

The Legacy of 9/11

Essential Question

What influence did music have on the processing of 9/11 as a collective American community?
How did/does 9/11 impact the perception of Muslim artists in the music industry today?

Enduring Understanding

Music is not merely a reflection of the current moment but has a crucial impact on how we as a society form opinions on major world events.

Learning Outcomes

Students will know:

- The response to 9/11 by popular musicians at the time
- The importance of music in processing 9/11 as Americans
- The impact of 9/11 on Muslim musicians today

Students will be able to:

- Compare and contrast the impact of one band's performances in two different 9/11 tributes
- Apply these same analyses to understand the message behind the music students' listen to, whether they see the music as apolitical or political
- Understanding the difficulties Muslims musicians face in the music industry today

Standards:

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.2:** Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.
- **CCSS.RH.9-10.1:** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- **ISBE SEL 2A:** Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.
 - a. **4a:** Analyze similarities and differences between one's own and others' perspectives.
 - a. **5a:** Demonstrate how to express understanding of those who hold different opinions.
 - b. **5b:** Demonstrate ways to express empathy for others.

Vocabulary:

- **Anti-Muslim Racism:** the unique ways in which people perceived as Muslim are discriminated against on both individually and systemically; while anti-Muslim racism targets Muslims, it also impacts other non-Muslims who are mislabeled such as Sikhs

and Christian Arabs

- **SWANA:** Southwest Asia and North Africa; the region of the world most targeted by the “Global War on Terror”; the term “SWANA” is used in place of “Middle East” which reflects a Euro-centric view of Asia (SWANA is the “middle” part of the area east of Europe); people in SWANA identify as Arab, Persian, Turkish, Amazigh, Kurdish, Druze, among other ethnicities and are devoted to a variety of religions including Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.
- **Global War on Terror:** an ongoing military campaign by the U.S. government in the wake of the 9/11 attacks; this war is also referred to as the “Never-ending War”

Time:

50-60 Minutes

Materials:

- Performances of Bon Jovi at the two tribute concerts
 - The “America: A Tribute to Heroes” can be found for free on Youtube [here](#)
 - “The Concert for New York City” performance can be rented from YouTube for \$2.99 or bought for \$10.99
 - Alternatively, you can find all of the music videos for the songs performed at the concert for free on YouTube.
- Supplementary performances of Muslim musicians you choose to discuss in the closing discussion
 - Again, all their music is readily accessible on YouTube for free

Procedure:

- (5-10 minutes) **Contextualizing:** Ask students what they know about 9/11.
- (40 minutes) **Compare and contrast:** compare the performances at the the “America: A Tribute to Heroes” benefit concert on September 21, 2001 and “The Concert for New York City” on October 20, 2001
 - Objective: students will understand the shift post-9/11 from the idea of unity to the sentiment that we must go to war for revenge
 - Students are shown two performances of Bon Jovi: their performance of “Living on a Prayer” at the “America: A Tribute to Heroes” benefit concert on September 21, 2001, and their performance of “Wanted Dead or Alive” at “The Concert for New York City” on October 20, 2001 (their set at the second concert was “Living on a Prayer,” “Wanted Dead or Alive,” and “It’s My Life”)
 - Students analyze the lyrics and music of the two songs identifying what is “peaceful” about this music or what is “violent” about this music.
 - While students will primarily focus on the lyrics, also be sure to include questions about the sonic material. Conversational points can include tempo, rhythm, distortion, key, timbre, etc.
 - Students will then hypothesize why Bon Jovi chose these particular songs to perform and why he did not perform “Wanted Dead or Alive” at the first concert
 - As you close this discussion, ask students how music impacts public perception.

Can music change public opinion or does music merely reflect what is going on in society?

- (10-15 minutes) **Closing:** Ask students how these concerts impacted Muslim musicians' ability to become popular. One question you can use to frame this conversation: If you were a Muslim during this time period, what would you do to get a record deal? Would you change anything about yourself?
 - Consider a popular musician today who identifies as Muslim. How does their identity influence their music and perception in the music industry? Muslim artists that students may know include Yasiin Bey (Mos Def), DJ Khaled, Zayn Malik, Ice Cube, Lupe Fiasco, Busta Rhymes, Akon, Yuna, and Janet Jackson
 - Example musicians and discussions:
 - French Montana (rap)
 - In the promotional materials for his 2019 album *Montana*, French Montana used imagery of niqabi women in red thigh-high boots. Several Muslim scholars and activists accused French Montana of sexualizing Muslim women and reducing their religious devotion to articles of clothing. This sexualization of women is a common trope in post-2000s rap music and the recurring imagery of “video vixens” (first popularized in 80s metal videos on MTV). However, rap music is much more diverse than this particular recurring image and, at its origins, is not built on the sexualization of women but rather the building of community.
 - Read more about the critique of this promotional material [here](#).
 - The promotional image of the album can be found [here](#) and the video promotion can be found [here](#).
 - Ask students why French Montana showed this particular imagery. Why does French Montana use the imagery of covered Muslim women in red boots as a way to assert his “Muslim-ness” and “American-ness”? What better images could he have chosen? How does this choice reflect the stereotypes of Muslims after 9/11?
 - Try to emphasize in this discussion that not all Muslim women wear hijab and that this is only one way to express one’s devotion to God. Muslims of all genders often dress modestly to show their devotion to God.
 - SZA (r’n’b)
 - In an interview, SZA stated she wore hijab until the 9/11 attacks. You can read more about it [here](#) and [here](#).
 - Ask students if they knew SZA was Muslim and focus on how the music industry erases her Muslim identity. Why is she not marketed as a Muslim woman?
 - Try to emphasize in this discussion that not all Muslim women wear hijab and that this is only one way to express one’s devotion to God. Muslims of all genders often dress modestly to show their devotion to God.
 - Closing question: How can we as musicians support Muslims?

Talking Points

- **9/11**
 - The day in which al-Qaeda, a violent organization, took over 4 airplanes crashing two of them into the World Trade Center (the Twin Towers) in New York City. Another plane crashed into the Pentagon in Virginia, and in the last plane, the passengers fought back and the plane crashed in Western Pennsylvania
 - Nearly 3,000 people died that day
 - Over 800,000 people have died in the “Global War on Terror” or the “Never-ending War”
 - Your students have never lived during a time in which the United States has not been fighting in the “Global War on Terror”
 - For further talking points, see this [slidedeck](#)
- **Bon Jovi**
 - An American rock band that rose in popularity in the 1980s
 - One of the best selling rock bands in U.S. history (selling over 100 records worldwide)
 - They were inducted into the US Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2018.
 - Some of their hit singles include “Livin On a Prayer,” “You Give Love a Bad Name,” and “It’s My Life” (just to name a few)
 - They performed a cover of the Beatles’ song “Here Comes the Sun” at the Biden-Harris inauguration.
- **“America: A Tribute to Heroes” benefit concert**
 - A commercial-less telethon that aired across the four major broadcast networks Fox, ABC, NBC, and CBS
 - The telethon included a phone bank with celebrities such as Meg Ryan, Jack Nicholson, Sally Field, Adam Sandler, Whoopi Goldberg, and Reba McEntire
 - Emphasize these were some of the most famous celebrities in 2001
 - Aired September 21, 2001
 - The previous night, George W. Bush said to a joint session Congress and televised address to the American people, “the enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends. It is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists and every government that supports them”
 - This concert focused on a message of “unity” after the attacks
 - this 90-minute broadcast raised over \$200 million dollars for the United Way
- **“The Concert for New York City”**
 - A tribute concert for the New York Police Department (NYPD) and New York Fire Department (NYFD)
 - Aired October 20, 2001, broadcasted live on VH1, and raised \$35million+
 - One-hour edited version aired on CBS in November 2001 and a CD/DVD was released of the concert
 - Unlike the first concert, this concert focused on a message of war/revenge
 - a New York City firefighter shouted on camera, “Osama Bin Laden, you can kiss my royal Irish ass” followed by deep baritone chant “U.S.A.” in the crowd

- When Richard Gere took the stage to say he did not think the solution to 9/11 healing was another war, he was immediately met with “boos” from the audience—a response that was edited out of the DVD version of the concert.
- Two weeks before this concert, the United States along with Great Britain launched targeted airstrikes in Afghanistan (October 7)
 - This message of war/vengeance, then, was aligned with the government’s move away from unity towards the “Global War on Terror”
- **Muslim Representation at the tribute concerts**
 - At the “A Tribute to American Heroes” concert the only Muslim representation was a short clip of Muslim children at an Islamic school describing their experiences of bullying and a short speech by Muhammad Ali. No Muslim musicians were featured on the program. “The Concert for New York City” did not feature any Muslim people speaking or performing.

Further Reading

- Garofalo, ReeBee. 2007. “Pop Goes ToWar, 2001–2004: U.S. Popular Music after 9/11.” In *Music in the Post-9/11 World*, edited by Jonathan Ritter and J. Martin Daughtry, 3–26. New York: Routledge.