

CIVIL WAR MUSIC

Music has the power to reveal the perceptions and deep feelings of a people at a particular time. Composed with the deliberate intention of stirring the emotions, music can become iconic over time, evoking compelling feelings and memories in an individual or a broad listening audience. Music can thus provide a unique, emotion-shaded window to a distant time, place, or event.



Union soldiers and band marching through a city street
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/var1995002135/PP/>

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Sometimes, listeners are surprised to find a familiar tune lurking behind the lyrics of a “new” song. Songwriters have been known to repurpose existing compositions, hoping to catch a listener’s attention through something familiar. The materials in this primary source set will help students consider American history by looking at the long, varied career of a tune popularized during the Civil War era – “When Johnny Comes Marching Home.”

Composer

Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore, an Irish immigrant, led a number of bands in the Boston area, including Patrick Gilmore’s Band. As a group, this band enlisted in the Union Army in September 1861 and subsequently served as musicians and stretcher-bearers at many horrific battles.

In 1863, in his role as grand master of the Union Army, Gilmore was ordered to reorganize the state military bands. It was then that he composed the

words and music to “When Johnny Comes Marching Home.” It has been noted, however, that his composition bears a great similarity to the melody of an earlier Irish song, “Johnny, I Hardly Knew Ye,” a protest song about conscription into the British Army.

Where are your legs that used to run,
huroo, huroo,
Where are your legs that used to run,
huroo, huroo,
Where are your legs that used to run
when first you went for to carry a gun?
Alas, your dancing days are done, och,
Johnny, I hardly knew ye.

Showman

In addition to his musical ability, Gilmore had a flair for showmanship. He organized a huge concert in New Orleans’ Lafayette Square, with 500 musicians and 5,000 or more schoolchildren, many from Confederate families. “When Johnny Comes Marching

Home" was written in time for Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's surrender and was part of a rousing return home for the troops. After the war's end, Gilmore produced "Peace Jubilees" that included renditions of "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" performed by as many as 1,000 musicians accompanying 10,000 singers and that concluded with the firing of a real cannon.



World's Peace Jubilee
<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.award/ncdeaa.B0122>

Remembering

"When Johnny Comes Marching Home" became popular with Northerners and Southerners alike. In 1939, a child of the Civil War era remembered:

The songs we sang were all patriotic. My niece Mary Hill, or Mollie, as we called her, but two years younger than I, was a little songbird. She learned all the popular songs of the day and was ready to sing on any occasion. "Dixie Land" was one of her favorites. She earned the pet name of "Dixie" by this song. Other songs that were sung in school entertainments were "When Johnny comes marching home again," [and] "On the field of battle, mother."

(Mrs. Hortense Applegate. Pioneer Reminiscences. *American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940.*

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=wpa2&fileName=29/2909/29090415/wpa229090415.db&recNum=6.>)

Parodies and Repurposing

"When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again," gave rise to many parodies, including the well-known Confederate parody "For Bales." Another parody, "Johnny, Fill Up the Bowl," reflected Northerners' concerns about taxes, conscription, and inflation. "When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again" remained popular in subsequent Amer-



Samuel W. Doble of Company D, with drum
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2010650443/>

ican wars. It reached new heights of popularity during the Spanish American War and, as this poster indicates, was used to express concerns about the Vietnam War, as well.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Teachers may use these Library of Congress primary source documents to introduce historical perspectives about the American Civil War while engaging students in interdisciplinary learning. A focus on the song “When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again” may help students understand that the music of an era provides a unique “people’s history” of the time. This set includes sound files, sheet music, song sheets, photographs, maps, and a letter from a soldier.

While the music of war often illustrates stark realities and melancholy outcomes, it can also convey patriotic enthusiasm, victorious celebrations, and antiwar sentiments. The photographs and maps in this set create a visual framework by introducing people and places of the era. The letter from a soldier allows students to consider this soldier’s perceptions and feelings, and may spark a discussion about the similarities and differences that might be noted in the experience of a soldier today.

As an interesting aside, teachers may wish to consider with students how popular melodies can become the foundation for new lyrics. Students may use the sound file without vocals to become familiar with the melody of “When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again.” They might then discuss other lyrics sung to this melody. Someone is sure to mention “The Ants Go Marching!”



Arlington, Va. Band of 107th U.S. Colored Infantry
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003000935/PP/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



The Civil War - Themed Resources From The Teachers Page

<http://loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/themes/civil-war/>



Today in History May 23

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/may23.html>



Patriotic Melodies From I Hear America Singing

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cocoon/ihas/html/patriotic/patriotic-home.html>



The Army of the Potomac Paraded Down Pennsylvania Avenue From America’s Library: Jump Back in Time – May 23

http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/civil/jb_civil_parade_1.html



Johnny Comes Marching Home

<http://www.loc.gov/item/afcreed.13705b27>



When Johny [sic] comes marching home

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/berl:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(berl+13177YY\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/berl:@field(NUMBER+@band(berl+13177YY)))



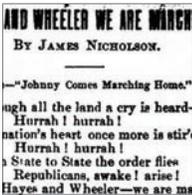
Johney I hardly knew ye

<http://www.loc.gov/item/amss.as106810>



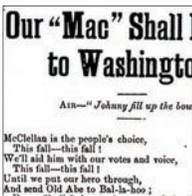
When Johnny comes marching home; Soldier’s Return March. 1863

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/dukesm:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(ncdhasm.a5654\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/dukesm:@field(DOCID+@lit(ncdhasm.a5654)))



For Hayes and Wheeler we are marching on

<http://www.loc.gov/item/amss.as104060>



Our “Mac” shall march to Washington. c1864

<http://www.loc.gov/item/amss.as110570>



Wyld’s Military Map of the United States 1861

<http://www.loc.gov/item/99447065>



Map of the Confederate States of America 1910

<http://www.loc.gov/item/ocm50942325>



A bugler: Drawing by Alfred Waud 1860-1865

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004660799/>



Funeral march: Drawing by Alfred Waud 1865

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004660471/>



[Drum]mer boy A drawing by Edwin Forbes 1863

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004661928/>



When Tommy comes marching home 1952

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/acd1996006081/PP/>



When Johnny comes marching home 1972

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2009617367/>



Music and U.S. Reform History: Stand Up and Sing

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/music/>

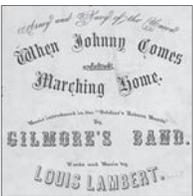
PRIMARY SOURCES WITH CITATIONS



Union soldiers and band marching through a city street on their way to join the Civil War. Photographic print. c1865. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/var1995002135/PP/>



"Johneey I Hardly Knew Ye." Dublin: Brereton, n.d. From Library of Congress, America Singing: Nineteenth-Century Song Sheets. <http://www.loc.gov/item/amss.as106810>



Lambert, Louis. "When Johnny comes marching home [sheet music]." Boston: Henry Tolman & Co., 1863. From Library of Congress: Performing Arts Encyclopedia. <http://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200001128>



"When Johnny comes marching home." Philadelphia: Johnson, n.d. From Library of Congress, I Hear America Singing. <http://www.loc.gov/item/amss.cw106530>



"Gilmore, Patrick S." n.d. From Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. <http://loc.gov/pictures/item/99471795/>



Terrill, John. "When Johnny comes marching home again." E. Berliner Gramophone, 1898. From Library of Congress, I Hear America Singing. MP3. <http://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.100010360>



Airforce Band of Liberty. "When Johnny comes marching home." Boston: MENC, n.d. From Library of Congress, I Hear America Singing. MP3. <http://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.100010447>



"For Bales!" New Orleans: A. E. Blackmar, 1864. From Library of Congress, *I Hear America Singing*.

<http://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200002389>



"New Johnny, Fill Up the Bowl!" Philadelphia: J.H. Johnson, n.d. From Library of Congress, *America Singing: Nineteenth-Century Song Sheets*.

<http://www.loc.gov/item/amss.cw103080>



"Johnny, Fill Up the Bowl!" Philadelphia: J.H. Johnson, n.d. From Library of Congress, *America Singing: Nineteenth-Century Song Sheets*.

<http://www.loc.gov/item/amss.cw103090>



Anderson, A. "When the Boys Come Marching Home." Philadelphia: Anderson, Jan. 1864. From Library of Congress, *America Singing: Nineteenth-Century Song Sheets*.

<http://www.loc.gov/item/amss.as114850>



Bacon's Military Map of the United States. London: Bacon, 1862. From Library of Congress, *Map Collections*.

<http://www.loc.gov/item/99447070>



Map of the United States, showing the Territory in Possession of the Federal Union, January 1864. London: Bacon, Jan. 1864. From Library of Congress, *Map Collections*.

<http://www.loc.gov/item/99447141>



Brady, Mathew B. "Washington, D.C. Infantry unit with fixed bayonets..." May 1865. From Library of Congress, *Selected Civil War Photographs, 1861-1865*.

<http://loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003001028/PP/>



"Portrait of a Federal soldier (Horse artillery)." n.d. From Library of Congress, *Selected Civil War Photographs, 1861-1865*.

<http://loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003001053/PP/>



"Portrait of Pvt. John White, drummer boy, Virginia Regiment, C.S.A." n.d. From Library of Congress, *Selected Civil War Photographs, 1861-1865*.

<http://loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003001091/PP/>



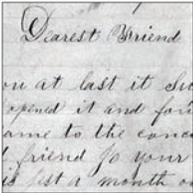
"Portrait of a musician, 2d Regulars, U.S. Cavalry." n.d. From Library of Congress, *Selected Civil War Photographs, 1861-1865*.

<http://loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003001056/PP/>



"Bernard Bluecher Graves, Corp., C.S.A..." n.d. From Library of Congress, *Prints and Photographs Online Catalog*.

<http://loc.gov/pictures/item/2005695735/>



Green, Joseph F. "Joseph F. Green to Juliana Smith Reynolds." 2 Jan. 1863. From Library of Congress, *A Civil War Soldier in the Wild Cat Regiment: Selections from the Tilton C. Reynolds Papers*.

<http://www.loc.gov/item/mreynolds000074>