

Laura McShane

## **Fight the Power** 55 min

### **Objective:**

Understand importance of music to affect social change

### **Big Idea:**

How can artists contribute to improve society?

## **1. Warm Up / Anticipatory** 15 min

Watch Bob Dylan's

## **Subterranean Homesick Blues**

## **2. Investigation and New Learning** 20 min

Discussion: What is Bob Dylan trying to say here?

Lyrics

Johnny's in the basement  
Mixing up the medicine  
I'm on the pavement  
Thinking about the government  
The man in the trench coat  
Badge out, laid off  
Says he's got a bad cough  
Wants to get it paid off  
Look out kid  
It's somethin' you did  
God knows when  
But you're doing it again  
You better duck down the alley way  
Lookin' for a new friend  
A man in the coonskin cap, in the pig pen  
Wants eleven dollar bills, you only got ten

Maggie comes fleet foot  
Face full of black soot  
Talkin' that the heat put  
Plants in the bed but  
The phone's tapped anyway  
Maggie says that many say  
They must bust in early May  
Orders from the D.A. Look out kid  
Don't matter what you did  
Walk on your tip toes  
Don't tie no bows  
Better stay away from those  
That carry around a fire hose  
Keep a clean nose  
Watch the plain clothes  
You don't need a weather man  
To know which way the wind blows

Oh, get sick, get well  
Hang around a ink well  
Hang bail, hard to tell  
If anything is goin' to sell  
Try hard, get barred  
Get back, write braille  
Get jailed, jump bail  
Join the army, if you fail  
Look out kid  
You're gonna get hit  
But losers, cheaters  
Six-time users  
Hang around the theaters  
Girl by the whirlpool  
Lookin' for a new fool  
Don't follow leaders, watch the parkin' meters

Oh, get born, keep warm  
Short pants, romance  
Learn to dance, get dressed, get blessed  
Try to be a success  
Please her, please him, buy gifts  
Don't steal, don't lift  
Twenty years of schoolin'  
And they put you on the day shift  
Look out kid  
They keep it all hid  
Better jump down a manhole  
Light yourself a candle  
Don't wear sandals  
Try to avoid the scandals  
Don't want to be a bum  
You better chew gum  
The pump don't work  
'Cause the vandals took the handles

Songwriters: Bob Dylan

Possible extensions:

- Explore the social context of this video filmed in 1965 when Bob Dylan was 24 years old. List the issues that affected youth at this time.
- List some of the issues that are stressful for youth today
- As a class prepare signs that express some of your fears, concerns, hopes. Use percussion to set the signs to music and, if you have the technology, film and edit for distribution via YouTube or Vimeo.
- Compile a playlist of contemporary artists who are making a statement through music
- See David Byrne Curates a Playlist of Protest songs: <http://www.openculture.com/?p=1059009> (Note 7-8th grade ^only: some songs are not classroom appropriate - but you can move the counter forward to the next song)
- See also: [We Rock! a fun family guide for exploring rock music history](#) by Jason Hanley



### 3. Review & Check for Understanding 30 min

["Fight the Power"](#) is a political music and social protest presentation for grades 7-12, linking genres of music to social movements or events. Visit the site for more lesson plans created by the [Rock & Roll Hall of Fame](#) in Cleveland, Ohio.

The program is **FREE** for schools within zip codes that begin with **440, 441, 442, or 443**. Regional groups can participate in *Rockin' the Schools* for a discounted rate.

Standards: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1