

# Example of american music at wartime essay

[War](#), [Civil War](#)



## Question 1

Although the American Civil War and World War I were less than a century apart, the two wars produced vastly different types of music. The American Civil War was a war within a country, and the songs and compositions that appeared during the Civil War were influenced by that reality. On the other hand, World War I was very far from the United States, and the distance certainly affected the type and thematic issues addressed within the music of the World War I time period.

Many experts on music cite the Civil War as being the time that American folk music began to take shape. The music of the time was rife with brass instruments like horns; it also had a distinctly patriotic air, often utilizing fifes, drums, and bugles. The Confederacy is considered to have contributed some of the greatest examples of brass band pieces during this time; the instruments needed to play these pieces were mobile and nearly anyone could fit into a band and play the parts. Some of the influences of the music written during the American Civil War went on to form the foundation of jazz music in later years.

World War I happened in the midst of the jazz craze in the United States. The war saw an influx of patriotic music, but jazz was the focus of many musicians during the time. Because the war was so far from American shores, patriotic music focused heavily on doing one's duty at home. Again, composers of the era utilized jazz mechanisms to portray patriotic messages for their listeners. Sometimes, the patriotism became somewhat exaggerated; the American folk song "Yankee Doodle Dandy" was written

during this time as an exaggeration of the patriotism and patriotic songs that were often written and performed.

## Question 2

Music has always been one of the most effective ways for people to communicate to each other. For this reason, protest music is and has always been very important to various groups dedicated to a variety of different causes. One of the first groups that made a name for themselves as artists protesting the status quo was the Hutchinson Family Singers. This group was active in the early to mid-1800s, participating in the abolitionist groups that were forming in the years leading up to and immediately following the Civil War.

Although the Hutchinson Family Singers were famous for their abolitionist music, their songs also featured themes like women's suffrage, workers' rights, and temperance. For their time, this group was incredibly active in a number of groups that were concerned with social justice, and they were very influential on American folk music of the day. The Hutchinson Family Singers were important musically because they formed one of the first successful (and, arguably, famous) four-part bands; this model for singers would become popular in later generations with the rise of musical genres like the barbershop quartet.

The Hutchinson Family Singers were able to spread their message quite effectively around New England because of the quick rise to success that the group had. The group was formed out of a family group, and this was part of the lure for the crowds; in the years leading up to the Civil War, groups like the Hutchinson Family Singers could effectively reach more people via song

than some of the great thinkers of the day could via treatise.

The model set forth by the Hutchinson Family Singers would continue to grow and evolve as America and American music grew and evolved over the years. However, the basic premise of the idea of musicians as the drivers of social change remains the same: even to this day, the more famous the musician, the more press he or she will get for speaking out against (or for) certain political policies.

Another composer that is famous for his protest songs is Bob Dylan, who wrote the famous piece "The Times They Are A-Changin,'" which is arguably one of the most haunting and beautiful protest songs written to date. Dylan's work is unique because it speaks to the inevitability of change as a result of the change in the people's mindset. It was a powerful protest song because it carries such a positive message.

### **Question 3**

The Vietnam War is often thought of as a war in which most of the citizenry were opposed to military action. Indeed, when the idea of "protest songs" is raised, it is most common to think of the Vietnam War as the era of protest music. However, there were pro-Vietnam War songs, as well; these songs were written and performed in the mainstream just as frequently as the anti-Vietnam War songs were. Indeed, the American government supported and sometimes even funded these songs as a way to drum up support from the American people.

Songs that decried the Vietnam War frequently called for peace and were linked to the hippie movement of the day, but songs that were pro-Vietnam War often harkened back to the time of the patriotic American battle song.

Many of the pro-Vietnam War songs had themes similar to those of the World War II and World War I-era war songs; they contained many lyrical and musical allusions to pieces such as “ The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” “ Battle Cry of Freedom,” and even “ The Star-Spangled Banner.”

One common theme throughout the music created during every war that America has been involved in is the theme of patriotism. Pro-war music in American culture tries to instill in the listener a sense of love for his or her country; this can be seen in songs such as “ God Bless the USA,” “ God Bless America,” and “ You’re a Grand Old Flag.” Usually, these pieces of music use musical allusions that the listener will recognize, and a number of different musical techniques to tug the listener’s heartstrings.