

THE SINGING REVOLUTION



Subjects: History / English Language Arts / Music & Art

The Power of a Song

Aim / Essential Question

Why did the song, “Mu isamaa on minu arm,” have such a powerful impact on the Estonian people at the 1969 Song Festival?

Overview

The defiant singing of, “Mu isamaa on minu arm,” at the end of the 1969 Song Festival resonated powerfully with the Estonian audience, while it troubled the Soviet authorities. It also foreshadowed events that would occur two decades later, the events leading up to independence in 1991. In this lesson, we will examine the symbolic power of the song festival and the power of the song itself, which combined to make that day a signal moment in Estonian history. How did the singing of this specific song that day enliven the spirit of the Estonian people?

Materials & Technology

- *The Singing Revolution* (Chapter 3 and Chapter 4)
(from Disc One / Chapters)
- Class set of copies of the lyrics to, “Mu isamaa on minu arm.”
(from Disc Three / Section 5: Song Festival / Laulupidu / Printable Documents)
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Length: One 50-minute class period

Objectives

Students will:

- Identify and explain the symbolism surrounding the 1969 Song Festival.
- Analyze the lyrics of the song to understand its emotional impact on the audience.
- Hypothesize how the events of that day in 1969 could have turned out differently had the Soviets been even more repressive.

Instruction

Opening: Bell Ringer / Do Now

Warm-up on symbolism. —Students write a paragraph on the following questions which are meant to illustrate the power of symbolism:

- When America is involved in foreign military actions, we often see televised images of protesters burning the American flag. Why do the protestors choose the American flag to burn, and not some other object?
- What does the American flag symbolize to Americans and to the rest of the world—in other words, what ideas does it represent?
- What impact does the image of our flag burning have on you as an American? Elaborate.

Activities

1. To make sure the students comprehend the power of symbolism, make the following analogy: 9/11 is said to have been a symbolic event, in large part because the terrorists selected symbolic targets: one symbolizing American military power, one symbolizing American political power, and one symbolizing American economic power. Identify these targets. What were the terrorists trying to achieve by selecting these symbolic targets? Did they achieve their intended emotional reaction?
2. View *The Singing Revolution*, from 21:13 to 35:43 (approximately 14 minutes from Chapters 3 and 4).
3. Ask the students the following questions on the film:
 - How did the event, (the 100th anniversary of the first song festival), and the location, (the newer and larger stadium), provide symbolic power to the 1969 Song Festival?
 - What else happened that day to stir the audience, and perhaps take on symbolic significance?
4. Analysis of Song Lyrics. Hand out copies of the lyrics to, “Mu isamaa on minu arm.” Students are to analyze the lyrics by doing the following:
 - Identify where in the lyrics particular poetic techniques are being used:—symbolism, personification, metaphor, repetition, imagery, etc.
 - Identify where in the lyrics strong feelings might be touched:—feelings like patriotism, love of the land, sacrifice, respect for tradition, hope for the future, loyalty etc.
 - By examining the lyrics what can you say that Estonians value?
5. Student Responses. Students are to share their analyses with the class.

Close: Application / Summary

Answer Aim Question. Why did this particular song, on that particular day, have such a powerful impact on the audience? Elicit student responses.

Homework

Respond to the following hypothetical situation: Imagine the lyrics to, “Mu isamaa on minu arm,” had been changed for the 1969 Song Festival so that the words, “Soviet Union,” were substituted for “Estonia” and the Estonian chorus that day was forced to sing the altered version instead. What impact might that have had on the audience? Write a half-page response.

Lyrics in English for, "Mu isamaa on minu arm" (Land of my fathers, land that I love)

Land of my fathers, land that I love,
I've given my heart to her,
I sing to you, my supreme happiness,
My flourishing Estonia!
I sing to you, my supreme happiness,
My flourishing Estonia!
Your pain boils in my heart,
Your happiness and joy make me happy too!
Your happiness and joy make me happy too!
Land of my fathers!
Land of my fathers!

Land of my fathers, land that I love,
I can't abandon her,
For her a hundred times
I shall give my life
For her a hundred times
I shall give my life
Envy makes strangers slander you
You are still alive in my heart
You are still alive in my heart
Land of my fathers!
Land of my fathers!

Land of my fathers, land that I love,
I want to have a rest.
I will lie down in your lap for eternal sleep
My holy Estonia
I will lie down in your lap for eternal sleep
My holy Estonia
Your birds are singing me to sleep
Flowers are blooming from me
Flowers are blooming from me
Land of my fathers!
Land of my fathers!