

Assignment sheet

Create an Activism Soundtrack

Music can seem to define an era of history when we look back and reflect on social change. For this challenge, the aim is to develop a playlist that could be considered a 'soundtrack to activism' for one period in Australian history — the 1960s, 70s, 80s or 90s. Artists have always been interested in expressing political and social opinions and ideas through music.

When we listen to certain song lyrics, we may be hearing a message of protest or of celebration intended for society (or for a particular segment of society). For example, the band Yothu Yindi's song *Treaty* speaks of former Prime Minister Bob Hawke's statement that a treaty should exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It was composed by Paul Kelly, Mandawuy Yunupingu, Stewart Kellaway, Cal Williams, Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu, Milkayngu Mununggurr, Witiyana Marika and Peter Garrett. This song has become one of the best-known Australian songs of the 1990s.

In this task, you should use at least two songs that are by Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander artists. The remaining three songs can be from other countries, such as the United Kingdom or the United States of America. These two nations have often led the way in the production of songs of social significance, and because their populations are so much bigger than Australia's and their global reach so much wider, songs from the UK and the USA have come to define a particular historical era. In particular, songs produced during the 1960s and 1970s came to be associated with the civil rights movement and the protest movement against America and Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

As you choose your songs, keep in mind that the song lyrics must relate to the struggle for social justice, the nature and purpose of activism in society and the push for equality, freedom and the idea that all people deserve a fair go.

LESSON 1

Step 1 — Select an era to research

Circle your choice 1960s 1970s 1980s 1990s

Step 2 — Conduct some online research

- Research the music of the era you have selected. Ensure that you include TWO or more songs by Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander artists.
- Compile a list of song titles. You will need five songs on your final playlist, so you should try to locate around 8-10 songs for your preliminary list.

Step 3 — Find song lyrics

- Locate song lyrics for each of the songs you have on your preliminary list. You don't need to print them at this stage.
- Read through the song lyrics carefully and identify the themes and ideas presented in them.
- Then make a selection of five songs to form your final playlist.

LESSON 2

Step 4 — Analyse the lyrics of one song

- Choose one song from your final playlist and print out the lyrics. The song selected for lyric analysis should be written by an Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander artist.
- Write a summary of the sentiments expressed in the song.
- Explain why you believe it is the most appropriate song on your list to illustrate the idea of activism.

Step 5 — Present your work

- Present your playlist in any creative form you choose. It could be a handwritten document, a word processed document, an artwork, an audio recording or in some other form.
- Your analysis of the lyrics of one song should be handwritten on paper.

You can refer to the information about activism that is in the 'Our Leadership and Activism' and 'Our achievements – our music' chapters of *The Little Red Yellow Black Book*, pp. 141-176.

Use search engines like Google and Bing. Check Wikipedia. Use search terms like '60s music Australia', 'popular music 1960s au', and other combinations. Make sure you specify the word 'Indigenous Australia' in order to locate your two songs by Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander performers.