

# Protest Songs

## Introduction

When some people, especially those in charge, create a bad situation, an injustice, other people find many ways to make things better. Adults organize demonstrations or protests with marching, chanting, and signs. Men and women write strong letters of concern (editorials), and send them to newspapers. Individuals make expressive drawings, cartoons, to show what they're thinking and share them. Lots of people post their thoughts, complaints, and feelings on social media, such as Facebook and Instagram. Most often these actions work. Sometimes people still do not feel heard. Then protests may turn into riots where items and buildings may get broken or burned!

Music is another way for people to speak out about what is unfair. For thousands of years, people have used songs to express emotions: sadness, anger, fear, hope, patience, persistence, and love. The lyrics (words) help people of all ages to say what is wrong and to ask others to join in finding solutions. Music can be a more peaceful pathway to success than other approaches. This type of music is often called a protest song.

There are many different types of protest songs. We are introducing four types today:



Songs that unite or help people come to work together



Songs that ask for change to an unfair rule for one group of people (a cause)



Songs that have a special meaning or code



Songs that groups can sing along with or march to easily

Now you can play the **Peg that Protest Song!** game by yourself or with your family.

## Peg that Protest Song!

Directions:

1. You will be given each song's name and a few sentences about it. Read this information. Then listen to the link.
2. Alone or with the other players, read the hint. Decide what type the song is.
3. Cut out the identification drawing of the type you picked (below). Paste or tape the drawing in the space to the left of the song. You pegged that protest song!
4. Compare your answers to the other players' answers. Do you all agree?

# Protest Songs



## Mystery Type Song 1 – “Wade in the Water”

In the 1840s Harriet Tubman safely led 70 of her family members and friends from slavery in the state of Maryland to freedom. She traveled with them in small groups at night from one safe house to another. Her trail was called “The Underground Railroad.”

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vq\\_8L96E3eU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vq_8L96E3eU)

*Hint: When Harriet sang this song, the escaping people knew where to hide to avoid being seen.*



## Mystery Type Song 2 – “Glory”

This recent song is by John Legend along with rapper Common from the movie “Selma”. The movie is based on the 1965 Selma to Montgomery voting rights marches led by James Bevel, Hosea Williams, Martin Luther King Jr., and John Lewis.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUZOKvYcx\\_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUZOKvYcx_o)

*Hint: The people were singing about getting freedom. All were not being treated equally. They had the same need but could not get freedom alone.*



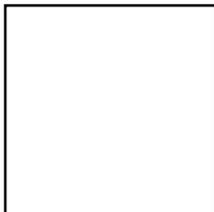
## Mystery Song 3 – “If I Had a Hammer”

Peter, Paul, and Mary are a trio of folk singers. They sang this song in many places.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AKgm9ARmOMM>

*Hint: They sang this song at the Civil Rights March in Washington, DC in 1963.*

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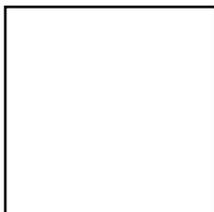


## Mystery Song 4 – “Suffragettes Songs”

In the United States at first only men were permitted to vote. Women were not. Women wanted this right. They were called “The Suffragettes”. A singer, Elizabeth Knight, recorded several of their songs and you can listen to the first 15 seconds of all of them here.

<https://folkways.si.edu/elizabeth-knight/songs-of-the-suffragettes/historical-song-struggle-protest/music/album/smithsonian>

*Hint: After almost 100 years of protesting in songs, marches, speeches and writing women finally were permitted to vote in 1920.*

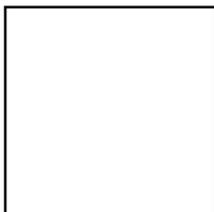


## Mystery Song 5 - “Stand with Standing Rock”

Native American people and others were protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline (carrying oil) coming through their land. They were worried that an accident could happen and the oil would ruin their water. They are angry that their land was put at risk and other lands weren’t considered.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Onyk7guvHK8>

*Hint: Many United States laws and actions hurt Native American people (Indigenous people).*



## Mystery Song 6 - “We Shall Overcome”

Martin Luther King, Jr. used the phrase “We Shall Overcome” in one of his famous speeches. Many people came to know about the song during the Civil Rights Movement. It was originally a hymn, like many protest songs.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7akuOFp-ET8>

*Hint: This song was sung at a march for rights for tobacco field workers in 1945 and hundreds of marches and rallies since then.*

1. special meaning or code 2. unite, work together 3. sing along or march 4. ask for change 5. ask for change 6. sing along or march

**Answers**