during the Civil War used music to express their feelings about the war.

**Assessment:** Ask the students to write their own lyrics to a Civil War song. They can make up their own music, or use the music from another song. Or, ask students to write an essay using the song lyrics as a primary source. Students can pick one of the groups discussed in the activity (Union soldiers, Confederate soldiers, women and children on the home front, freed slaves, or African American soldiers), and discuss in a short essay how they felt about the Civil War using the songs as evidence.

## **Battle Cry of Freedom (Version 1)**

## **Group A**

Yes we'll rally round the flag, boys, we'll rally once again,  
Shouting the battle cry of freedom,  
We will rally from the hillside, we'll gather from the plain,  
Shouting the battle cry of freedom!

### **Chorus**

The Union forever! Hurrah, boys, hurrah!  
Down with the traitors, up with the stars;  
While we rally round the flag, boys, rally once again,  
Shouting the battle cry of freedom!

### **Chorus**

We are springing to the call of our brothers gone before,  
Shouting the battle cry of freedom!  
And we'll fill our vacant ranks with a million freemen more,  
Shouting the battle cry of freedom!

### **Chorus**

We will welcome to our numbers the loyal, true and brave,  
Shouting the battle cry of freedom!  
And although they may be poor, not a man shall be a slave,  
Shouting the battle cry of freedom!

### **Chorus**

So we're springing to the call from the East and from the West,  
Shouting the battle cry of Freedom;  
And we'll hurl the rebel crew from the land that we love best,  
Shouting the battle cry of Freedom.

## **Battle Cry of Freedom (Version 2)**

## **Group A**

Our flag is proudly floating on the land and on the main,  
Shout, shout the battle cry of Freedom!  
Beneath it oft we've conquered, and we'll conquer oft again!  
Shout, shout the battle cry of Freedom!

### **Chorus**

Our Dixie forever! She's never at a loss!  
Down with the eagle and up with the cross  
We'll rally 'round the bonny flag, we'll rally once again,  
Shout, shout the battle cry of Freedom!

Our gallant boys have marched to the rolling of the drums.  
Shout, shout the battle cry of Freedom!  
And the leaders in charge cry out, "Come, boys, come!"  
Shout, shout the battle cry of Freedom!

### **Chorus**

They have laid down their lives on the bloody battle field.  
Shout, shout the battle cry of Freedom!  
Their motto is resistance – "To the tyrants never yield!"  
Shout, shout the battle cry of Freedom!

### **Chorus**

While our boys have responded and to the fields have gone.  
Shout, shout the battle cry of Freedom!  
Our noble women also have aided them at home.  
Shout, shout the battle cry of Freedom!

### **Chorus**

## **Weeping, Sad, and Lonely**

## **Group B**

Dearest love, do you remember when we last did meet,  
How you told me that you loved me, kneeling at my feet?  
Oh! How proud you stood before me, in your suit of blue,  
When you vow'd to me and country ever to be true

### **Chorus**

Weeping, sad, and lonely, hopes and fears how vain. (Yet praying)  
When this cruel war is over, praying that we meet again.

When the summer breeze is sighing mournfully along.  
Or when the autumn leaves are falling, sadly breathes the song.  
Oft in dreams I see thee lying on the battle plain,  
Lonely, wounded even dying, calling, but in vain.

### **Chorus**

If amid the din of battle nobly you should fall,  
Far away from those who love you, none to hear you call.  
Who would whisper words of comfort, who would soothe your pain?  
Ah, the many cruel fancies ever in my brain.

### **Chorus**

But our country called you, darling, angels cheer your way,  
While our nation's sons are fighting, we can only pray.  
Nobly strike for God and liberty, let all nations see  
How we love our starry banner, emblem of the free.

### **Chorus**

## **When Johnny Comes Marching Home**

## **Group B**

When Johnny comes marching home again  
Hurrah! Hurrah!  
We'll give him a hearty welcome then  
Hurrah! Hurrah!  
The men will cheer and the boys will shout  
The ladies they will all turn out  
And we'll all feel gay  
When Johnny comes marching home.  
The old church bell will peal with joy  
Hurrah! Hurrah!  
To welcome home our darling boy,  
Hurrah! Hurrah!  
The village lads and lassies say  
With roses they will strew the way,  
And we'll all feel gay  
When Johnny comes marching home.  
Get ready for the Jubilee,  
Hurrah! Hurrah!  
We'll give the hero three times three,  
Hurrah! Hurrah!  
The laurel wreath is ready now  
To place upon his loyal brow  
And we'll all feel gay  
When Johnny comes marching home.  
Let love and friendship on that day,  
Hurrah, hurrah!  
Their choicest pleasures then display,  
Hurrah, hurrah!  
And let each one perform some part,  
To fill with joy the warrior's heart,  
And we'll all feel gay  
When Johnny comes marching home.

## **No More Auction Block for Me**

**Group C**

No more auction block for me  
No more, no more  
No more auction block for me  
Many thousands gone

No more driver's lash for me  
No more, no more  
No more driver's lash for me  
Many thousands gone

No more whip lash for me  
No more, no more  
No more pint of salt for me  
Many thousands gone

No more auction block for me  
No more, no more  
No more auction block for me  
Many thousands gone

## **Marching Song of the First Arkansas**

**Group C**



Oh, we're the bully soldiers of the "First of Arkansas,"  
We are fighting for the Union, we are fighting for the law,  
We can hit a Rebel further than a white man ever saw,  
As we go marching on.

**Chorus**

Glory, glory hallelujah.  
Glory, glory hallelujah.  
Glory, glory hallelujah.  
As we go marching on.

See, there above the center, where the flag is waving bright,  
We are going out of slavery; we're bound for freedom's light;  
We mean to show Jeff Davis how the Africans can fight,  
As we go marching on!

**Chorus**

We have done with hoeing cotton, we have done with hoeing corn,  
We are colored Yankee soldiers, now, as sure as you are born;  
When the masters hear us yelling, they'll think it's Gabriel's horn,  
As we go marching on.

**Chorus**

They will have to pay us wages, the wages of their sin,  
They will have to bow their foreheads to their colored kith and kin,  
They will have to give us house-room, or the roof shall tumble in!  
As we go marching on.

**Chorus**

We heard the Proclamation, master hush it as he will,  
The bird he sing it to us, hoppin' on the cotton hill,  
And the possum up the gum tree, he couldn't keep it still,  
As he went climbing on.

**Chorus**

They said, "Now colored brethren, you shall be forever free,  
From the first of January, Eighteen hundred sixty-three."  
We heard it in the river going rushing to the sea,  
As it went sounding on.

### **Chorus**

Father Abraham has spoken and the message has been sent,  
The prison doors he opened, and out the pris'ners went,  
To join the sable army of "African descent,"  
As we go marching on.

### **Chorus**

Then fall in, colored brethren, you'd better do it soon,  
Don't you hear the drum a-beating the Yankee Doodle tune?  
We are with you now this morning, we'll be far away at noon,  
As we go marching on

## Investigating Song Lyrics

## Group A

1. Both songs are called “The Battle Cry of Freedom.” Which one is Northern? Which is Southern? How do you know?
2. In stanza 3 of Version 2, who is considered the “tyrant?”
3. In stanza 3 of Version 1, what does “Freedom” mean? Freedom for whom?
4. What does freedom mean for the Unionists? What does it mean for the Confederates?

## Group B

1. In both songs, what is it the singers are worried about?
2. In “When Johnny Comes Marching Home,” who is “Johnny”?
3. Who do you think would have sung these songs?
4. Do you think the singers wanted the war to continue? Why or why not?

## Group C

1. Who do you think would have sung “No More Auction Block for Me?”
2. In “The Marching Song of the First Arkansas,” the singer states “They’ll have to pay us wages, the wages of their sin.” Who do they mean by “they?” What sin is the singer referring to?
3. In stanza 6, what is the significance of the date “the first of January, eighteen hundred sixty-three.”?
4. How do you think the singers of “The Marching Song of the First Arkansas” got their freedom?