

# TOBY KEITH AND THE CHICKS: SONGS AND WORDS DURING THE WAR ON TERROR

Est. Time: 120 minutes

Subjects: Advisory, Social Studies/History

Age Range: Middle, High School, AP/Honors/101

[View the classroom lesson](#)

★ *TEACHROCK* ★




What were the different reactions to songs and comments by Country musicians about the September 11th terrorist attacks and the Iraq War?

In this lesson you will:

- Identify events that led to the Iraq War
- Examine definitions of “Patriotism,” “Chauvinism,” and “Jingoism”
- Explore how feelings of anger and revenge inspired by the September 11th attacks were expressed by Toby Keith in his song, “Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue (The Angry American)”
- Explore how \*The Chicks experienced backlash due to their comments opposing the Iraq War and responded with the song “Not Ready to Make Nice”

\*formerly known as **Dixie Chicks**





Talk to a friend or family member that may be old enough to remember specifics about the September 11th terrorist attacks in the United States and the Iraq War. Use the following questions as prompts for your conversation and take notes about what they tell you.

- What do you remember about the September 11th terrorist attacks in the United States?
- What do you remember about the Iraq War?
- Do you remember the two events being connected? In what way?

If possible, pair with a classmate to share what each of you learned.



# Terrorists Hijack 4 Airliners, Destroy World Trade Center, Hit Pentagon; Hundreds Dead

**Bodies Pulled From Pentagon; Troops Patrol District Streets**

As smoke billowed from the Pentagon, the Pentagon's main entrance was cordoned off. Troops were seen patrolling the streets of the Pentagon City neighborhood. The Pentagon's main entrance was cordoned off. Troops were seen patrolling the streets of the Pentagon City neighborhood. The Pentagon's main entrance was cordoned off. Troops were seen patrolling the streets of the Pentagon City neighborhood.



**Bush Promises Retribution; Military Put on Highest Alert**

President Bush said he would lead a coalition of nations to hunt down and destroy the terrorists who hijacked the planes and destroyed the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. He said he would lead a coalition of nations to hunt down and destroy the terrorists who hijacked the planes and destroyed the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

**Washington**  
**On Flight 77: 'Our Plane Is Being Hijacked'**

Passengers on Flight 77 were told their plane was being hijacked. The pilot was told to land at a nearby airport. The plane was hijacked by terrorists. The pilot was told to land at a nearby airport. The plane was hijacked by terrorists.

**U.S. Intelligence Points To Bin Laden Network**

U.S. intelligence officials said they believe the hijackers were part of a network led by Osama bin Laden. The network was involved in the hijacking of the planes. U.S. intelligence officials said they believe the hijackers were part of a network led by Osama bin Laden.


**New York**  
**'I Saw Bodies Falling Out—Oh, God, Jumping, Falling'**

A witness described seeing bodies falling from the World Trade Center towers. The witness said they were jumping out of the windows. A witness described seeing bodies falling from the World Trade Center towers.

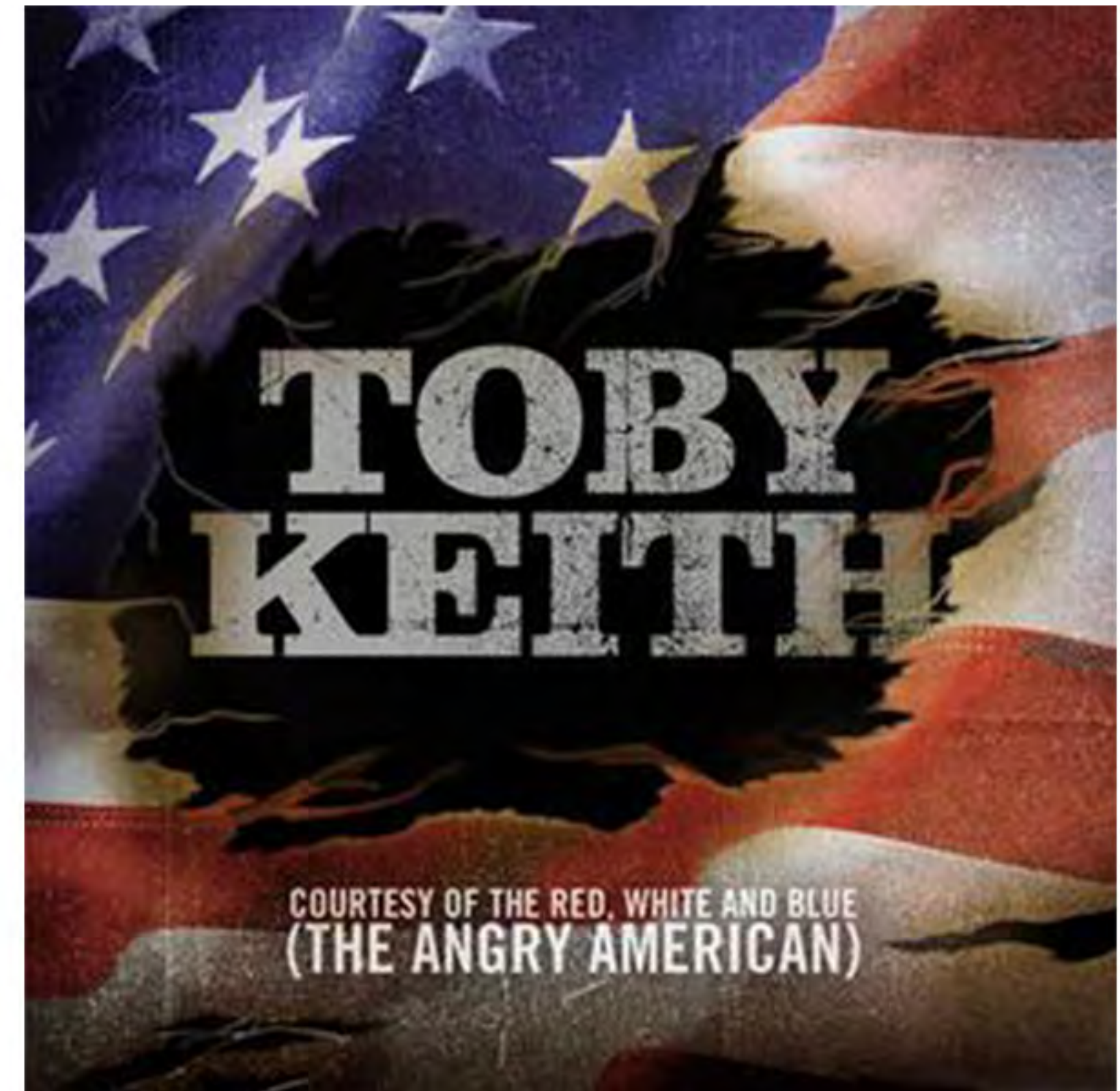
View this front page headline from The Washington Post reporting on the September 11th terrorist attacks in the United States.



Consider or ask a friend:


- What do you know about the events of September 11, 2001?
  - How do you think the attacks may have made Americans feel?
  - Why might Americans have felt this way?
  - If something similar happened recently in the area where you live, how do you think you might feel? Why?
  - Why might there be different reactions to this type of tragedy? Why?
- 

Examine **the lyrics** to Toby Keith's "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue (The Angry American)" and then consider the questions on the following slide.





Consider or ask a friend:

- From whose perspective are the lyrics written?
  - Who are the lyrics addressing?
  - What emotions might Toby Keith be expressing in his song?
  - What are some messages you might find in the lyrics?
  - Considering the events of September 11th, why might the song have connected with Americans at the time?
  - Can you think of any Americans that might not have identified with the sentiments of the song? Who and why?
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## COURTESY OF THE RED, WHITE AND BLUE


Watch [this video](#) about Toby Keith's "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue (The Angry American)."





Consider or ask a friend:

- Why might Americans have had “patriotic feelings” and wanted to strike “out at the rest of the world” after the September 11th attacks?
  - Why might Toby Keith feel confident to take a stand on how America should react to the attacks on September 11th?
  - What are your thoughts about Toby Keith’s statement, “I’m not gonna lay down. And I’m not gonna shut up”?
  - As journalist Dan Rather alluded to in his comments, what may have been the “dangers” of the themes and emotions Toby Keith expressed in his song?
- 



Examine the definitions of these words,  
take notes for future reference, and then  
consider the questions on the next slide.

**Patriotism - devotion to and vigorous support for one's  
country**


**Chauvinism - exaggerated or aggressive patriotism**

**Jingoism - extreme patriotism, especially in the form of  
aggressive or warlike foreign policy**





Consider or ask a friend:


- Are you familiar with these words? If so, which ones?
  - What feelings might you have towards these words?
  - Can you hear characteristics of these words and their definitions in the lyrics to Toby Keith's song? What characteristics do you hear? Which lyrics in particular strike you as patriotic, chauvinistic, or jingoistic?
  - In what ways might these words and their definitions align with the U.S.'s response to the September 11th attacks?
  - Do you agree with Dan Rather's description of the song as having elements of "chauvinism" and "jingoism"?
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Read [this handout](#) on how 9/11 was used as a premise by the U.S. Government for invading Iraq to start the Iraq War in 2003.





Consider or ask a friend:

- What action did the U.S. government take in response to the September 11th terrorist attacks? Was the action supported by a majority of Americans?
  - What action did the U.S. then take in 2002 after removing the Taliban from power in Afghanistan? What cause did the U.S. give for taking this action?
  - What terrorist group did the U.S. link to the Iraqi regime as part of its explanation?
  - What was the response to the U.S. government's argument for invading Iraq?
  - Did the U.S. government find Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in Iraq?
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## THE CHICKS DISSENT

Watch [this video](#) about The Chicks' public comments regarding the start of the Iraq War and President George W. Bush.



Consider or ask a friend:

- What did the Bush Administration argue that the Iraq government had in its possession? Why might they have presented that argument?
  - Why might some Americans have felt differently about a military response to the September 11th attacks versus going to war with Iraq?
  - Referencing your notes on the definitions of “patriotism,” “chauvinism,” and “jingoism,” might characteristics of those words be found in the U.S.’s actions in starting a war?
  - Should Natalie Maines have made her comments about the Iraq War and President George W. Bush? Why or why not?
  - What do you think the reaction will be to her comments?
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## BACKLASH AGAINST THE CHICKS

Watch [this video](#) about the backlash against The Chicks' public comments regarding the start of the Iraq War and President George W. Bush



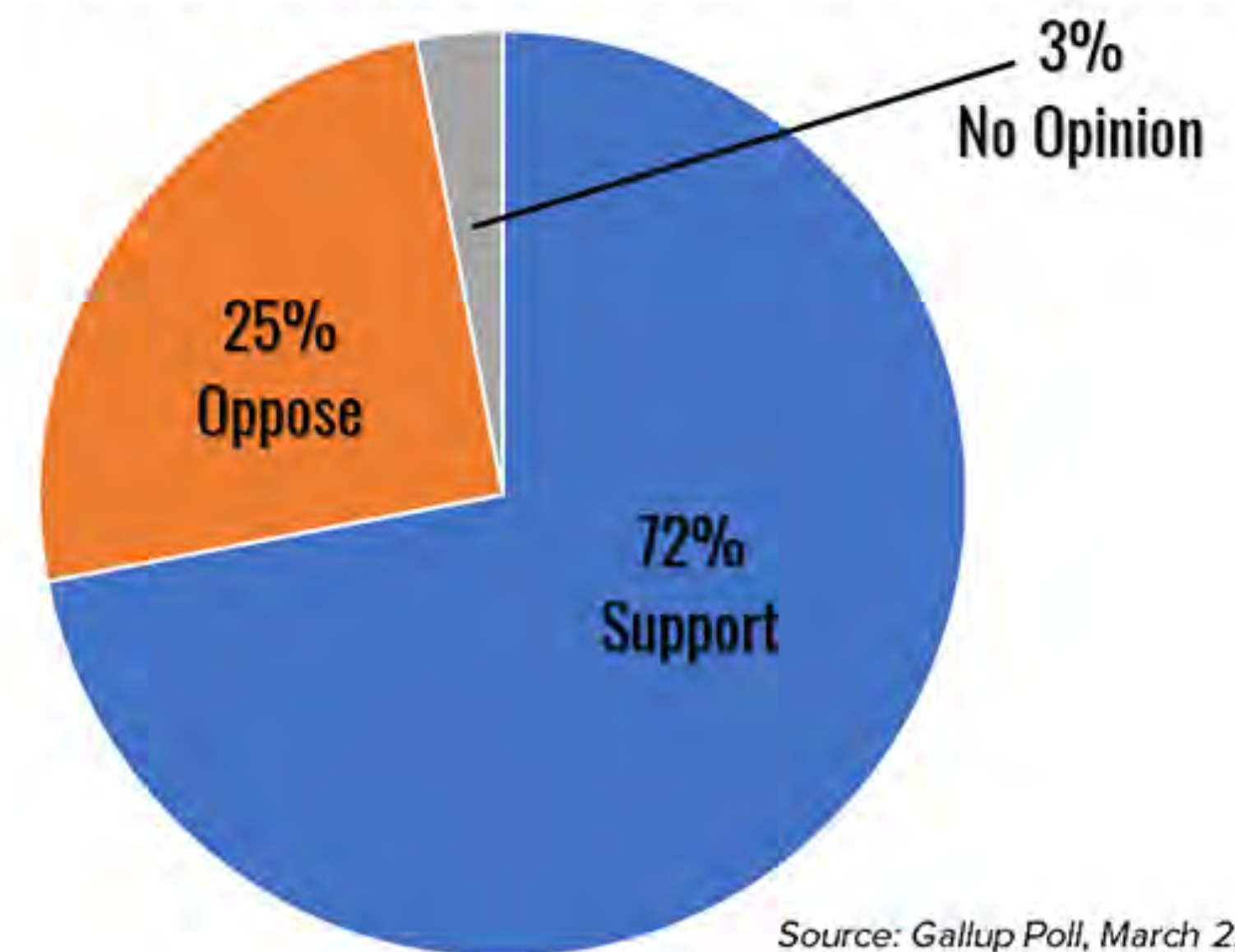


Consider or ask a friend:

- What was the reaction to Maines' comments about the Iraq War?
  - Who criticized The Chicks in the clip and did the criticism come from just media figures?
  - Do you see any connections to people's reactions to Maines' comments and the emotions expressed in Toby Keith's song?
  - Were The Chicks the only individuals being told to "watch what they say"?
  - Besides the anger, hostility, and threats of violence against them, how did the Country music industry react to The Chicks' public opposition to the Iraq War and comments about President Bush?
  - Might gender have played a role in the response The Chicks received?
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Examine this image containing data from an opinion poll about the Iraq war and then consider the questions on the next slide.

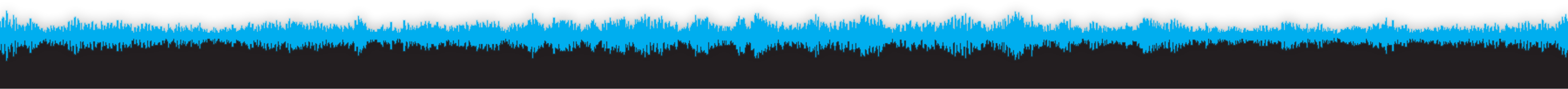
### Do you favor or oppose the U.S. war with Iraq?



Source: Gallup Poll, March 22-23rd, 2003



Consider or ask a friend:

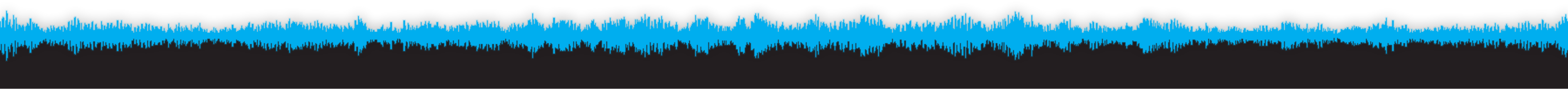
- What data is being presented in this chart?
  - When was the data collected and how does that time relate to the Iraq War?
  - What conclusions might you draw from the data in this chart?
  - Might the data explain the response The Chicks received due to their comments?  
Why?
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Examine **the lyrics** to The Chicks' "Not Ready to Make Nice" and then consider the questions on the following slide.





Consider or ask a friend:

- From whose perspective are the lyrics written?
  - Who are the lyrics addressing?
  - What specific experiences do the lyrics describe?
  - What emotions are being expressed by the lyrics?
  - What are some messages you might find in the lyrics?
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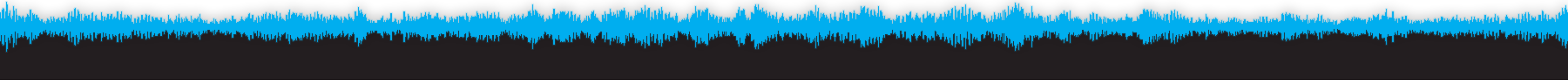


# NOT READY TO MAKE NICE

Watch [this video](#) about The Chicks' song, "Not Ready to Make Nice."



Consider or ask a friend:

- Why might those consulting The Chicks have suggested Natalie Maines apologize?
  - How did The Chicks respond?
  - What emotions might The Chicks be experiencing when performing the song?
  - How did the audience react to their performance?
  - Considering the anger, hostility, and threats of violence against them, why might The Chicks have written this song?
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# SUMMARY

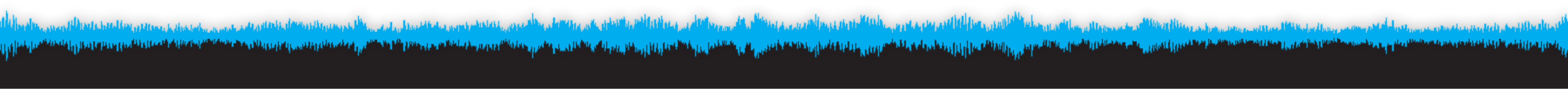
- Toby Keith's song, "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue (The Angry American)" connected with the anger some Americans felt after the 9/11 terrorist attacks
- Patriotism, chauvinism, and jingoism are terms that can be used to characterize the emotions and actions of Americans and the U.S. Government during and after 9/11
- The Chicks publicly criticized the U.S. Government and President George W. Bush's pursuit of war against Iraq in 2003
- The Chicks experienced a severe backlash to their comments, including threats of violence





# BE CURIOUS

Visit the **Costs of War website** by the Watson Institute at Brown University, which details the long term effects of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Choose one of the three columns on the page and create an infographic that summarizes the information gathered from reading the text and examining the media. Share your work with a family member, friend, or class!

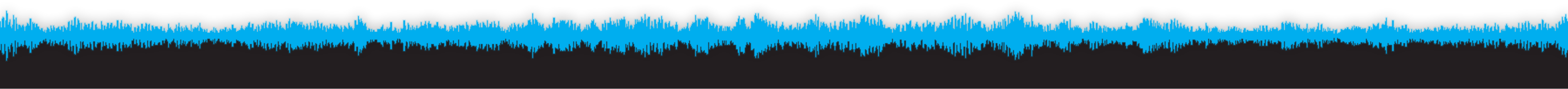


# BE CREATIVE

Think of an experience that upset you and that you could not change. Create a self-portrait reflecting how you felt during this upsetting experience:

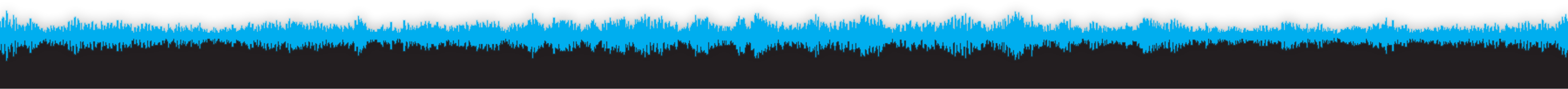
- Write the experience at the top of a piece of paper.
- Create your self-portrait in the center of the paper styled to characterize your feelings.
- On the left side of the paper, list healthy reactions to the experience.
- On the right side of the paper, list unhealthy reactions to the experience.

Share your work with a family member, friend, or class!



# CONNECT

Share it with us! Either you or an adult in your life can share your work with TeachRock on **Instagram** or **Facebook**, email to **info@teachrock.org**, or Tweet it to **@TeachRock**





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