Lesson plan ai vs human 4

# **CENTRAL QUESTION**

Music is not just entertainment—it has shaped cultural movements, challenged political systems, and given voice to the voiceless. Across history and across borders, governments and societies have taken different approaches to regulating, supporting, or censoring music. In this Close Up–style classroom inquiry, students will explore several proposals related to music’s role in society and examine competing perspectives about freedom of expression, cultural funding, and public responsibility.

**How should society govern and support the role of music in public life?**

The following pages contain six proposals that communities or governments could adopt to influence the role of music in society. Consider the pros and cons of each proposal, conduct additional research if needed, and answer or discuss the following questions:

* Which proposal(s), if any, do you favor? Why?
* Which proposal(s), if any, would you change? How?
* Which proposal(s), if any, would you reject? Why?
* Are there any other proposals you would put forward? Explain your answer.

# **EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS**

### **OPTION 1**

**Public schools should be required to offer music education at every grade level.**

| **What Supporters Say** | **What Opponents Say** |
| --- | --- |
| Music education improves brain development, supports emotional growth, and increases student engagement. Research shows that schools with music programs report higher attendance and graduation rates. Requiring music education ensures that all students—regardless of income—have access to cultural learning and creative expression. | School budgets are already stretched thin, and not every school has the staff or resources to offer a high-quality music program. Mandating music classes may force districts to cut funding for other important subjects like science, reading intervention, or mental health services. Local school boards—not the state—should decide what’s required. |

### **OPTION 2**

**The government should fund grants to preserve endangered musical traditions.**

| **What Supporters Say** | **What Opponents Say** |
| --- | --- |
| Many traditional forms of music—from Indigenous drumming to Appalachian ballads—are disappearing due to globalization and lack of intergenerational transmission. These musical traditions are part of cultural heritage and should be protected like historic sites. Grants would allow community leaders to teach and record these songs before they vanish. | Funding niche or localized music projects with taxpayer money may not serve the broader public. Decisions about which traditions to preserve could become political or biased. Private institutions and nonprofits—not the government—should take on that responsibility. |

### **OPTION 3**

**Streaming platforms should be required to pay artists higher royalties per play.**

| **What Supporters Say** | **What Opponents Say** |
| --- | --- |
| Most musicians make less than a penny per stream on major platforms like Spotify or Apple Music. This makes it nearly impossible for working musicians to earn a living. Raising minimum royalties would protect artists from exploitation and ensure that creators are paid fairly for their work. | Raising royalty rates could lead to more ads or higher subscription fees for consumers. Smaller platforms might shut down or stop hosting independent music altogether. The market—not the government—should determine prices and compensation. |

### **OPTION 4**

**Lyrics that promote hate or violence should be restricted from public radio.**

| **What Supporters Say** | **What Opponents Say** |
| --- | --- |
| Public radio is funded in part by taxpayer dollars and should not air music that promotes hate speech, misogyny, or violence. Setting basic content standards is not censorship—it’s about public accountability and protecting young listeners. | Determining what counts as “offensive” is highly subjective and could violate First Amendment rights. Artistic freedom includes the right to provoke or disturb. Once the government starts censoring lyrics, it becomes a slippery slope toward broader restrictions on expression. |

### **OPTION 5**

**Cities should invest in public spaces for free live music events.**

| **What Supporters Say** | **What Opponents Say** |
| --- | --- |
| Free live music events—like outdoor concerts or street festivals—build community, support local artists, and make cities more vibrant. Investing in public stages, sound equipment, and permitting helps bring people together across race, age, and income. | While free music events can be enjoyable, they often create noise complaints, litter, and traffic. Local governments should prioritize spending on essential services like housing, infrastructure, and safety—not concerts. Artists and venues should seek private sponsors or ticket sales. |

### **OPTION 6**

**Music with strong political messages should be protected, even if controversial.**

| **What Supporters Say** | **What Opponents Say** |
| --- | --- |
| Throughout history, music has played a critical role in protest movements—from Civil Rights to anti-war efforts. Songs that challenge injustice or critique government actions should be strongly protected under free speech laws. Even controversial music can spark important conversations and raise awareness. | Political music has a place, but it can also fuel division or unrest—especially if it targets specific groups. Schools, festivals, or public platforms may have legitimate reasons to avoid programming music that could incite anger or backlash. Free speech should be respected, but with limits in sensitive settings. |

# **DISCUSSION & REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

1. Which proposal(s), if any, do you favor? Why?
2. Which proposal(s), if any, would you change? How?
3. Which proposal(s), if any, would you reject? Why?
4. Are there any other proposals that you would put forward? Explain your answer.
5. What factors were most important to you in evaluating these options? (e.g., free expression, cultural preservation, fairness, public funding)