**Protest Poetry Package**

**1. “Ohio” by Crosby, Nash, Stills and Young**

Tin soldiers and Nixon coming,  
We're finally on our own.  
This summer I hear the drumming,  
Four dead in Ohio.  
  
Gotta get down to it  
Soldiers are cutting us down  
Should have been done long ago.  
What if you knew her  
And found her dead on the ground  
How can you run when you know?  
  
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"Ohio" was written by Neil Young in reaction to the Kent State shootings of the 4th of May 1970, after he had seen photos of the incident. Neil Young said, *"It's still hard to believe I had to write this song. It's ironic that I capitalized on the death of these American students. Probably the biggest lesson ever learned at an American place of learning. My best CSNY cut. Recorded totally live in Los Angeles. David Crosby cried after this take."* Ohio" wasn't played on major AM radio stations because the song mentions the President at the time, Richard Nixon.

The lyrics reflect a difficult time where citizens were outraged after the Kent State shootings where Ohio National Guardsmen shot and killed four students who were peacefully protesting. The fact that Nixon (the sitting United States President at the time) was named was considered to be a bold move by Young. In fact, it was so bold that it was considered “antinationalistic” and many radio stations refused to play it for years. The ways in which the song challenges the administration of the United States makes it an excellent example of a protest song. The lyrics leave no room for questioning whether it was directed at the President or not – that is clear. The song later acted as an anthem for counterculture.

2. “Dulce et Decorum Est” Wilfred Owen

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,  
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,  
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs  
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.  
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots  
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;  
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind.

Gas! Gas! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling,  
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;  
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling  
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime...  
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,  
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,  
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace  
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,  
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,  
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;  
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,  
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud  
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—  
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est*  
*Pro patria mori*.

This poem was written during World War 1 when Owen himself was a soldier. He was later sent to a treatment facility in Scotland to recover from “Shell Shock”. He met another soldier/poet named Siegfried Sassoon who supported him as a poet and author and helped to publish his works after his premature death at the age of 25.

The poem actively addresses the propaganda that occurred during WW1 when he refers to “the old lie” that it is glorious and fitting to die for one’s country.

1. How do we know that this poem is criticizing war and not celebrating it?

3. “Paper Planes” by M.I.A

I fly like paper, get high like planes  
If you catch me at the border I got visas in my name  
If you come around here, I make 'em all day  
I get one down in a second if you wait

I fly like paper, get high like planes  
If you catch me at the border I got visas in my name  
If you come around here, I make 'em all day  
I get one down in a second if you wait

Sometimes I think sitting on trains  
Every stop I get to I'm clicking my gun  
Everyone's a winner we're making that fame  
Bonafide hustler making my name

Sometimes I think sitting on trains  
Every stop I get to I'm clocking that game  
Everyone's a winner now we're making that fame  
Bonafide hustler making my name

All I wanna do is  
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Man I'm rollin' through the city, old school on them big boys  
12 inch woofers in the trunk making big noise  
Got the big toys (toys), dont make me have to flash  
Let a hundred rounds go, you do a hundred yard dash  
Back up in the hood where the rules dont shift  
And the gangstas talk trills, sip purp and burn piff  
You can call 5-0 and 5-0 might come  
But by the time that they arrive all that dirt had been done  
Now one things for certain, and two things for sure  
Being poor is a disease, gotta hustle up a cure  
Start with your head homie then use your hands  
If you try it in reverse, you dont even have a chance  
We worldwide worried with the hunger and the thirst  
From the third world countries to the second and the first  
It sounds like a verse but it's more like a plan  
Get your Robin Hood on, put some pressure on the man, tell it

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I wake up in the morning with my b\*\*\*\* in the bed  
She don't like the police and she sure hate the feds  
I love my girl 'cause she gives me what I want  
She ride in the trunk or either ride in the front  
She looks like 22 but she really 45  
Some reason she done made a whole lotta n\*\*\*\*\* cry  
So bad that she make 'em all pull they money out  
Take it out they pockets and they put it in my pouch  
Ouch! gotta hurt the way that girl do ya  
She always wanna what take, take, take the moolah  
Gimmie them pesos the cash and the credit card  
Might be a broad but the lil' b\*\*\*\* hit ya hard  
You the police and we is the robbers  
You need more than them helicopters to stop us  
Excuse me, let me introduce my lady  
Her name is Beretta and she mothaf\*\*\*in crazy

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The lyrics for this song are inspired by the artists’ struggles as an immigrant to the United States and the kind of reactions and treatment that immigrants in general receive when coming from “third world” countries to the US. She is satirizing the view that immigrants are money hungry, visa-seekers who are only interested in stealing from American “citizens” while ignoring the atrocities that most immigrants are escaping from.

1. Dissect this poem and find examples of poetic devices. Label them on the poem.
2. Next, identify a few examples of strong lyrics that support the idea that she is mocking the belief described above.

**Protest Poetry Assignment**

In the assigned groups decide upon **three critical standards** that would make an effective protest poem. Browse through a bunch of poems and pick the one that you feel is most effective (in other words meets the standards). Present it to the class, and then convince us that it is effective (explain HOW the poem meets the standards.

**Part 1: Presenting poem (communication/critical thinking)10 marks**

Choral reading: Decide on an effective and creative way to read the poem to the class using all the group members. You may want to build to a finale, create a dialogue or individual voices, emphasize a key word or phrase, etc. Background music or sound effects could also be used. You will be marked on the smoothness of the reading and on the effectiveness of your chosen strategy.

**Part 2: Analysis (communication/critical thinking/knowledge) 15 marks**

State your 3 critical standards. Convince the class that this poem is an effective protest. Does it shock and horrify? Create strong emotions? Paint a vivid image? How does it do these things? Remember to use strong examples from the poem to support your answer.

Submit a written copy of your presentation notes to the teacher after the presentation complete with works cited for the poem that you use.

**Topics to consider:** War, Poverty, Environment, Human Rights Abuses, Social Problems, Government, etc.

**Artists to look at:** Bob Dylan, Kurt Weil, John Pryne, Tom Paxton, Buffy Ste. Marie (Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee), Woodie Guthrie, Mark Twain (The War Prayer), Mamas and the Papas (Where Have All the Flowers Gone), Lauryn Hill, Pink Floyd, Ani DeFranco, Bruce Cockburn (If I Had a Rocket Launcher), William Wordsworth (The Chimney Sweeper), Black Eye Peas (Where is the Love?), Pink (Hey, Mr. President), Lily Allen (The Fear), Wilfred Owen, etc.

**Protest Poetry Rubric Peer Evaluation**

**Name of Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Person being Evaluated: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Knowledge** | Did not achieve a level 3 | Achieved a level 3 | Achieved more than a level 3 |
| -provides relevant quotations to support points |  |  |  |
| -is able to clearly explain the theme and general content of the poem |  |  |  |
| -can explain and give examples of technical aspects of the poem |  |  |  |
| -is able to answer questions posed by the audience |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Thinking** | Did not achieve a Level 3 | Achieved a Level 3 | Achieved more than a level 3 |
| -presents a strong argument/thesis for the poem’s effectiveness |  |  |  |
| -selects creative styles that enhance the message of the poem |  |  |  |
| -create and articulate standards of effectiveness upon which the poem is judged and that are specific to protest poetry |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Communication** |  |  |  |
| -a variety of audio-visual techniques are used to enhance meaning and engage audience |  |  |  |
| -good speak skills are demonstrated (tone, posture, eye-contact, etc) |  |  |  |
| -wording is well-phrased and appropriate to audience |  |  |  |
| -the presentation has good flow with each member knowing their role |  |  |  |
| -ideas are presented in an organized manner with clear transitions |  |  |  |

The two things that were strongest about this presentation were…

The main area for improvement is …