

Lesson 10.2

SATIRE AND POLITICS*

Objective: Students will demonstrate their understanding of how humor can be used as a political tool by writing satiric lyrics on a current political issue, after studying a satiric song written during the Prohibition era.

Background Reading: Chapter Ten, Section One

Materials:

- **Doc 10.2:** Copies of sheet music to "Where Do They Go When They Row, Row, Row?"
- Piano and pianist, if possible, to play and sing the song

Timing: 3-4 class periods

Procedure:

1. Review Chapter Ten, Section One with students, focusing on Prohibition. Make sure students are aware of Maine's unique role as a model for National Prohibition, and that Maine was legally dry from 1851 until Prohibition was repealed in 1933 (see pp. 166-168 of textbook).
2. Play and sing the song for students, if possible (have the class take a field trip to the music room!). Have students follow along with their sheet music. Teach students the basic melody to the song and have them sing it a couple of times.
3. Discuss the song lyrics with students. Ask them questions like the following:
 - What is this song about? How can you tell?
 - What does this song have to do with Maine?
 - How is the situation that is hinted at in the song similar to the situation described by Arthur Woodward in the textbook? Why do you think that bootlegging activity was so heavy off the coast? (Boats that were anchored three miles offshore were out of state jurisdiction, so they could legally carry liquor.)
 - The songwriter uses many puns in the song. What are some of these puns? (dry, wet, rocking the boat, foam)
 - What is the songwriter's opinion of Prohibition? How can you tell?
 - What does he think of "Men who agreed Prohibition was right"? How can you tell?
 - Could you call this song a form of protest against Prohibition? Why or why not?
 - How does the humor in the song make it effective?
4. Introduce students to the term *satire* (the method of using sarcasm or humor to make fun of foolishness or corruption). Personalize it: brainstorm with students ways they or people they know may use sarcasm or humor to make fun of others. Make a list of sarcastic or humorous insults on the board (keep this light and good-humored--make sure students do not begin insulting each other).
5. Ask students to explain how "Where Do They Go When They Row, Row, Row?" could be described as a satiric song. (It makes fun of the poorly enforced Prohibition law by using puns and humor.)

6. Tell students they will have a chance to practice their own satiric skills. Have them choose a familiar melody and write lyrics to it that satirize a current political issue, either on the local, state, or federal level. Brainstorm possible issues with students (i.e. an unpopular dress code, a local law against skateboarding, an unpopular political figure, etc.). If student cannot think of an issue or rule they want to satirize, suggest some for them.
7. Give students time in class and at home to work on their satiric lyrics. You may choose to have them work in pairs or by themselves. When they are finished, have them share their song lyrics with the class. Have the class rate song lyrics according to how effectively the satire works. Collect student lyrics for grading.

Evaluation: Grade student lyrics according to creativity and how effectively the satire works. Alternatively, you may choose to have students evaluate their own lyrics, and forgo the grade (since it is a creative project). Students may include their songs in their Unit Portfolio, if they choose.

Follow-up Activities:

- Have students collect examples of satire they find in the current media. These may be songs, speeches, comments, or advertisements. Create a classroom satire book on current political issues.
- Have students rewrite the song "Where Do They Go When They Row, Row, Row?" as a pro-Prohibition song. Have them evaluate the effectiveness of the song when it is no longer a satire.

***Note:** This lesson is based on the research and educational programming accompanying the Maine Historical Society's exhibition "Rum, Riot and Reform: Maine and the History of American Drinking."

Alignment with the Learning Results:

Grade Level: **6th-8th**

Content Area: Social Studies: **APPLICATIONS**

Standard: **Researching and Developing Positions on Current Social Studies Issues**

Students research, select, and present a position on a current social studies issue by proposing and revising research questions, and locating and selecting information from multiple and varied sources.

Descriptor **A1c:** Locate and access relevant information that includes multiple perspectives from varied sources.

Grade Level: **9th-dipl.**

Content Area: Visual and Performing Arts: **CREATION, PERFORMANCE, AND EXPRESSION - MUSIC**

Standard: **Composition**

Performance Indicator **B2:** Students compare musical ideas expressed in their own compositions or the compositions of others.



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Where Do They Go When They Row-Row-Row?

Words by
T. KALMAR &
GEORGE JESSEL

Music by
HARRY RUBY

Moderato

Till Ready

Voice

Ev - er since they passed the pro - hib - it - ion law —
Some - one that I know pulled off a clev - er stunt —

I've been puz - zled o - ver some - thing that I saw; — I've no - ticed late - ly where -
He bought lots of lots a - long the riv - er front; — Hell make a for - tune just

ev - er I go, — Most ev - 'ry - bod - y is learn - ing to row. — This is what's get -
take it from me, — Ev - 'ry - ones go - ing to live by the sea. — They claim it's just

ting my goat, — Ev - 'ry - one's buy - ing a boat. —
for the air, — That's not the on - ly thing there. —

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Chorus

Where do they go when they row, row, row, Three miles a - way — from the

shore? — Why do they go there and what do they get? — They go out
Men who a - greed Pro - hib - it - ion was right, — Hire — a

dry and they come back so wet, — Why do they load up with dough, dough, dough?
boat and then stay out all night. —

They must have some - thing in store, — Why do you see emp - ty bot - tles a - float?
It's not the o - cean, it must be the foam,

And why do they all come back rock - ing the boat? — Where do they go when they
That makes lov - ing hus - bands come stag - ger - ing home —

row, row, row, Three miles a - way — from the shore? — shore?

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