Music from the Vietnam War Era

During the Vietnam War era, music helped people express their beliefs about America’s involvement. Some songs were patriotic, encouraging national pride and support for the troops serving overseas. Other songs were protest songs against what many viewed as an unnecessary war and a government who wouldn’t listen to its citizens.

Two songs that were popular during the Vietnam War era were “***Okie From Muskogee***” by Merle Haggard (1969) and “***Blowin’ in the Wind***” by Bob Dylan (1963). These songs represent opposing viewpoints of the Vietnam War. The following activity requires you to analyze both songs and answer the questions that follow.

Song #1: “***Okie From Muskogee***” by Merle Haggard (1969). Click here for the link to the song on YouTube: [Okie From Muskogee](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dM03dG3zv4)

[](https://www.youtube.com/embed/3dM03dG3zv4?feature=oembed)

1) What stands out to you in this song?

2) How does this song make you feel?

Now read the lyrics to “***Okie From Muskogee***”

We don't [smoke](https://www.definitions.net/definition/smoke) marijuana in Muskogee

We don't take our [trips](https://www.definitions.net/definition/trips) on LSD

We don't burn our [draft](https://www.definitions.net/definition/draft) cards down on Main Street

We like livin' right, and bein' free

We don't make a [party](https://www.definitions.net/definition/party) out of lovin'

We like holdin' [hands](https://www.definitions.net/definition/hands) and pitchin' woo

We don't let our hair grow long and shaggy

Like the [hippies](https://www.definitions.net/definition/hippies) out in San [Francisco](https://www.definitions.net/definition/Francisco) do

I'm [proud](https://www.definitions.net/definition/proud) to be an Okie from Muskogee,

A [place](https://www.definitions.net/definition/place) where even [squares](https://www.definitions.net/definition/squares) can have a ball

We [still](https://www.definitions.net/definition/still) wave Old [Glory](https://www.definitions.net/definition/Glory) down at the courthouse,

And [white](https://www.definitions.net/definition/white) lightnin's [still](https://www.definitions.net/definition/still) the [biggest](https://www.definitions.net/definition/biggest) thrill of all

Leather [boots](https://www.definitions.net/definition/boots) are [still](https://www.definitions.net/definition/still) in [style](https://www.definitions.net/definition/style) for [manly](https://www.definitions.net/definition/manly) footwear

Beads and [Roman](https://www.definitions.net/definition/Roman) sandals won't be seen

Football's [still](https://www.definitions.net/definition/still) the [roughest](https://www.definitions.net/definition/roughest) thing on campus

And the kids here [still](https://www.definitions.net/definition/still) respect the [college](https://www.definitions.net/definition/college) dean

And I'm [proud](https://www.definitions.net/definition/proud) to be an Okie from Muskogee

A [place](https://www.definitions.net/definition/place) where even [squares](https://www.definitions.net/definition/squares) can have a ball.

We [still](https://www.definitions.net/definition/still) wave Old [Glory](https://www.definitions.net/definition/Glory) down at the courthouse

And [white](https://www.definitions.net/definition/white) lightnin's [still](https://www.definitions.net/definition/still) the [biggest](https://www.definitions.net/definition/biggest) thrill of all

3) In his song “***Okie From Muskogee***”, does Merle Haggard encourage Americans to support the war in Vietnam or protest US involvement? Cite evidence from the lyrics to support your answer.

Song #2: “***Blowin’ in the Wind***” by Bob Dylan (1963). Click here for the link to the song on YouTube: [Blowin in the Wind](https://www.youtube.com/embed/jleLj9Pj1Gw?feature=oembed)

[](https://www.youtube.com/embed/jleLj9Pj1Gw?feature=oembed)

4) What stands out to you in this song?

5) How does this song make you feel?

Now read the lyrics to “***Blowin’ in the Wind***”:

How many roads must a man walk down  
Before you call him a man?  
Yes, n how many seas must a white dove sail  
Before she sleeps in the sand?  
Yes, n how many times must the cannon balls fly  
Before they're forever banned?  
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,  
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

How many years can a mountain exist  
Before its washed to the sea?  
Yes, n how many years can some people exist  
Before they're allowed to be free?  
Yes, n how many times can a man turn his head,  
Pretending he just doesn't see?  
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,  
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

How many times must a man look up  
Before he can see the sky?  
Yes, n how many ears must one man have  
Before he can hear people cry?  
Yes, n how many deaths will it take till he knows  
That too many people have died?  
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,  
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

6) In his song “***Blowin’ in the Wind***”, does Bob Dylan encourage Americans to support the war in Vietnam or protest US involvement? Cite evidence from the lyrics to support your answer.

7) Which song do you prefer? Why?