

### Question Sheet for Revolutionary War Music (with answers)

1. First, review the lyrics for “God Save the Thirteen States.” The song was sung to the tune of “God Save the King.” Why do you think the writer of this song wanted to have the song sung to the tune of a British song?

Answers will vary, but many students might note that “God Save the King” would be an easily recognizable song for many people, and the music would be easy to remember. Other students may note that “God Save the King” was a tribute to King George III, and if the colonists wrote a song that would support the independence movement, then that might be considered a “slap” against George.

2. Look at the third stanza of the song. How does this sum up the reason for revolution?

In the stanza, reference is made to “slavery” from oppressive policies of the British. Also, in this stanza, the author notes that the colonists tried to negotiate with Britain (“Oft did her grievance state”), but in the lines, “But Britain, falsely great, Urging her desp’rate fate, Turned a deaf ear,” we learn that the British refusal to listen to colonial issues was, in the song’s context, the impetus for Revolution.

3. Next, view the lyrics for “The World Turned Upside Down.” Legend is that this song was played when Cornwallis surrendered to Washington at Yorktown. Why would this song be fitting according to Britain’s view?

Some students may note that the song highlighted the end of the British Empire. Others may feel that the song symbolized how the British Army felt having been beaten by colonial troops, who they frequently considered inferior to their better trained, better equipped army.

4. From whose viewpoint is “Johnny Has Gone for a Soldier” sung? How are these lyrics different than the lyrics sung at the end of each episode of *Liberty!*?

In this version of the song, the viewpoint is of a woman whose “Johnny” has left her to join the army. Based on the lyrics on the site, it is difficult to tell whether she is mourning Johnny’s death in battle or if she is sad because Johnny has left her all alone.

At the end of each episode of the series, James Taylor sings this song in the third person. Rather than using “I,” he uses “She”.

5. What do the words in the last stanza of “Johnny Has Gone for a Soldier” symbolize, in your view?

Answers will vary. Most students may look at the line, “And through the streets I’ll beg for bread...” as a symbol of the hardships endured by spouses of soldiers. Members of

the army were often unable to provide a living for the families they left behind while they fought.

6. Next, study the lyrics for *Liberty Song*. In the first stanza, what do you think the author means by “No tyrannous acts shall suppress your just claim or stain with dishonor America’s name”.

Answers will vary. Some students may note that this, again, is a slap against the British and a way of highlighting injustice against the colonists. Still, others may view that the line refers to something internal that affected the American cause, such as Benedict Arnold’s treason.

7. What do you think the message in the chorus of this song is?

Most students will infer that the meaning of the chorus is an attempt to get colonists to support the colonial cause, not only with their beliefs, but by assisting financially as well.

8. How do these songs compare in scope and tone to a song such as “Yankee Doodle,” which is probably more well-known as a Revolutionary-era song? What was the original purpose of “Yankee Doodle?” (*Note: the song and lyrics are included in the Franklin School District site and are also discussed in the related music page on the Liberty! site*).

Answers will vary. Most students will probably note that “Yankee Doodle” was originally considered a derogatory song by the British, but the Patriots simply took it and made it “their own”.

9. Which one of these songs, in your view, tended to unite colonists the most? Which one the least? Explain your view.

Answers will vary. Most will probably say that “The World Turned Upside Down” probably doesn’t explain the cause of liberty and that “Johnny Has Gone for a Soldier” is more a lament than a unification song.

Most students would probably feel that either “Liberty Song” or “God Save the Thirteen States” would be most likely to unite colonists because of the lyrics’ tone.

10. Speculate on whether music today has the same impact on political, military, and social issues as it did in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Is the impact greater? Less? Explain your answer.

Answers will vary.