

## Group 2: World War I

### [World War I Songs](#)

American popular sheet music from 1913-1918 reflects the changing public perspectives on the war. Some of these songs were popular enough to have been recorded, and these early recordings can often be found online.

**Directions:** You will have 20 minutes for this portion of the class.

- Read the General Information section of the page and look at the questions below.
- Read the lyrics and listen to the recording of either “I didn’t raise my boy to be a soldier” or “Over there.”
- Discuss your responses to the songs as a group
- Choose one or more speakers to speak 2-3 minutes following the breakout.
- You may make any notes you wish on the document to help you remember what you want to say.

**Choose one or more of the the following questions to address:**

***What sentiments do these two songs portray and in what way?***

- Clearly anti war (I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier)
- IDRMNTBAS: Trying to convey that war is morally wrong, and that it isn't an innate quality in man because the song points out that “If mothers all would say I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier.”
- “I brought him up to be my pride and joy,” might be a remez to the nature of war, and the psychological effects that were felt worldwide by countries in or watching the war. Millions of people died, and were displaced because of the war. Many independent states rose up as a result.
- Probably from a mothers point of view. She doesn't want her son to go shoot another mothers son. She is against war and what it means.
- Some men were forced to go to war so maybe this is the mother protesting.
- The beginning of the song emphasizes the ten million mothers that broke down in tears, and had to live alone because their son(s) died in war.

***Can you think of music today that expresses attitudes toward recent or current wars?***

Wars have played out in a variety of ways through the centuries and even millenia. They have inspired musicians to pick up their instruments and protest. To write about what they were observing in the experience of others. Or to write about tragedies.

***Examples:***

"How does the grass grow?" released in 2013 by David Bowie addresses how soldiers are thought to kill other soldiers without any remorse. Where, "how does the grass grow" is a chant that the soldiers are taught as they plunge bayonets into dummies.

"The Bigger Picture" by Lil Baby released in 2020 expresses a view towards another modern war: the everyday fight of people of color in America. Similarly, "War Ready" by Vince Staples released in 2016 describes the daily struggle of impoverished communities, in their fight against racial inequality and their experiences in America.

"Harry Patch (In Memory of)", released in 2009 by Radiohead was written to remind everyone of the horrors of war.

All of these songs have one main component in common, they all criticize the horrors of war and how millions of lives are tragically killed every year.