

To Kill a Mockingbird Great Depression Songs

Studying a historical event through songs and music can provide an honest look into the past at how people were affected by, or perceived an event. This activity will allow you to see the variety of points of view represented about The Great Depression through songs written during the time.

Directions: BEFORE reading any of the lyrics, you and your group will make predictions about the songs based on their titles. Predict the point of view being represented (a mother, a working man, a young woman, a child, etc.), predict what feelings or emotions are intended to be evoked from the song, guess what time during the depression the song came out, and predict what the main topic/message of the song will be.

1. "Brother, Can you Spare a Dime"

Point of view: _____

Feelings attached to the song:

When during the Great Depression did the song come out? (beginning, middle, end)

Topic/message of the song:

2. "Life is Just a Bowl of Cherries"

Point of view: _____

Feelings attached to the song:

When during the Great Depression did the song come out? (beginning, middle, end)

Topic/message of the song:

3. "We're in the Money"

Point of view: _____

Feelings attached to the song:

When during the Great Depression did the song come out? (beginning, middle, end)

Topic/message of the song:

Directions: After making your predictions, read the songs and answer the questions that follow.

Songs of the Great Depression

"Brother, Can You Spare a Dime," lyrics by Yip Harburg, music by Jay Gorney (1931)

They used to tell me I was building a dream, and so I followed the mob,
When there was earth to plow, or guns to bear, I was always there right on the job.
They used to tell me I was building a dream, with peace and glory ahead,
Why should I be standing in line, just waiting for bread?
Once I built a railroad, I made it run, made it race against time.
Once I built a railroad; now it's done. Brother, can you spare a dime?
Once I built a tower, up to the sun, brick, and rivet, and lime;
Once I built a tower, now it's done. Brother, can you spare a dime?
Once in khaki suits, gee we looked swell,
Full of that Yankee Doodly Dum,
Half a million boots went slogging through Hell,
And I was the kid with the drum!
Say, don't you remember, they called me Al; it was Al all the time.
Why don't you remember, I'm your pal? Buddy, can you spare a dime?
Once in khaki suits, gee we looked swell,
Full of that Yankee Doodly Dum,
Half a million boots went slogging through Hell,
And I was the kid with the drum!
Say, don't you remember, they called me Al; it was Al all the time.
Say, don't you remember, I'm your pal? Buddy, can you spare a dime?



"Life is Just a Bowl of Cherries," lyrics by Lew Brown, music by Ray Henderson (1931)

People are queer, they're always crowing, scrambling and rushing about;
Why don't they stop someday, address themselves this way?
Why are we here? Where are we going? It's time that we found out.
We're not here to stay; we're on a short holiday.
Life is just a bowl of cherries.
Don't take it serious; it's too mysterious.
You work, you save, you worry so,
But you can't take your dough when you go, go, go.
So keep repeating it's the berries,
The strongest oak must fall,
The sweet things in life, to you were just loaned
So how can you lose what you've never owned?
Life is just a bowl of cherries,
So live and laugh at it all.
Life is just a bowl of cherries.
Don't take it serious; it's too mysterious.
At eight each morning I have got a date,
To take my plunge 'round the Empire State.
You'll admit it's not the berries,
In a building that's so tall;
There's a guy in the show, the girls love to kiss;
Get thousands a week just for crooning like this:
Life is just a bowl of . . . aw, nuts!
So live and laugh at it all!



**"We're in the Money," lyrics by Al Dubin, music by Harry Warren
(from the film [*Gold Diggers of 1933*](#), 1933)**

We're in the money, we're in the money;
We've got a lot of what it takes to get along!
We're in the money, that sky is sunny,
Old Man Depression you are through, you done us wrong.
We never see a headline about breadlines today.
And when we see the landlord we can look that guy right in the eye
We're in the money, come on, my honey,
Let's lend it, spend it, send it rolling along!
Oh, yes we're in the money, you bet we're in the money,



We've got a lot of what it takes to get along!
Let's go we're in the money, Look up the skies are sunny,
Old Man Depression you are through, you done us wrong.
We never see a headline about breadlines today.
And when we see the landlord we can look that guy right in the eye
We're in the money, come on, my honey,
Let's lend it, spend it, send it rolling along!

Questions (full sentences and at least 4 sentences per answer):

1. What can you learn about The Great Depression through these songs that you (typically) don't learn from textbooks?
2. Are songs used to convey messages or recount events today? Why or why not? Explain how and provide an example proving either side.
3. Pick one song and analyze it (break it down).

Song Project

- Song must have a unique title. (10 points)
- All group members must be listed under the title. (5 points)
- Song must be 10 lines long. (20 points)
- Must convey a message about something that is going on in the world today. (25 points)
- Lyrics must be displayed in a creative way (posterboard, foldable, scrapbook, etc.). (20 points)
- Must have one hand drawn illustration somewhere on the displayed lyrics. (20 points)