



Songs about Age Lesson Plan

Introduction

Music is a medium that appeals to all ages. Many musical groups popular in the 1960s, 70s and 80s are familiar to adolescents of the 90s. This activity uses music as a means to explore attitudes about old age.

Objectives

Students will:

- identify common attitudes about aging that are found in popular songs;
- indicate ways in which negative attitudes influence relationships with older people;
- identify common fears about aging; and
- consider the extent to which popular songs accurately portray the majority of older people.

Materials

cassette tapes, records or compact discs and music-playing equipment

Procedures

1. Ask students to bring to class recordings of music about older people. Teachers can share their albums from the "old days." Below is a selected list of songs about aging.
 - Joan Baez (1974). "Forever Young," The Best of Joan Baez.
 - The Beatles. (1967). "When I'm 64," Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band.
 - Elton John. (1971). "Sixty Years On," 11-17-70.
 - Mike and the Mechanics (1988). "Living Years," Living Years.
 - Willie Nelson and Roger Miller (1982). "Old Friends," Old Friends.
 - Joni Mitchell (1990). "Nothing Can Be Done," Night Ride Home.
 - The Rolling Stones (circa 1970). "Mother's Little Helper," Through the Past, Darkly.
 - Linda Ronstadt (1978). "When I Grow Too Old to Dream," Living in the USA.
 - Saffire (1990). "Middle-Aged Blues Boogie," Uppity Blues Women.
 - Simon and Garfunkel (1968). "Old Friends," Bookends.
 - Frank Sinatra (1983). "Young at Heart," Gift of Music.
 - Frank Sinatra (1968). "It Was a Very Good Year," Frank Sinatra Greatest Hits, Vol.1.
 - James Taylor (1988). "Never Die Young," Never Die Young.
 - James Taylor. (1977). "Secret o' Life," JT.
2. Discuss the lyrics, melody and overall message of the songs. What ideas about aging are expressed? What fears or joys are expressed in the music about old age? Does the music reflect the thoughts and feelings of any older people you know? How can lyricists write about old age when they have not personally experienced it?

Extension Activities

Compose a class song or group song on aging.

Invite older adults from a local community choral group to listen to the music and participate in an intergenerational discussion group.

Ask each student to draw a picture representing a song about aging.