

## **The Kennedy Assassination: The Loss of Innocence In America**

### **The Basics**

#### **Time Required**

1-2 class periods

#### **Subject Areas**

High School American History

Post World War II U.S., 1945-1970

#### **Common Core Standards Addressed:**

Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6-12

#### **Authors**

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### **The Lesson**

#### **Introduction**

This lesson is designed as a cross-curricular collaboration to study the effect of the Kennedy assassination; namely, the loss of innocence that Americans experienced as a result of the assassination.

#### **Guiding Questions**

How do song lyrics better transmit historical events?

What limitations do song lyrics have for transmitting historical events?

#### **Learning Objectives**

Students will analyze a song for its emotional impact and historical context

**Song used in this lesson:** "He Was a Friend of Mine"

## **Lesson Activities**

1. Class will listen to the song once, with no input from the teacher other than that it is a song from 1963 about JFK's assassination.

2. The students will discuss the questions in groups of 2-3.

Discussion questions:

a. How does this song reflect how many Americans felt about JFK? [a personal connection or closeness]

b. What kind of emotion is the singer expressing? [Sorrow, grief, loss]

c. How does he use the music to help the words elicit this emotion from you? [the slow tempo, the long-held "he," the simple, narrow-range tune]

d. Suppose you were sitting in class on the day FK was assassinated. What would be your reaction when they made the announcement over the intercom? How might your life and attitudes change?

e. Can you think of an event during your lifetime that had this kind of powerful and dramatic effect on you? Share it with your partner.

3. Teacher will give the students more information about the song then play it again.

4. Students will possibly revise then discuss their answers to the questions as a class.

## **Assessment**

Students will prepare an oral presentation to be presented in front of the class within one week's time, choosing one of these two options:

1. Think of the loss of a friend or a public figure whose death changed your life and/or attitudes.

Re-write the second and third verses of the song to reflect that emotional connection.

2. Choose a current song and compose your own words about the JFK assassination to fit. (It must have a melody.)

Students will be graded on originality, presentation, and effectiveness to the purpose.

## **Extending the Lesson**

Students will sight read the 3-part score, and begin working on learning their parts, emphasizing phrasing and harmonic changes. This song will not be for performance, only for stylistic practice.

## **Resources**

### **Lyrics**

“He was a Friend of Mine” available at

<http://www.sing365.com/music/lyric.nsf/He-Was-A-Friend-of-Mine-lyrics-The-Byrds/6389403640BB75A5482569A0000DE5A5>