



# UNIT 5 : PROTEST SONGS



## STEP 2 : American Protest Music.

1. WATCH this documentary : « The evolution of American protest music ».

a) **WRITE** the names of songs/artists in this **timeline** of American history.

EVENTS & MOVEMENTS :

7 Year War

Slavery

1756-1763

18th & 19th  
centuries

1920s :

1931 :

1945 :

1950s

1955-1975

1963 :

1964 :

1971 :

1980s

1990s

2000s

2001 :

2009-2017 :

2010s :

ARTISTS & SONGS :

« Yankee Doodle » Richard Chuckburgh & Edward Bangs

« The evolution of American Protest Music »  
short documentary on Youtube, by VOX, 2017.

## b) REMEMBER the documentary and TICK the correct answer(s).

### **Protest songs history is linked to :**

- Technological evolution (radio, TV, internet...).
- Historical events.
- Political and social movements.

### **First protest songs...**

- used famous melodies in order to be easy to sing and remember.
- were recorded in order to be sold.
- were spread orally.



### **Protest songs are powerful because :**

- Music is repetitive and easy to remember.
- Music is controlled by the government.
- Music is a popular art form.

### **Artists use protest music...**

- in order to bring people together.
- in order to bring a movement together.
- to bring down the people.
- to spread ideas and messages.

## 2. « What is Punk ? » Henri ROLLINS.

### a) READ the text.

**Henry Rollins**, born in 1961, is an American musician, actor, writer, television and radio host, and comedian

When someone asks you 'what's punk?' my reply is "If you have to ask, you're never going to know." Apparently someone asked Louie Armstrong or Lightening Hopkins what jazz or the blues were respectively, and apparently that's the answer they gave them, so I don't know who said what to whom when, but a lot of times if you have to ask...

I think it changes from person to person. So what is punk? Everything from the Velvet Underground to Occupy Wall Street and anything in between. The kid who throws his spaghetti from the high chair onto his father's face, he's pushing back. He's sticking it to the man as he sees it. I like that. So that is punk.

So is there punk rock today? Is there punk? Is there a punk ethic? Absolutely. Where there is young people and vitality you're going to find punk rock. You'll find it in the youth of Tehran who want a different future. You'll find it in young people in Saudi Arabia who look at Sharia law and go "No, and I might have to die to overturn it, but I'm not taking this." That to me is punk rock. The questioning of authority, pushing back against established structures of authority, of government, of the way it is. Questioning anything and everything to me is punk rock. [...]

So is it present in our lives today? Absolutely. I find it in music. I find it in art. I find it in filmmaking. I find it in these amazing demonstrations happening all over the world, these Twitter-fed, Facebook-fed flash-mobbing revolutions that are happening all over the world that are indeed changing the course of government, ousting people like Hosni Mubarak and changing people's minds. So yeah, punk rock is alive and well.

Henri Rollins, interviewed by *Bigthink.com*, 2012.

### b) ANSWER these questions in full sentences in your notebook.

1. What is this text about ?
2. Is Henri Rollins's first answer HIS personal answer ? Explain.
3. What examples does Rollins give of being punk today?
4. What is his definition of being punk ? What's the goal of punk ?
5. According to Rollins, is punk only a music style today ?

## 3. THINK & SPEAK :

*What's your opinion ? Do you think songs can change the world ?*

*Do you know protest songs ? What are they about ?*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLc5QJsMgww>

Yankee Doodle, Richard Chuckburgh & Edward Bangs

John Brown's Body

1920s : rise of electrical recording technology

Strange Fruit 1931, lynching in the South, banned on the radio

Woodie Guthrie, This land is your land, after 1945, folk

1964 dylan the times they are a changing

1963 Nina Simone Mississippi Goddam civil rights movement

1971 : what's going on Marvin Gaye, against Vietnam War

81 mtv 85 vh1

80s 90s

Fuck the police, NWA, protest rap

Mid 90s Riot grrrl, Feminist punk rock (bikini kill, L7) Sleater Kinney « a real man »

2000

2001 11th september

American Idiot Green Day 2004

2010 obama

Alright Kendrick Lamar, empowerment songs « black lives matter » movement

Trump presidency : MILCK Quiet me too movement

<https://vimeo.com/241993526>

you don't own me <https://vimeo.com/51940856>