

# WS18 COLLEGE Lesson Plan



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**Title: Roger McGuinn; A Folk Icon and Internet Pioneer**

**Subject: Folk Music and Community**

**Length of Lesson: May vary depending on class times and Project Design**

**Grade Level: College-Level**

## **Introduction and Overview:**

This episode of WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour features folk artist and founding member of the The Byrds, Roger McGuinn. Roger McGuinn is a Grammy award winning artist, member of the Rock N' Roll Hall of Fame, and founding member of The Byrds. The Byrds formed during the 1960's and have a very unique sound. Roger McGuinn's roots are very connected to folk music. Roger performs several songs throughout the broadcast. He performs both old, as well as new songs that he has written and recorded. The Byrds became famous for songs such as, "Mr. Tambourine Man", and "Turn, Turn, Turn." Roger introduced the sound of the 12-string Rickenbacker guitar and the sound that would be called the, 'Jingle-Jangle Sound".

Roger tells the audience how he grew to love folk music through the introduction to it from a music teacher. In fact, we also learn in the show that preserving folk music is so important to Roger, that he created a virtual space to preserve it online called the "The Folk Den", which we will talk more about within the lesson. In addition, while Roger started as a folk singer, he then became the leader of The Byrds, but pulled back from the idea of stardom and rock n' roll, and returned to folk music. As Roger performs, Michael Johnathon says to the live audience, "I feel like I am witnessing an epic reconstruction of musical history!" This really says so much about the artistry and talent of Roger McGuinn. This would be a nice reference for the students to really grasp the talent and art that they are experiencing while they watch and listen to Roger perform.

Also, please direct the student's attention to Michael Johnathon's opening song. There is so much value in the words to this song. Encourage the students to think about what the words mean to them. Encourage the students to think about the "front porch" dynamic of music. Guide students as they make a connection and realize that music really can be about sitting on a front porch and not needing a big production. Music is so enriching to our lives and encourage students to explore this, and not only the focus on music as a money making tool. Ask students what they would play on their front porch and to reflect upon the tradition of music. Michael Johnathon says that one of the most beautiful art forms is folk music. Michael references the acoustic rural sound of folk music that celebrates communities and families. Michael then says something that I really want to focus on within the lesson. Michael says, "The greatest stage in the world is your own front porch." We will focus on this aspect and encourage students within this lesson. Words to this song include, "We need a front porch around the world." "We got to slow it down and learn to sit a spell." We will explore the meaning of these words in more depth and have activities within the lesson to focus on this message.

## **The Folk Den Project**

This lesson will also focus on "The Folk Den Project", which is a project that Roger McGuinn pioneered. Roger began this online group in 1995, when websites and the internet were not nearly as common as today, to say the least. Folk Den archives global folk music, and is one of

the very first streaming websites in internet history. The Folk Den is an online document of folk music and has been archiving amazing traditional folk songs since. Roger researches the song and includes the history as well as the chords to learn.

One other aspect that we want to focus on within this lesson is within the words of the other guest John Lomax. John's family has been preserving and educating about folk music for many years. John says, "The song is the story." One of the activities will encourage students to reflect upon this and to explore a song that speaks to them and to explain the story that it is telling.

### **Activity 1:**

Students will journal about what stands out to them within the episode. Students will then respond, in a journal format, to three guided questions to help them to make connections and apply what they've learned. The prompt questions are as follows:

1. What do you think Michael Johnathon means when he sings the words, "We need a front porch around the world."
2. What does your front porch look like? Explain that this is symbolism, and that the goal of the activity is not to describe their actual structural front porch, but rather, where they may sing and perform. Where may they recite poetry in their home or school? Will their front porch be their yard? Basically, we want students to realize that their front porch is the place where family and community come together and that music enriches this sense of community. That being said, playing music on the front porch is also a stage, and so if that is where these moments come together, we want to hear about it! Encourage the students to use descriptive language.
3. Finally, the third prompt will be for students to explain how they feel music encourages a sense of community and family, and to offer an example of a time in which they have had this feeling with family and/or friends.
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After students have completed the journal entry, they will then turn their journal entries into a blog post. You may offer guidelines for your preferred format. The blog will offer more artistic aspects, and students will also review one another's blog post and comment with what they learn from it. The blog could then turn into a weekly blog post, where the students respond to one another as well. The posts will include photographs, history, and information that includes valuable and reliable sources cited by the students. The weekly blog post could turn into an assignment each week and by the end of the course, students may want to continue to expand on their blog.

### **Activity 2:**

Activity two has students design their version of a "Folk Den Project". Students should have a name specific to their project. This will include having the students design a media project in which they select folk songs that are of particular significance to them. The students will upload (preserve) the songs, research the song, provide a brief history of it, and include the words to accompany the song. This could be a blog, or another form of a media project that your students have already studied are familiar with designing. If you wish, you may take this opportunity to introduce a new form of media project design. This project is also a way for students to express why they have selected their chosen folk songs. Why do they feel it is important to preserve these songs? This activity is excellent experience for students with the

design of a media project. This could also be a weekly assignment, in which students add to their Folk Den every week throughout the semester.

### **Activity 3:**

Have students listen to the song, “Turn, Turn, Turn”, as performed by Roger McGuinn in this episode. Once the students have listened to this performance, have them listen to it again, to ensure that they really hear the message. Then, have a class discussion in which you explore, what is the message of this song? What were The Byrds expressing during the 1960’s with this song? How does it apply to our world now? Then, as an artistic component to this plan, please have the students design an art project, using a medium of their choice, in which they express the message of this iconic song. This part of the lesson may extend into future class periods, and will likely require time outside of the classroom for completion. Options for the design of the art project may include photography, drawing, painting, or an artistic media design. If you want to continue to expand upon this project, students may present their work to the class if you think that would be a nice addition to the project. In this case, you may also design a rubric for the students to analyze presentations, which may be a helpful exercise and offer good experience for the students as they move forward and become more and more acquainted with rubrics and guidelines. This work offers room to change depending on what course you teach. For example, if you teach an Appalachian Studies course, this could turn into a very creative and essential part of the course work, and could be added to every week as well.

### **Goals & Objectives:**

- Students will understand the history of folk music and how it encourages togetherness; in turn, how music encourages togetherness and community
- Students will be familiar with the sounds of folk music and particular instruments
- Creativity encouraged through project designs
- Knowledge of music as applied to project designs
- Knowledge of musical instruments introduced and played in WoodSongs episode
- Builds communication and presentation skills
- Encourages creative design
- Critical Thinking
- Creative Thinking
- Encourages students to make connections of how music tells a story and delivers a message
- Understanding of music as community building
- Understanding of the importance of the preservation of music and developing archives to do so

For work of this nature, I find that it works best to let the projects serve as the assessments. That way, students are more focused on the creative design of their projects. You may choose to design a rubric to meet your specific qualifications for each project.