



Protest Songs

A **protest song** is a song that is associated with a movement for social change and hence part of the broader category of *topical songs* (or songs connected to current events). It may be folk, classical, or commercial in genre.

Among social movements that have an associated body of songs are the abolition movement, women's suffrage, the labour movement, the human rights movement, civil rights, the anti-war movement and 1960s counterculture, the feminist movement, the sexual revolution, the gay rights movement, **animal rights movement**, vegetarianism and veganism, gun control, and **environmentalism**.

Protest songs are often situational, having been associated with a social movement through context. Or they may be abstract, expressing, in more general terms, opposition to injustice and support for peace, or free thought, but audiences usually know what is being referred to. Beethoven's "Ode to Joy", a song in support of universal brotherhood, is a song of this kind. It is a setting of a poem by Schiller celebrating the continuum of **living beings** (who are united in their capacity for **feeling pain and pleasure and hence for empathy**), to which Beethoven himself added the lines that all men are brothers. Songs which support the status quo do not qualify as protest songs.

Protest song texts may have significant cognitive content.

An 18th-century example of topical song intended as a feminist protest song is "Rights of Woman" (1795), sung to the tune of "God Save the King", written anonymously by "A Lady", and published in the *Philadelphia Minerva*, October 17, 1795. There is no evidence that it was ever sung as a movement song, however.

20th Century

Colin Irwin, a journalist for *The Guardian*, believes the modern British protest movement started in 1958 when the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) organized a 53-mile march from Trafalgar Square to Aldermaston, to protest Britain's participation in the arms race and recent testing of the H-bomb. The protest "fired up young musicians to write campaigning new songs to argue the case against the bomb and whip up support along the way. Suddenly many of those in skiffle groups playing American songs were changing course and writing fierce topical songs to back direct action. A song composed for the march, "The H-Bomb's Thunder", set the words of a poem by novelist John Brunner to the tune of "Miner's Lifeguard":

***Men and women, stand together
Do not heed the men of war
Make your minds up now or never
Ban the bomb for evermore.***

In 1965, folk-rock singer Donovan's cover of Buffy Sainte-Marie's "**Universal Soldier**" was a hit on the charts. His anti-Vietnam War song "**The War Drags On**" appeared that same year. This was a common trend in popular music of the 1960s and 1970s. The romantic lyrics of pop songs in the 1950s gave way to words of protest.

As their fame and prestige increased in the late 1960s, The Beatles—and John Lennon in particular—added their voices to the Anti-war. In the documentary *The US Versus John Lennon*, Tariq Ali attributes the Beatles' activism to the fact that, in his opinion, "The whole culture had been radicalized: [Lennon] was engaged with the world, and the world was changing him." "**Revolution**", 1968, commemorated the



worldwide student uprisings. In 1969, when Lennon and Yoko Ono were married, they staged a week-long "bed-in for peace" in the Amsterdam Hilton, attracting worldwide media coverage. At the second "Bed-in" in Montreal, in June 1969, they recorded "**Give Peace a Chance**" in their hotel room. The song was sung by over half a million demonstrators in Washington, D.C. at the second Vietnam Moratorium Day, on 15 October 1969.

The 1970s saw a number notable songs by British acts that protested against war, including "**Peace Train**" by Cat Stevens (1971), and "**War Pigs**" by Black Sabbath(1970). Sabbath also protested environmental destruction, describing people leaving a ruined Earth ("**Into the Void**" including, "**Iron Man**"). Renaissance added political repression as a protest theme with "**Mother Russia**" being based on *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and being joined on the second side of their 1974 album *Turn of the Cards* by two other protest songs in "**Cold Is Being**" (about ecological destruction) and "**Black Flame**" (about the Vietnam War).

Also in the 1980s the band Frankie Goes to Hollywood released a political pop protest song '**Two Tribes**' a relentless bass driven track depicting the futility and starkness of nuclear weapons and the Cold War.

(Wikipedia)

Download some of these songs and listen carefully to how the artists have put them together.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UC9pc4U40sl> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XrOE2s_lIdIQ
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGLGzRXY5Bw> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkZC7sqlmaM>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaNtV_iU61U <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=caIM8e5m4u8>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKb2VlcrRn8> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQ_5h0SKUSM
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5s7_WbiR79E <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCjZcG-pH-c>

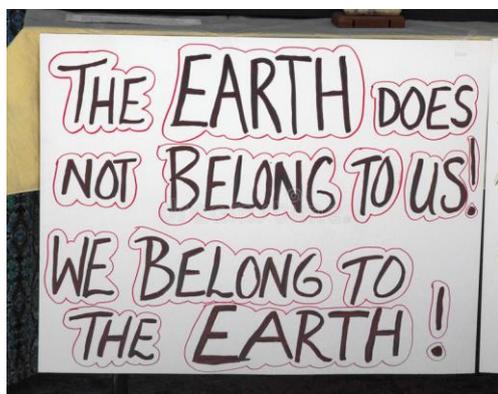
These songs are written about the environment, climate change, etc. Download some of these songs and listen to the lyrics. Go to: <https://spinditty.com/playlists/Songs-About-Climate-Change>

You can find the lyrics online.

- **Listen to, review and evaluate the music you hear.** How do they use the lyrics?
- **Try to create and compose music - either on your own or with others** (At the discretion of your teacher),
- **Improvise and compose** a protest song about the problems of wildlife crime and the information you have been given and have researched for yourself.



- **Now rehearse and present your protest song to others.**



Royalty-Free Stock Photo. Download Environmental Sign At GMO Protest Rally
Stock Image - Image of earth, point:

© Durham County Badger Group 2018