A Library of Congress Primary Source Starter

The Battle Hymn of the Republic

Quick and easy activity ideas to start using Library of Congress primary sources in the classroom

Teacher Instructions

Goal

Students can think critically about the differences between these two songs, and what they can tell us about the different audiences and purposes these songs might have had.

Background

Sometimes a familiar old song can turn out to have some surprising relatives.

"The Battle Hymn of the Republic" has been around for more than 150 years, but it has a complicated family tree. It started out as a gentle religious camp meeting song in the 1850s, but within a few years, people began giving the tune their own lyrics.

One of the fiercest versions was called "John Brown's Body" or "The John Brown Song", after the radical abolitionist who was executed in 1859. Someone created a new set of lyrics that were full of marching, decaying bodies, and the threat of violence, and soon Union troops were singing it across the battlefields of the Civil War.

The patriotic lyrics that we know today were written by author Julia Ward Howe in 1861, and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" was very popular throughout the Civil War. But so was "John Brown's Body."

Activities

Teachers can have students:

- Sing both songs
- Compare the two songs to identify similarities and differences
- Speculate about the people who created these songs, and their motivations for doing so

Ask themselves:

- Who might have sung these songs when they first became popular? What might their reasons have been?
- How does encountering "John Brown's Body" change the way you look at "The Battle Hymn of the Republic"?

You can use the Library's primary source analysis tool and teacher guides to help students analyze these documents in further depth.

For background information and recorded versions of these songs:

John Brown's Body/The Battle Hymn of the Republic
http://www.loc.gov/teachers/lyrical/songs/john_brown.html
For more classroom materials and other teacher resources from the Library of Congress, visit loc.gov/teachers

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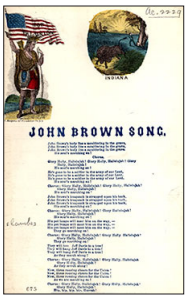

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Primary Sources

1. The Battle Hymn of the Republic

Julia Ward Howe. n.d. From Library of Congress: *Civil War Song Sheets.*
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/amss:@field(DOCID+@lit(cw100430))

2. John Brown Song

N.p. n.d. From Library of Congress: *American Song Sheets.*
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/amss:@field(DOCID+@lit(as106750))

BATTLE HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC.

BY MRS. JULIA WARD HOWE.

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord:
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath
are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightnings of His terrible swift sword:
His truth is marching on.
CHORUS—Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps;
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and
damps:
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps:
His day is marching on.
CHORUS—Glory, glory, hallelujah, &c.
His day is marching on.

I have read a fiery gospel writ in burnished rows of steel:
"As ye deal with my contemners, so with you my grace shall
deal;
Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel,
Since God is marching on."
CHORUS—Glory, glory, hallelujah &c.
Since God is marching on.

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat:
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat:
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant my feet!
Our God is marching on!
CHORUS—Glory, glory, hallelujah, &c.
Our God is marching on!

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me;
As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on.
CHORUS—Glory, glory, hallelujah, &c.
While God is marching on.

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JOHN BROWN SONG.

John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave,
John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave,
John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave.
His soul's marching on!

Chorus.

Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory
Hally, Hallelujah!
His soul's marching on!

He's gone to be a soldier in the army of our Lord,
He's gone to be a soldier in the army of our Lord,
He's gone to be a soldier in the army of our Lord.
His soul's marching on!

Chorus: Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hally, Hallelujah!
Glory Hally, Hallelujah!
His soul's marching on!

John Brown's knapsack is strapped upon his back,
John Brown's knapsack is strapped upon his back,
John Brown's knapsack is strapped upon his back,
His soul's marching on!

Chorus: Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Clory Hallelujah!
Glory Hally, Hallelujah!
His soul's marching on!

[lambs]

His pet lamps will meet him on the way, —
His pet lamps will meet him on the way, —
His pet lamps will meet him on the way. —
They go marching on!

Chorus: Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hally Hallelujah!
Glory Hally, Hallelujah!
They go marching on!

They will hang Jeff Davis to a tree!
They will hang Jeff Davis to a tree!
They will hang Jeff Davis to a tree!
As they march along!

Chorus: Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hally, Hallelujah
Glory Hally, Hallelujah!
As they march along!

Now, three rousing cheers for the Union!
Now, three rousing cheers for the Union!
Now, three rousing cheers for the Union!
As we are marching on!

Chorus: Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hally, Hallelujah!
Glory Hally, Hallelujah!
Hip, hip, hip, hip, Hurrah!

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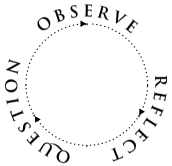
Primary Source Analysis Tool

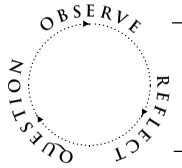


OBSERVE	REFLECT	QUESTION

FURTHER INVESTIGATION

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Primary_Source_Analysis_Tool.pdf

TEACHER'S GUIDE
ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES



Guide students with the sample questions as they respond to the primary source. **Encourage them to go back and forth between the columns; there is no correct order.**

OBSERVE

Have students identify and note details.

Sample Questions:

What do you notice first? · Find something small but interesting. · What do you notice that you didn't expect? · What do you notice that you can't explain? · What do you notice now that you didn't earlier?

REFLECT

Encourage students to generate and test hypotheses about the source.

Where do you think this came from? · Why do you think somebody made this? · What do you think was happening when this was made? · Who do you think was the audience for this item? · What tool was used to create this? · Why do you think this item is important? · If someone made this today, what would be different? · What can you learn from examining this?

QUESTION

Have students ask questions to lead to more observations and reflections.

What do you wonder about...

who? · what? · when? · where? · why? · how?

FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Help students to identify questions appropriate for further investigation, and to develop a research strategy for finding answers.

Sample Question: What more do you want to know, and how can you find out?

A few follow-up activity ideas:

Beginning
Have students compare two related primary source items.

Intermediate
Have students expand or alter textbook explanations of history based on primary sources they study.

Advanced
Ask students to consider how a series of primary sources support or challenge information and understanding on a particular topic. Have students refine or revise conclusions based on their study of each subsequent primary source.

For more tips on using primary sources, go to

http://www.loc.gov/teachers

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Primary_Sources.pdf

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Analyzing Sheet Music & Song Sheets

Guide students with the sample questions as they respond to the primary source. **Encourage them to go back and forth between the columns; there is no correct order.**

OBSERVE

Have students identify and note details.

Sample Questions:

Describe what you see on the cover. · What kind of design or image is printed on the document? · Does anything on the page look strange or unfamiliar? · What names or places appear in the lyrics? · Do you see anything on the page besides writing? · What other details do you notice? · If you know the melody, sing or hum it. What do you notice about how it sounds?

REFLECT

Encourage students to generate and test hypotheses about the source.

What was the purpose of this piece of music? · Who do you think composed it? · Who do you think was intended to sing or play it? · What does the cover tell you about the music? · If it doesn't have lyrics, what instruments were intended to play it? · If you know the melody, how does it add to your understanding? · If someone created this today, what would be different?

QUESTION

Have students ask questions to lead to more observations and reflections.

What do you wonder about...

who? · what? · when? · where? · why? · how?

FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Help students to identify questions appropriate for further investigation, and to develop a research strategy for finding answers.

Sample Question: What more do you want to know, and how can you find out?

A few follow-up activity ideas:

Beginning
Have students write a brief description of the song or piece of sheet music in their own words.

Intermediate
Select a song sheet or piece of sheet music. Speculate about the composer's purpose in creating it, and what he or she expected it to accomplish. Do you think it achieved its writer's goals? Explain why you think so.

Advanced
Think about what you already know about this period in history. How do the lyrics support or contradict your current understanding of this period? How does the song highlight the values or opinions held during this period? How do you think the public reacted to this song?

For more tips on using primary sources, go to

http://www.loc.gov/teachers

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Sheet_Music_and_Song_Sheets.pdf