

BUILDING BLOCK INQUIRY C3 TEACHERS

Political and Social Polarization

How Can Art Unite a Divided Democracy?

C3 Framework Standard

D2.Civ.5.9-12. Evaluate citizens' and institutions' effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.

This inquiry leads students through an investigation of the ways in which artists are trying to heal the political polarization that have divided Americans. Students analyze recent events (e.g., the 2024 Fast Car duet between Tracy Chapman and Luke Combs) and how these artists created some national unity in their work. Students start to think about the role artists can play in a democracy and how people find commonality within the humanities generally, and art specifically.

Featured Sources

Source A: [Fast Car by Tracy Chapman](#)

Source B: ["A Rare Moment Americans Could All Share"](#)

Formative Performance Task

DELIBERATE: Annotate the [lyric sheet](#) as you listen to "Fast Car" by Tracy Chapman. Select your favorite lyric and share with a partner.

COLLABORATE: Listen to the [story](#) and work in a group to answer this question: Does the artist change the meaning of the song? If so, how? If not, why not?

PRODUCE: Interview a classmate you **do not know** well (at least someone you have not worked with thus far). Use the [protocol](#) for questions and add a question of your own.

Instructional Snapshot

Class begins listening to the song, *Fast Car*, by Tracy Chapman and students individually annotate by highlighting the lyrics that most resonate to them and then select their favorite lyric and share it with a partner (15 minutes). Next, students listen to *The Atlantic* story, ["A Rare Moment Americans Could All Share"](#), and work in a group of 4 to understand the background of both Tracy Chapman and Luke Combs and what they have in common and how their unique perspectives impact the meaning of *Fast Car* (their individual versions as well as the duet) --15 minutes. Finally, students are asked to interview someone in the class that they do not know well using the protocol questions. Each student is asked to add a question to make it their own--30 minutes. Ultimately, teachers could use these three instructional stages (Deliberate, Collaborate, Produce) to have a larger classroom conversation about the compelling question and what other artists have helped create unity (e.g., *Hamilton*, the musical).