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GREAT WAR, FLAWED PEACE, AND THE LASTING LEGACY OF WORLD WAR I

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THE UNITED STATES
WORLD WAR ONE
CENTENNIAL COMMISSION

PRITZKER
MILITARY
FOUNDATION

NHD
NATIONAL
HISTORY DAY

"I DIDN'T RAISE MY BOY TO BE A..."

MOTHERS, MUSIC, AND OBLIGATIONS OF WAR



GUIDING QUESTION: How did the idea of a mother's sacrifice impact how World War I was viewed?

AUTHOR

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WHY?

Mothers had an enormous impact on the American public supporting the war. As women gained more political agency, their voices of approval or disapproval for their sons' service were vital to the war effort.

OVERVIEW

Using the cover and lyrics from two popular songs of the time, photographs, and primary source analysis, students will evaluate how popular culture sought to influence mothers' support of the war and how the government recognized their sacrifice with Gold Star Mothers' Pilgrimages to their sons' and daughters' final resting places.

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to

- > Analyze two pieces of music from the early 1900s to determine messages;
- > Explain the symbolism of the flag/arm bands with blue star and gold stars; and
- > Create an original song title, four lines of lyrics, and a cover image from the point of view of a Gold Star Mother.

STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

CONNECTIONS TO COMMON CORE

- > CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
- > CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- > CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5 Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

DOCUMENTS USED

PRIMARY SOURCES

Leo Friedman and Helen Wall, "I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be A Slacker," 1918

Library of Congress (2013563813)

https://www.loc.gov/ñotated-music/?fa=segmentof:ihas.2002_02142.0/&q=i+didn%27t+raise+my+boy+to+be+a+slacker&st=gallery

Photograph, Harris & Ewing, *Group with United States Service flag at U.S. Capitol*, 1926

Library of Congress (2016888168)

<https://www.loc.gov/item/2016888168/>

Photograph, J.B. Holmes, *Just a Little Flag with One Bright Star*, 1919

Library of Congress (2013560771)

<https://www.loc.gov/item/2013560771/>

Photograph, Marjory Collins, *Oswego, New York. A service flag in the window of a home*, 1943

Library of Congress (2017859603)

<https://www.loc.gov/item/2017859603/>

Photograph, *Mother of Four Soldiers*, 1919

National Archives and Records Administration (31480764)

<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/31480764>

Photograph, *Party "K" - Sailed July 10, 1931*

Library of Congress (92-GS-3-224)

<https://unwritten-record.blogs.archives.gov/2016/09/27/spotlight-the-pilgrimages-of-gold-star-mothers-and-widows/#jp-carousel-10794>

Photograph, *A group of Pilgrims of Party "S," with Capt. Shannon, aboard the AMERICA on the voyage to Europe*

Library of Congress (92-GS-2-110)

<https://unwritten-record.blogs.archives.gov/2016/09/27/spotlight-the-pilgrimages-of-gold-star-mothers-and-widows/#jp-carousel-10690>

Photograph, *A group of Pilgrims from Party "T" arriving at the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery, France*

Library of Congress (92-GS-2-123)

<https://unwritten-record.blogs.archives.gov/2016/09/27/spotlight-the-pilgrimages-of-gold-star-mothers-and-widows/#jp-carousel-10693>

Photograph, *Pilgrim at Suresnes, July 26, 1930*

American Battle Monuments Commission

<https://www.abmc.gov/multimedia/images/pilgrim-suresnes-july-26-1930>

Albert Piantadosi and Bryan Alfred, "I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be A Soldier," 1915

Library of Congress

<https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.100008457/>

SECONDARY SOURCES

Women and World War I Commemoration: The Gold Star Mothers and Widows Pilgrimages, 1930-33

American Battle Monuments Commission

<https://www.abmc.gov/news-events/news/women-and-world-war-i-commemoration-gold-star-mothers-and-widows-pilgrimages-1930>

MATERIALS

- › "I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be A Soldier" image and lyrics
- › "I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be A Slacker" image and lyrics
- › Projector
- › Song of Loss Graphic Organizer

ACTIVITY PREPARATION

- › Make one copy the following for each student:
 - » "I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be A Soldier" image and lyrics;
 - » "I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be A Slacker" image and lyrics; and
 - » Song of Loss Graphic organizer.
- › Set up classroom technology, if necessary.
- › Prepare to project all photographs.

PROCEDURE

ACTIVITY ONE: CONTRASTING WAR SONGS (30 MINUTES)

- › Give each student a copy of "I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be A Soldier" image and lyrics. Tell the students that this song was published in 1915. Remind them of political landscape in the United States at that time, which was to remain neutral and stay out of the war.
 - » Allow five minutes for the students to study the cover image and lyrics.
 - » Ask the students: *How was the political landscape of the time reflected in the title and subtitle? What is the significance of the word boy instead of son?*
 - » Lead a discussion about the image. Include observations on the age of the mother, the posture of the son, contrast between the safety of home and the imagined battlefield.
 - » Lead a discussion about the lyrics. What are the main points?
- › Give each student a copy of "I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be A Slacker." Tell students that this song was published in 1918. Ask them: *What changed in the three years since the other song was published?*
 - » Allow five minutes for the student to study the cover image and lyrics.
 - » Ask the students: *Why the change in the message of the music? What has happened to the mother's attitude?*
 - » Lead a discussion about the image. Include observations about the posture of the son, the look on his face, what he is holding in his hands, and the background behind him.
 - » Lead a discussion about the lyrics. What are the main points?
 - » Discuss the connotation of the word slacker versus soldier and other ways the two songs compare and contrast.

ACTIVITY TWO: GOLD STAR MOTHERS (30 MINUTES)

- › Discuss the dilemma for mothers when the nation goes to war. The sacrifice that a mother must make is sending her son to war. Share with students that during World War I, mothers would outwardly show this sacrifice by displaying a service flag in the windows of their homes.
 - » Explain the evolution of service flags.
 - › They originally contained only blue stars.
 - › In 1918, President Woodrow Wilson approved a suggestion by the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense that mothers who lost a son in the war wear a black armband with a gold star.
 - › Eventually, this led to the practice of covering blue stars on service flags with a gold star when the service member died.
- › Project images of Service Flags.
 - » *Mother of Four Soldiers*
 - » *Service Flag in Window of a Home*
 - » *Group with United States Service Flag*
- › Ask the students to discuss how service flags were an outward sign of sacrifice and loss.
- › Tell students that Gold Star Mothers lobbied for the government to pay travel expenses to France and Belgium to allow women who had lost sons or husbands to visit the final resting place of their loved ones. From 1930 to 1933, groups of women traveled overseas as guests of the United States government. More than 6,000 women made the journey.
 - » Project pictures of Gold Star Mothers' Pilgrims, one at a time. Leave each image up long enough to allow time for students to study it. For each image, ask students: *What do you notice?* before moving on to the next image.
 - › *Party "K" - Sailed July 10, 1931*
 - › *A group of Pilgrims of Party "S," with Capt. Shannon, aboard the AMERICA on the voyage to Europe*
 - › *A group of Pilgrims from Party "T" arriving at the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery, France*
 - › *Pilgrim at Suresnes, July 26, 1930*
 - » Lead a wrap-up discussion with the students about their observations. Make sure the students have recognized segregation of the pilgrimages, methods of travel, age of women (the war had been over for 12-15 years), etc.
 - » Ask students: *What do you think this journey must have been like for mothers to travel together to visit their sons' graves?* Refer to the emotional impact as well as the significance of the age of the women and traveling to a foreign country with unfamiliar laws, customs, and language, etc.

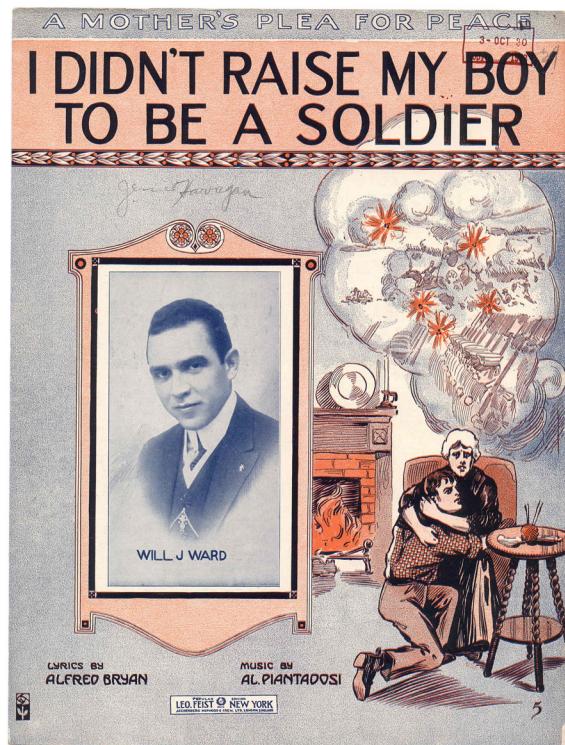
ASSESSMENT

- › Give each student a Song of Loss Graphic Organizer.
- › Review the first four lines from the choruses of both "I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be A Soldier" and "I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be A Slacker."
- › Tell students that they will write their own title and four lines of lyrics from the point of view of a Gold Star Mother. They can express any point of view, either in support of or opposition to having a son fight in World War I.
 - » The title format should be "I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be _____".
 - › Some examples could include: I didn't raise my boy to be a name on a cross, I didn't raise my boy to be a coward, etc.
 - » The four lines of chorus lyrics should support the title.
- › Tell students they will also draw an image that supports the title and lyrics.

METHODS FOR EXTENSION

- › Students with interest in the Gold Star Mothers can research how their journey was reflective of society's values at the time, including women's rights, racism and patriotism.
- › Students can search for other musical scores or propaganda posters that reflected the values of society during World War I.

I DIDN'T RAISE MY BOY TO BE A SOLDIER (1915)



Words by Alfred Bryan

Music by Al Piantadosi

Ten million soldiers to the war have gone,

Who may never return again.

Ten million mothers' hearts must break

For the ones who died in vain.

Head bowed down in sorrow

in her lonely years,

I heard a mother murmur thro' her tears:

[Chorus]

"I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier,
I brought him up to be my pride and joy,
Who dares to place a musket on his shoulder,
To shoot some other mother's darling boy?"

Let nations arbitrate their future troubles,
It's time to lay the sword and gun away,

There'd be no war today,
If mothers all would say,

"I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier."

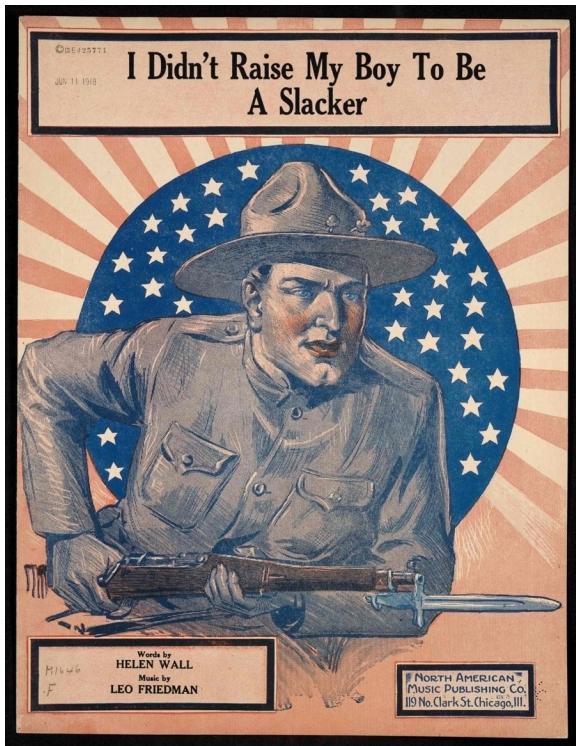
What victory can cheer a mother's heart,
When she looks at her blighted home?

What victory can bring her back
All she cared to call her own.

Let each mother answer in the years to be,
Remember that my boy belongs to me!

[Repeat Chorus]

I DIDN'T RAISE MY BOY TO BE A SLACKER (1918)



Words by Helen Wall

Music by Leo Friedman

When Uncle Sammy calls for us,
we'll all have to go,
No matter what we have in hand;
We all have to stand by Old Glory true,
The Red, White and Blue.
Then in proud but dreary words,
The mothers all cry out:

[Chorus]

I didn't raise my boy to be a slacker,
I brought him up to be a soldier boy,
To place the gun and musket on his shoulder,
And march away with the other boys;
I taught him to fight for his country,
And never fail in what he says he'll do,
For when the war is done,
we'll all cry Hurrah with this,
"I didn't raise my boy to be a slacker."

Good-bye boys, good-bye boys,
you are off to do your bit,
In your arms you hold your dear ones;
And with their kind words
ringing in your ears,
Say your last farewell.
Then in proud but dreary words,
Your mothers all cry out:

[Repeat Chorus]

IMAGES OF SERVICE FLAGS



Top Left: Oswego, New York. A service flag in the window of a home, 1943. Library of Congress (2017859603).

Bottom Left: Group with United States Service flag at U.S. Capitol, 1926. Library of Congress (2016888168).

Right: Mother of Four Soldiers, 1919. National Archives and Records Administration (31480764).

GOLD STAR MOTHERS' PILGRIMMAGES



Above: Party "K" - Sailed July 10, 1931.
Library of Congress (92-GS-3-224).



Right: A group of Pilgrims of Party "S," with Capt. Shannon, aboard the *AMERICA* on the voyage to Europe. Library of Congress (92-GS-2-110).



Above: A group of Pilgrims from Party "T" arriving at the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery, France.
Library of Congress (92-GS-2-123).



Right: Pilgrim at Suresnes, July 26, 1930.
American Battle Monuments Commission.

SONG OF LOSS GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

Write your own original title and four lines of chorus lyrics from the point of view of a Gold Star Mother. You can take any point of view, either in support of or opposition to having a son fighting in World War I. In addition, use the second page to create an image that goes along with your title and lyrics.

Follow the format of one of these two songs:

I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be A Soldier

I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier,
I brought him up to be my pride and joy,
Who dares to place a musket on his shoulder,
To shoot some other mother's darling boy?

I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be A Slacker

I didn't raise my boy to be a slacker,
I brought him up to be a soldier boy,
To place the gun and musket on his shoulder,
And march away with the other boys;

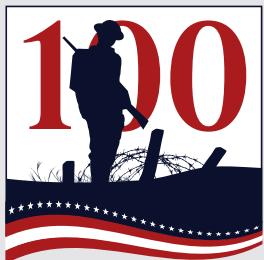
Your Original Title:

I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be _____

Your Original Lyrics:

Your Original Image:





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