

LESSON PLANNING ARTICLE

Teaching About Tolerance Through Music

Subjects

Arts & Humanities

- Language Arts
- Literature
- Dance, Music

Educational Technology

Social Studies

- Psychology

Grades

- 3-5
- 6-8
- 9-12



Return to [Teaching @ Tolerance](#) Lesson Article

Brief Description

Students analyze the lyrics of Peter, Paul and Mary songs that express themes of tolerance.

Objectives

Students will

- read and talk about the underlying messages in Peter, Paul, and Mary songs.
- choose a follow-up activity (write a poem, perform a poem, sing a song, or draw a picture) that evokes the feelings or sentiments of one of the song's lyrics.

Keywords

songs, music, lyric, poetry, tolerance, prejudice, self-esteem

Materials Needed

- printouts of the words of two Peter, Paul, and Mary songs: [Right Field](#) and [Don't Laugh at Me](#)
- recordings of those songs (optional)
- art supplies (optional)

Lesson Plan

Many Peter, Paul and Mary songs are known as much for their messages as their tunes. The trio's lyrics -- without the music -- often stand alone as poetry. In this lesson, share with students the lyrics to two Peter, Paul, and Mary songs that include special messages about tolerance.

Print and hand out to students copies of the poems [Right Field](#) and [Don't Laugh at Me](#)

Special note: "Don't Laugh at Me" is the title song of a special program Peter Yarrow created for use in schools and camps. The [Don't Laugh at Me](#) program has received a great deal of [positive feedback](#) from educators. The program's Web site states that, "Through music, video, and classroom activities, the programs (one for use in grades 2-5 and another for grades 6-8) help sensitize children to the painful effects of behaviors such as ridicule, disrespect, ostracism, and bullying. ... Children learn that by working together they can positively shape their school environment, and eventually bring this message to the broader community."

[Right Field](#)

After students have an opportunity to read "Right Field," solicit their reactions to its message. You might ask questions such as:

- How does the kid in the song feel about playing right field?
- Does she or he fancy her/himself a great ball player?
- What does s/he do while out in the field? Is s/he paying close attention to the game?
- Does s/he feel part of the game? part of the team?
- Can you tell how s/he feels about always being picked last? Have you ever experienced that feeling? How did it affect you?

You also might share an audio version of the song with students: "Right Field" is available on several Peter, Paul, and Mary CDs, including *No Easy Walk to Freedom* (1986) and *Around the Campfire* (1998). Music and lyrics are also available in the *Around the Campfire Songbook*.

[Don't Laugh at Me](#)

After reading "Don't Laugh at Me," engage students in a discussion of its messages. You might prompt discussion with such questions as:

- Who are some of the people mentioned in the poem who are feeling pain? Why are they feeling that way?
- The poem includes the words "I'm fat, I'm thin, I'm short, I'm tall, I'm deaf, I'm blind, hey, aren't we all..." What do those words mean? How might we all be "blind" to some people?
- Do you think most people can relate to the words of this song? Have you ever felt the way the people mentioned in the song feel?
- Is it fair to say that *tolerance* is one of the main themes of this song?

You also can share this song with students: "Don't Laugh at Me" is available on the Peter, Paul, and Mary CD titled *Songs of Conscience & Concern* (1999).

You might read aloud the words of one more Peter, Paul, and Mary song that has a message of tolerance: [Because All Men Are Brothers](#).

Extend the Lesson: Curriculum Connections for Multiple Intelligences

- Art. Paint or draw a picture that evokes the feelings captured in the song.
- Language/Poetry. Challenge students to write a poem about their own feelings about being left out, about times when they experienced intolerance, or about how it must feel to be in the shoes of somebody else who experiences those feelings. Or students might write about a personal experience related to the theme of "Don't Laugh at Me."
- Music. Students (perhaps two boys and a girl) join together to perform one of the songs for their classmates.
- Theater. Perform a recitation/dramatic reading of one of the poems.
- Technology. Create and illustrate a PowerPoint presentation or video to accompany one of the songs.

Assessment

Assessment will vary according to the follow-up project that each student selects.

You might ask students to choose the poem they liked best and to write a paragraph explaining why that poem spoke to them.

Lesson Plan Source

Education World

Submitted By

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peterpaulandmary.com

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[No Easy Walk To Freedom](#)
1986



[Peter Paul & Mommy, Too](#)
1993



[Around The Campfire](#)
1998



[The Collection](#)
1998



[Carry It On](#)
2004

SONGBOOKS:

[Around the Campfire](#)

VIDEOS:

[25th Anniversary](#)
[Peter Paul & Mommy](#)
[Too](#)

RIGHT FIELD

Willy Welch- © 1986 *Playing Right Music*

Saturday summers, when I was a kid
 We'd run to the schoolyard and here's what we did
 We'd pick out the captains and we'd choose up the teams
 It was always a measure of my self esteem
 Cuz the fastest, the strongest, played shortstop and first
 The last ones they picked were the worst
 I never needed to ask, it was sealed,
 I just took up my place in right field.
 Playing...

chorus:

*Right field, it's easy, you know.
 You can be awkward and you can be slow
 That's why I'm here in right field
 Just watching the dandelions grow*

Playing right field can be lonely and dull
 Little Leagues never have lefties that pull
 I'd dream of the day they'd hit one my way
 They never did, but still I would pray
 That I'd make a fantastic catch on the run
 And not lose the ball in the sun
 And then I'd awake from this long reverie
 And pray that the ball never came out to me
 Here in...

(chorus)

Off in the distance, the game's dragging on,
 There's strikes on the batter, some runners are on.
 I don't know the inning, I've forgotten the score.
 The whole team is yelling and I don't know what for.
 Then suddenly everyone's looking at me
 My mind has been wandering; what could it be?
 They point at the sky and I look up above
 And a baseball falls into my glove!

Here in right field, it's important you know.
 You gotta know how to catch, you gotta know how to throw,
 That's why I'm here in right field, just watching the dandelions
 grow!



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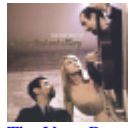
[Songs Of Conscience & Concern](#)
 1999



[In These Times](#)
 2004



[Carry It On](#)
 2004



[The Very Best of](#)
 2005

DON'T LAUGH AT ME

([Steve Seskin](#)/Allen Shamblin)

I'm a little boy with glasses
 The one they call a geek
 A little girl who never smiles
 'Cause I have braces on my teeth
 And I know how it feels to cry myself to sleep
 I'm that kid on every playground
 Who's always chosen last
 A single teenage mother
 Tryin' to overcome my past
 You don't have to be my friend
 But is it too much to ask

Don't laugh at me
 Don't call me names
 Don't get your pleasure from my pain
 In God's eyes we're all the same
 Someday we'll all have perfect wings
 Don't laugh at me

I'm the beggar on the corner
 You've passed me on the street
 And I wouldn't be out here beggin'
 If I had enough to eat
 And don't think I don't notice
 That our eyes never meet

Don't laugh at me
 Don't call me names
 Don't get your pleasure from my pain
 In God's eyes we're all the same
 Someday we'll all have perfect wings
 Don't laugh at me

I'm fat, I'm thin, I'm short, I'm tall
 I'm deaf, I'm blind, yes, I think in a way, we're all
 I'm black, I'm white and I am brown
 I'm Christian, I'm Jewish, and I am Muslim
 I'm gay, I'm lesbian, I'm American Indian
 I'm very, very young, I'm quite aged
 I'm very wealthy, I'm very, very poor

Don't laugh at me
 Don't call me names
 Don't get your pleasure from my pain
 In God's eyes we're all the same
 Someday we'll all have perfect wings
 Don't laugh at me

My country 'tis of thee
 Oh, sweet land of liberty
 It is of thee that I sing

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 Nashville, TN 37203



[See What Tomorrow Brings](#)
1965



[Songs Of Conscience & Concern](#)



[Carry It On](#)
2004

BECAUSE ALL MEN ARE BROTHERS

Bach/Glazer- *Amrita Music Corp. ASCAP*

Because all men are brothers wherever men may be
One Union shall unite us forever proud and free
No tyrant shall defeat us, no nation strike us down
All men who toil shall greet us the whole wide world around.

My brothers are all others forever hand in hand
Where chimes the bell of freedom there is my native land
My brother's fears are my fears yellow white or brown
My brother's tears are my tears the whole wide world around.

Let every voice be thunder, let every heart beat strong
Until all tyrants perish our work shall not be done
Let not our memories fail us the lost year shall be found
Let slavery's chains be broken the whole wide world around.