

# Sample essay on how does music influence politics

Countries, United States



Music has for years without number formed an integral part of mankind from its very existence. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in acknowledging this fundamental and pivotal role of music stated asserts that music is a universal language. According to him, human beings, through music are able to communicate their emotions, feelings and attitudes towards various issues within the society. Songs have been crafted to touch and influence almost every aspect of the human life-from birth to dating, romance and marriage to death and life supposedly thereafter, to events in-between, sports, work as well as politics, the list is endless. Every event, success, failures and challenges in the life of mankind are best captured in songs not only due to the respite and relief that lie therein but also their timeless nature. They remain in memory and play even long after the demise of the singer and composer. Many musicians while conscious of the inherent power that lie in music, used it as a tool to champion political revolutions and influence; some of which revolutions and influence shaped the global political landscape we are enjoying or love to hate today.

The most typical example of the influence of music on politics is national anthems that are on most occasions if not all reminiscent of the struggle of the citizenry for liberty and economic autonomy. National anthems, historical songs and military band music have been used in many countries to express nationhood and patriotism. These provide the platform and the basis upon which politics is based. For instance, the National Anthem of the United States of America, though composed and first sang around 1814, the message therein still remain strikingly relevant and continue to shape the politics of today. The anthem reminds Americans of their war-ravaged past,

the dawn of freedom and clamour for braveness, superiority and success. Any politician keen on winning the citizenry's trust always endeavours to capture the fundamentals of the anthem. Any President or elected official intent on staying longer in office must plan and spin out agenda that are in sync with the ideals enshrined not only in the American Constitution but also in the lyrics of the national anthem.

Besides being used a medium of expression of nationhood and patriotism, music has for donkey's years been employed as a platform for expressing protest at the excesses of the regimes or power-that-be. These include but not limited to music about discrimination of any kind, poverty and oppression. Such anti-establishment lyrics function to not only inform, mobilize, empower and motivate the masses but also to subvert certain anomalous practices. In fact, many songs have in the recent past been made in direct response to politics and political practices.. Many songs were composed in response to wars with the aim of subverting or stopping the same completely and on some occasions, encouraging the same to meet a particular end. The entertainment function was never rudimentary. For instance, Bob Marley vide his song " War" suggests war as the only solution to the widespread racial segregation that sees most of the ' people of colour' oppressed and treated in an inhuman manner. He also loathes the widening gap between the haves and the have nots. Marley is confident that only an uprising can help save the situation. He employs various stylistic devices including alliterations, regular rhyme schemes and figurative language to convince the ' second class citizens' to go to war to protect their dignity. His songs contributed a lot to and influence the struggle against racial

segregation. Moreover, like Bob Marley, Bob Dylan, a prolific and world-beating musician wrote a plethora of music touching on the events of his time including wars. He criticized the decisions of the political class in driving the innocent citizens, men and women into wars they themselves have engineered. He in his song "Masters of War" repeatedly indicated that it was wrong and unethical for politicians to create and build wars that threatened the lives of the citizens and soldiers. Dylan employs anaphora as a stylistic device; he reiterates or repeats various words. Notice the repeated use of 'You' at the beginning of every phrase? The approach in use of various stylistic devices in the aforesaid songs is profound as most deal with very delicate, dicey and dangerous themes such as war and politics. It is notable that Marley's song helped influence and shape the political landscapes of South Africa, Angola and Mozambique.

Most of the songs of the 60's and 70's influenced the social and political environment in various countries. A lot of artists wrote songs based on politics and in particular those that in their opinion underpinned the Vietnam War. Bob Dylan's song "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall", though replete with alliteration and repletion and is prima facie ambiguous, voices an opinion on the Vietnam War which was at the material time raging. , uses paradox to paint a picture of the situation while at the same time mocking and condemning the political class whose decisions led to those situations. He sings thus "I saw guns and sharp swords in the hands of young children". This is a paradox because ordinarily, guns and sharp swords are not commonly held by common adult citizens let alone children. He depicts a story of the far-reaching and devastating effects of war in the lives of the

civilians. Further, the Public Enemy band, just like Rage against the Machine during this time helped shape the black liberation movement in the United States of America.

Various genres of Music have for so many years been associated with certain political machinations. For instance, folk or traditional or participatory music was employed in union, uprising, strikes, protests and documenting injustices while Jazz was majorly used to stop or stem off the Nazi regime and as a consequence of which they were banned from airplay in 1933 in Berlin. For instance, " We Shall Overcome" was a political folk song very popular and synonymous with the Civil Rights Movements in the United States of America. Moreover, the struggles against poor working conditions and class segregation in the 20th Century led to growth of the Labour Movement and facilitated composition of songs advocating social and political reforms. Joe Hill, The Weavers and Woody Guthrie were some of the most prominent songwriters who championed and advocated change vide their songs. Political folk songs by Ray Korona, Charlie King and Anne Feeny advocated various issues touching on environment, labour, social justice and peace. Racist music as a rather infamous genre promoted and effectively propagated neo-Nazism and White-supremacy ideologies. Country music on the other hand advocated nationalism, brotherliness, religion and patriotism. For instance Merle Haggard's " The Fighting Side Of Me" and " Okie from Muskogee" were perceived to be patriotic and anti-war.

## **Works Cited**

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