Focus/Summary

The purpose of this assignment is to engage students in thinking about how music can be a tool for self-empowerment and as a means of disempowerment. The particular focus of this lesson is females and the Feminist Movement; however, this lesson can be applied to other demographics with different music. To extend the lesson, consider adding your own music and other popular culture to the ideas herein.

Vital Theme and Narrative

The use of music as a means of power.

Objectives

Students will listen to and read the lyrics of three popular songs, Sisters Are Doing It For Themselves (Appendix A) and Just a Girl (Appendix B), Stand By Your Man (Appendix C) and then choose their own set of songs that focus on the female struggle for self-empowerment.

Procedures

Opening the Lesson

Students will listen to all three songs. They will discuss their initial impressions of the song in general. What did they like and dislike about the songs and why. They will then narrow their focus to the theme of self-empowerment for females. How do the songs empower (or not) females? Are there any ways in which the songs do not empower females? Do any of the songs have an underlying current of anger? If so, why might that anger exist? Of the three songs, which is most empowering to females? Why? Which is the least empowering? Why?

Developing the Lesson

Students will discuss in groups other songs that they believe empower and songs that are disempowering to others. This discussion should focus primarily on females; however, students are welcome to narrow their focus to specific groups of females (females of color, young females, aged females, etc.) They should begin developing a list of songs that they think do an especially good job of empowering females. They should then discuss songs that they believe are disempowering to females and why those songs might be disempowering.
Concluding the Lesson

As a class, discuss the songs that students chose in their groups and help students to articulate why songs might be empowering and/or disempowering to females. Depending on students’ choices, discuss the use of specific language and images in the song that spoke to the students. This is an appropriate time for a mini-lesson in positive and negative connotations and the use of imagistic language to appeal to emotion.

Assessing Student Learning

Students will choose one song that they believe empowers females and one song that they believe is disempowering to females. They will write a two – four (2 – 4) page paper discussing the use of language and images in the song that supports their claims about the songs. Students should demonstrate an understanding of positive and negative connotations, specific empowering and disempowering language, and the use of image as a means to appeal to emotion.
Appendix A:

*Sisters Are Doing It For Themselves*, sung by Annie Lennox & Aretha Franklin

Now there was a time
When they used to say
That behind every great man
There had to be a great woman

But in these times of change
You know that it's no longer true
So we're coming out of the kitchen
Cause there's something
We forgot to say to you

Sisters are doing it for themselves
Standing on their own two feet
And ringing on their own bells
Sisters are doing it for themselves

This is a song to celebrate
The conscious liberation
Of the female state

Mothers, daughters
And their daughters too, yeah
Woman to woman
We're singing with you

The inferior sex
Has got a new exterior
We got doctors, lawyers
Politicians too, ooh, hoo

Everybody, take a look around
Can you see, can you see, can you see
There's a woman right next to you

Sisters are doing it for themselves
(Oh, yes, we are)  
Standing on their own two feet  
And ringing on their own bells  
Sisters are doing it for themselves

Now we ain't making stories  
And we ain't laying plans  
Don't you know that  
A man still loves a woman  
And a woman still loves a man  
Just the same way

Sisters are doing it for themselves

Now there was a time  
When they used to say  
That behind every great man  
There had to be a great woman

In these times of change  
You know that it's no longer true  
So we're coming out of the kitchen  
Cause there's something  
We forgot to say to you

Sisters are doing it for themselves  
Standing on their own two feet  
And ringing on their own bells  
Sisters are doing it for themselves

Come on, girl  
Go for it, go for it  
Sisters are doing it for themselves

Sisters are doing it, doing it  
Doing it, doing it, doing it, doing it  
Sisters are doing it for themselves  
Doing it, doing it, doing it, doing it
Appendix B:

Just a Girl, sung by No Doubt

Take this pink ribbon off my eyes
I'm exposed, and it's no big surprise
Don't you think I know exactly where I stand?
This world is forcing me to hold your hand

'Cause I'm just a girl, a little ol' me
Well, don't let me out of your sight
Oh, I'm just a girl, all pretty and petite
So don't let me have any rights
Oh, I've had it up to here

The moment that I step outside
So many reasons for me to run and hide
I can't do the little things I hold so dear
'Cause it's all those little things that I fear

'Cause I'm just a girl, I'd rather not be
'Cause they won't let me drive late at night
Oh, I'm just a girl, guess I'm some kind of freak
'Cause they all sit and stare with their eyes

Oh, I'm just a girl, take a good look at me
Just your typical prototype
Oh, I've had it up to here
Oh, am I making myself clear?

I'm just a girl, I'm just a girl in the world
That's all that you'll let me be

Oh, I'm just a girl living in captivity
Your rule of thumb make me worrisome
Oh, I'm just a girl, what's my destiny?
What I've succumbed to is making me numb

Oh, I'm just a girl, my apologies
What I've become is so burdensome
Oh, I'm just a girl, lucky me
Twiddle Dum, there's no comparison

Oh, I've had it up to
Oh, I've had it up to
Oh, I've had it up to here
Appendix C:

*Stand By Your Man*, sung by Tammy Wynette

Sometimes its hard to be a woman
Giving all your love to just one man
You'll have bad times
And he'll have good times
Doing things that you don't understand
But if you love him you'll forgive him
Even though he's hard to understand
And if you love him
Oh be proud of him
'Cause after all he's just a man
Stand by your man
Give him two arms to cling to
And something warm to come to
When nights are cold and lonely
Stand by your man
And tell the world you love him
Keep giving all the love you can
Stand by your man
Stand by your man
And show the world you love him
Keep giving all the love you can
Stand by your man