

Not Too Far Distant -Song Analysis Lesson Plan

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Students examine the song *There's a Rainbow in the Army*, the official song of the Rainbow Division during WWII. Students use an analysis guide to dig deeper into the song to understand its meaning and historical context. (To be paired with the play *Not Too Far Distant* by Becky Boesen)

LESSON OBJECTIVE

Students will interpret a song by observing its parts and lyrics.

PREREQUISITE KNOWLEDGE

A “Division” is a military term that refers to a specific group of soldiers. Each division is led by a “major-general” and includes 10,000-15,000 soldiers. Each division is broken into small units of soldiers.

The 42nd Infantry Division, also known as the Rainbow Division, fought in France and Germany during WWII. Clarence Williams served in the Rainbow Division in the 1940s.

Nebraska State Education Standards
 SS 7.4.4,
 SS 8.4.2,
 SS HS.4.1.b US, SS HS.4.1.c US, SS HS.4.4.b US, SS HS.4.5.c WLD

Lesson Details

Time Requirement:
30 minutes

Grade Level:
7th - 12th grade

Lesson Materials:

- Documents 1 and 2
- Song Analysis guide (2 copies)
- Video of *There's a Rainbow in the Army* (optional)
- Video of *Vict'ry Polka* (optional)
- Video of *Dear Old Nebraska U* (optional)

LESSON STRUCTURE

Lesson Introduction

- 1) Listen or read. Play or show the lyrics to your school's fight song or cheer. If none are available, use the lyrics to [Dear Old Nebraska U](#).
- 2) Discuss. As a class, discuss:
 - What is the tone or mood of the song?
 - What is the purpose of this song?
 - Why would someone write a song like this?

Recommended time: 3-5 minutes.

Procedure

- 1) Explain. Tell students that soldiers in the Army are divided into groups. Some groups create and sing songs to build morale and foster teamwork.
- 2) Listen: Pass out Document 1: *There's a Rainbow in the Army*, 1944. Play the song, *There's a Rainbow in the Army*, aloud for the entire class. Ask students to listen.
- 3) Observe the song: Pass out one “Song Analysis Guide” for each student. Answer the four questions in the “Observe the Song” section together.
- 4) Analyze the song: Allow each student to complete the “Song Analysis Guide.” *Recommended time: 10-15 minutes*
- 5) Repeat steps 2-4. Repeat steps 2-4 using *Vict'ry Polka*. (Optional) *Recommended time: 10-20 minutes*

Exit Ticket

- 1) Create a WWII Playlist: If devices are available, allow students to research popular songs during WWII. Have students curate a WWII playlist of songs that soldiers in the Rainbow Division may have listened to. *Recommended time: 10-15 minutes*

Document 1: There's a Rainbow in the Army, 1944

Song Lyrics:

There's a rainbow in the Army,
Like a rainbow in the sky,
Shining brightly in all the glory
of a past that will not die.

Let our voices show in our hearts
know that the new rainbow will carry on.

Hey! We're the mighty Forty-Second
and our fathers fought like men.
In the battle now before us
we will fight as they fought then.

With our chins up high we will win or die
for the rainbow in the Army,
for the rainbow in the sky.

“There's a Rainbow in the Army” was the official marching song of the 42nd Infantry Division. Every soldier in the Rainbow Division was expected to know this song.



Scan the QR code or click here to [here](#) a recording of this song.

THERE'S A RAINBOW IN THE ARMY

This excellent marching song written by Sgt. Norman Monath of the 132d Signal Company, is dedicated to our Division Commander, Major General Harry J. Collins, and has been designated as the official Division song. Every Rainbow soldier should know this song.

CHORUS *marcato*

THERE'S A RAINBOW IN THE ARMY,
LIKE A RAINBOW IN THE SKY
SHINING BRIGHTLY IN ALL THE GLORY

Semper Staccato

— 24 —

Source: Clarence Williams Collection, Institute for Holocaust Education

Document 2: Vict'ry Polka, 1944

Song Lyrics:

There's gonna be a hallelujah day
When the boys have all come home to stay
And the million bands begin to play
We'll be dancing the victory polka

And when we've lit that torch of liberty
In each blacked-out land across the sea
When a man can proudly say I'm free
We'll be dancing the victory polka

And we'll give a mighty cheer
When the ration book is just a souvenir
And we'll heave a mighty sigh
When each girl can kiss the boy she kissed goodbye

And they'll come marching down fifth avenue
The United Nations in review
When this lovely dream has all come true
We'll be dancing the victory polka

Dance, dance, dance the victory polka
Join, join the merry throng
Sing, sing, sing the victory polka
Raise your voices loud and strong

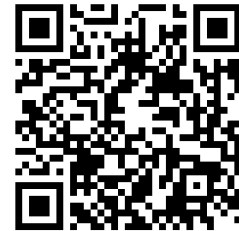
Repeat verses 1-5

We'll be dancing the victory polka



Source: [National Museum of American History](#)

“Vict'ry Polka” was written in 1943. It was performed by Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters, two of the most popular artists of the time.



[Scan the QR code or click here to here a recording of this song.](#)

Song Analysis Guide

Song Analysis Process

Observe the song

Step 1: Observe the song

Find information about the song itself.

Make sense of the song

Step 2: Make sense of the song

Think about the people writing and listening to the song.

Use the song as historical evidence.

Step 3: Use the song as historical evidence

Connect what is being written in the song to what is happening in the world at the time.

Observe the song

Step 1: Observe the song

1) Who wrote this song?

3) When was this song written or performed?

2) Who was the intended audience for this song?

4) What is the mood or tone of the song?

Make sense of the song

Step 2: Make sense of the song

1) Why did the author/composer write this song?
What is it about?

2) Why did the author/composer write this song? What did they
want people to feel, think, or do based on this song?

Song Analysis Guide

Make sense of the song

Step 2: Make sense of the song

3) What else was happening at the time this was created? How do those events help you understand why it was created?

4) What does this song teach you about the experiences of American soldiers during WWII?

Use the song as
historical evidence.

Step 3: Use the song as historical evidence

1) What evidence does the author present that you should “fact check” (verify as true)?

3) What perspectives do you bring to this topic and source? How does your identity and the time in which you live affect your perspective?

2) This primary source shows one perspective of a historical event. What other perspectives could you examine?