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# AP Research Academic Paper

## Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

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# 2018 AP Research Academic Paper Rubric v1.0

The response...

<p><b>Score of 1</b> Report on Existing Knowledge</p>	<p><b>Score of 2</b> Report on Existing Knowledge with Simplistic Use of a Research Method</p>	<p><b>Score of 3</b> Ineffectual Argument for a New Understanding</p>	<p><b>Score of 4</b> Well-Supported, Articulate Argument Conveying a New Understanding</p>	<p><b>Score of 5</b> Rich Analysis of a New Understanding Addressing a Gap in the Research Base</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presents an overly broad topic of inquiry.</li> <li>• Situates a topic of inquiry within a single perspective derived from scholarly works <b>OR</b> through a variety of perspectives derived from mostly non-scholarly works.</li> <li>• Describes a search and report process.</li> <li>• Summarizes or reports existing knowledge in the field of understanding pertaining to the topic of inquiry.</li> <li>• Generally communicates the student’s ideas, although errors in grammar, discipline-specific style, and organization distract or confuse the reader.</li> <li>• Cites <b>AND/OR</b> attributes sources (in bibliography/works cited and/or in-text), with multiple errors and/or an inconsistent use of a discipline-specific style.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presents a topic of inquiry with narrowing scope or focus, that is NOT carried through either in the method or in the overall line of reasoning.</li> <li>• Situates a topic of inquiry within a single perspective derived from scholarly works <b>OR</b> through a variety of perspectives derived from mostly non-scholarly works.</li> <li>• Describes a nonreplicable research method <b>OR</b> provides an oversimplified description of a method, with questionable alignment to the purpose of the inquiry.</li> <li>• Summarizes or reports existing knowledge in the field of understanding pertaining to the topic of inquiry.</li> <li>• Generally communicates the student’s ideas, although errors in grammar, discipline-specific style, and organization distract or confuse the reader.</li> <li>• Cites <b>AND/OR</b> attributes sources (in bibliography/works cited and/or in-text), with multiple errors and/or an inconsistent use of a discipline-specific style.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carries the focus or scope of a topic of inquiry through the method <b>AND</b> overall line of reasoning, even though the focus or scope might still be narrowing.</li> <li>• Situates a topic of inquiry within relevant scholarly works of varying perspectives, although connections to some works may be unclear.</li> <li>• Describes a reasonably replicable research method, with questionable alignment to the purpose of the inquiry.</li> <li>• Conveys a new understanding or conclusion, with an underdeveloped line of reasoning <b>OR</b> insufficient evidence.</li> <li>• Competently communicates the student’s ideas, although there may be some errors in grammar, discipline-specific style, and organization.</li> <li>• Cites <b>AND</b> attributes sources, using a discipline-specific style (in both bibliography/works cited <b>AND</b> in-text), with few errors or inconsistencies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses a topic of inquiry with clear and narrow parameters, which are addressed through the method and the conclusion.</li> <li>• Explicitly connects a topic of inquiry to relevant scholarly works of varying perspectives <b>AND</b> logically explains how the topic of inquiry addresses a gap.</li> <li>• Logically defends the alignment of a detailed, replicable research method to the purpose of the inquiry.</li> <li>• Supports a new understanding or conclusion through a logically organized line of reasoning <b>AND</b> sufficient evidence. The limitations and/or implications, if present, of the new understanding or conclusion are oversimplified.</li> <li>• Competently communicates the student’s ideas, although there may be some errors in grammar, discipline-specific style, and organization.</li> <li>• Cites <b>AND</b> attributes sources, with a consistent use of an appropriate discipline-specific style (in both bibliography/works cited <b>AND</b> in-text), with few to no errors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses a topic of inquiry with clear and narrow parameters, which are addressed through the method and the conclusion.</li> <li>• Explicitly connects a topic of inquiry to relevant scholarly works of varying perspectives <b>AND</b> logically explains how the topic of inquiry addresses a gap.</li> <li>• Logically defends the alignment of a detailed, replicable research method to the purpose of the inquiry.</li> <li>• Justifies a new understanding or conclusion through a logical progression of inquiry choices, sufficient evidence, explanation of the limitations of the conclusion, and an explanation of the implications to the community of practice.</li> <li>• Enhances the communication of the student’s ideas through organization, use of design elements, conventions of grammar, style, mechanics, and word precision, with few to no errors.</li> <li>• Cites <b>AND</b> attributes sources, with a consistent use of an appropriate discipline-specific style (in both bibliography/works cited <b>AND</b> in-text), with few to no errors.</li> </ul>

# AP<sup>®</sup> RESEARCH 2018 SCORING COMMENTARY

## Academic Paper

### Overview

This performance task was intended to assess students' ability to conduct scholarly and responsible research and articulate an evidence-based argument that clearly communicates the conclusion, solution, or answer to their stated research question. More specifically, this performance task was intended to assess students' ability to:

- Generate a focused research question that is situated within or connected to a larger scholarly context or community;
- Explore relationships between and among multiple works representing multiple perspectives within the scholarly literature related to the topic of inquiry;
- Articulate what approach, method, or process they have chosen to use to address their research question, why they have chosen that approach to answering their question, and how they employed it;
- Develop and present their own argument, conclusion, or new understanding while acknowledging its limitations and discussing implications;
- Support their conclusion through the compilation, use, and synthesis of relevant and significant evidence generated by their research;
- Use organizational and design elements to effectively convey the paper's message;
- Consistently and accurately cite, attribute, and integrate the knowledge and work of others, while distinguishing between the student's voice and that of others;
- Generate a paper in which word choice and syntax enhance communication by adhering to established conventions of grammar, usage, and mechanics.

The Influence of Feminist Music Over the Years

Word Count: 3636

**ABSTRACT:**

The role of women in the music industry has become a prominent topic these past years. This is due to the fact that females continue to flourish in a more male dominated career. In these past years, female vocalists have become one of the most idolized people due to their impactful lyrics and unforgettable images. This study aims to look into the lyrics of five of the most influential feminist artists of these past decades to understand what they did to boost female respect during the time period their music was put out. Content analysis will be the main method used to conduct this research. The lyrics will be looked at and coded for certain feminist phrases and messages to understand if the song made an impact to women empowerment during the time period it was released. The results of this study will provide an understanding that music is much more than just a song to listen to and can impact things as big as the Feminist Movement.

**INTRODUCTION:**

During the 19th century-early 20th century, a woman in the music industry was almost unheard of. Jazz and rock and roll were a huge part of the times and it was without a doubt a male dominated field. Being a woman who played an instrument or was in jazz was extremely rare. There was always little space in jazz and rock for women during those times. And any woman that was involved in those genres just acted like a man and felt as if they had to act that way or else they would not be accepted. Because of this, women were always being let down by the music industry. There clearly was a major lack of representation by women in the music industry. During these times women were often not taken seriously by record labels and were even paid less than males were. The gender imbalance in the music industry during these times

was undeniable and women were not being treated or taken as seriously as the men were. However, these times have changed because the role of women in the music industry is now drastically better than it was during the 19th and 20th century. The reason for this change is solely accredited to the females that we now have in this industry. These are women that went through so much to be taken seriously in this male dominated field. These women understand what discrimination feels like which is why they are so heavily passionate about feminism and demanding respect. For this study, the researcher decided to select five of the most “feminist musicians” from different time periods. The way that these five women were picked out was from simply researching a list of feminist musicians and hand picking the ones with the most songs with lyrics relating to feminism. These five women that were chosen are as follows: Aretha Franklin, Madonna, Queen Latifah, Christina Aguilera, and Beyonce. This research seeks to delve into the lyrics of women empowering songs from these five artists, code them into feminist messages, and understand how they impacted the feminist movement. The songs were chosen by simply researching “most feminist song by” and then placing in the selected artists name. Once the search results came back with a list of songs, it was time to come down to which song had the most examples of feminism and which songs had the most feminist words in the lyrics. Once that was discovered it was time to analyze the lyrics and understand what point the artist was trying to make when they wrote them.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

Now that the researcher has picked out the five artist that will be analyzed, they must understand the background of these women. How they become artists and why, which songs

have the most to do with feminism, and how the lyrics impacted the feminist movement. The five artists will include: Aretha Franklin (1960), Madonna (1980) Queen Latifah (1990), Christina Aguilera (2000), Beyonce (2010). In order to understand why these women are so influential one needs to understand how they impacted the world with their music and hard work to build up equal women's rights.

Starting with Aretha Franklin, she is best known to be “The Queen of Soul”. Franklin has a plethora of songs about female empowerment such as “Respect” and “A Natural Women”. Aretha Franklin made a huge impact on society during the late 60’s because she played a huge role in the civil rights cause, and even performed publicly in support of Martin Luther King. Franklin was known to be an important symbol of black advancement. (“About Aretha Franklin” ,2006). During the civil rights movement, black women were not taken seriously and were not prominent at all. Most of the time, a woman's hard work during this time was usually overshadowed by a man who would get more attention and credit for it. Women were faced with sexual harassment and discrimination within the movement and later turned towards the feminist movement (“Women in the Civil Rights Movement” ,2015). When Franklin came out with her song “Respect” it certainly shifted the tone of the civil rights from women getting no respect to them then demanding it. Franklin's song “Respect” gained the attention of many because it was a song the world had not heard before. The lyrics symbolize a man needing to show his respect to a woman because she is not a fool and deserves it. Franklin is a symbol of black equality and feminism. Adding to her impact she was also on the cover of Time magazine and was presented an award from Martin Luther King Jr. himself. (“Aretha Franklin Bio”).

The next influential feminist singer that will be focused on is Madonna. This icon who is

also otherwise known as “The Queen of Pop”, is best known for her unique voice and her original lyrics and music videos that push the boundaries of content. Madonna continued to push the envelope and encouraged women to embrace their sexuality and express it. Madonna has an undeniable strong passion for women's rights and this is clear to see because a majority of her songs contain lyrics of feminism (“ The Evolution of Madonna's Feminist Message” 2017). For example the song “Express Yourself” has a stanza which states:

“What you need is a big strong hand  
To lift you to your higher ground  
Make you feel like a queen on a throne  
Make him love you till you can't come down.”

This stanza talks about how women should not be asking for diamonds and nice gifts from a man because those things do not mean much, but rather his respect towards the women he is with (Similar to Aretha Franklin in her song “Respect”). Madonna is one of the very few artists that has made a huge impact on the musical industry and society itself. According to the Rolling Stones, Madonna has been compared to artists such as The Beatles and Elvis Presley. Because she is such a known public figure she has been analyzed from the point of view of several studies including topics such as feminism, musical, social etc., becoming known as an icon in all of these branches. (“ Cultural Impact of Madonna” 2018). Madonna is an active member with the feminist movement and is considered to be an iconic women who pushes the boundaries of her music and of gender.

Transitioning from one icon to another, the next feminist idol is Queen Latifah. Queen Latifah is a grammy award winning rapper, producer, and actress. She relates a lot to Aretha

Franklin because they both are important to the black women's rights community. Latifah called out the misogyny in the music industry at a time when women in the industry weren't being given opportunities to ask for much at all. She also introduced feminism into rap music which was rare for other female artist to do ("Feminist Activism in Hip Hop" 2018). Latifah completely flipped the rap community in the 90s. During this time period, rap was one of the most profitable and popular music genres. Many songs would refer to their inner cities gang activity, drugs, weaponry, violence, and police brutality. In most of these songs, rappers would refer to women with many derogatory and demeaning names. These vulgar terms were used so often in these songs that it just became a habit and women would be called this to often. Latifah absolutely was not going to put up with this so she created a new approach to rapping which was all about feminism. Similar to Aretha Franklin's song "Respect", Latifah's albums are filled with songs about female power and the respect that women should be demanding from men. In one of Latifah's most famous hits called "UNITY", she addresses sexual harassment, domestic violence, the cycle of violence within the Black community, and the ways Black female sexuality had been objectified in life and art ("Queen Latifah UNITY Feminist Legacy" 2015).

Equally as important as Latifah, the next feminist artist is Christina Aguilera. Aguilera has been setting the stage for women empowerment ever since she began her career. Almost every single one of her songs are deemed to empower women. One of her most iconic feminist songs is called "Can't Hold Us Down". This song talks about the double standards between men and women. The opening lyrics of the song start off very powerful with her stating "So what am I not supposed to have an opinion /should I just be quiet because I am a women". These lyric talks about how women should have a right to speak up just as much as men should.

Aguilera was and still to this day is an active feminist who will always stand up for herself.

Lastly one of the most known feminist singers to this day is Beyonce. All of the women that are being analyzed were always on the list of being great feminist singers, but Beyonce was number one on all of those lists. Beyonce literally put the definition of a feminist in her most known song “Flawless” because she states “not for propaganda or to proclaim to the world that I’m a feminist, but to give clarity to the true meaning. I’m not really sure people know or understand what a feminist is, but it’s very simple. It’s someone who believes in equal rights for men and women. I don’t understand the negative connotation of the word, or why it should exclude the opposite sex”. Beyonce believes that not everyone truly understands what being a feminist involves, but she says that it is truly simply because it only involves someone believing in equality of the sexes. Beyonce works with many philanthropic organizations such as Chime for Change and Global Citizen which deal with issues women face in third world countries such as sanitation and the lack of health and education. Beyonce considers that working with these organizations to try and vanish these inequalities go away is being a feminist, and also a humanist (“What Being a Feminist Means to Beyonce” 2015).

All in all, every single one of these women has contributed countless amounts of work to abolish sexism and misogynist and to keep women's rights. These ladies all have written songs that millions of people have heard and that impact people day to day.

### **METHODOLOGY:**

The first step in carrying out this research was to pick out the five songs that would be analyzed. There are a plethora of songs from these five artists that have a small or large messages

of feminism. In order for this research to be carried out as best as possible, the songs that were chosen had to be full of feminist messages and words. The researcher looked through all of the artist best selling songs and decided which one had the most amount of feminist lyrics to work with. These five songs will include: “RESPECT” by Aretha Franklin, “What it Feels Like For A Girl” by Madonna, “U.N.I.T.Y” by Queen Latifah, “Can’t Hold Us Down” by Christina Aguilera, and lastly “Flawless” by Beyonce. The one thing that all of these songs have in common is that they all carry out a feminist message to the public. It had been discovered that each song has a different problem that women face. **Figure 1** shows the themes that each song discusses.

SONG	THEME
RESPECT	Black women demanding respect.
What It Feels Like For A Girl	Society's misconception on how girls should act and dress.
U.N.I.T.Y	Inappropriate scenarios men put women through.
Can't Hold Us Down	Double standards that women face.
Flawless	The empowerment of every single women.

**Figure 1: Feminist Themes of Various Songs**

After understand the themes of the songs, the researcher will then look into the lyrics and understand how these lyrics helped the women and men of the times to promote feminism.

**DATA ANALYSIS/RESULTS:**

The feminist movement started around the 19th and 20th century. Although it was not very supported or popular during those times. Lately, feminism is a widely populated topic that is supported by numerous people and political figures. It is strongly believed that it is so known now because of the various celebrities and press coverage that this topic gets. The songs that are being analyzing have somehow helped the feminist movement come to where it is today, and this is how.

Aretha Franklin released her song “RESPECT” in 1967. The lyrics in this particular song are all about demanding a mans respect because during the 60s this was something that women did not frequently get. In the 1960's war on poverty, a woman could not receive welfare if there was a man living in the house. Aretha Franklin actually did receive welfare checks from the state. In this song she is saying that when he comes home she will give him all of her money as long as he gives her his respect.

“All I'm askin'

Is for a little respect when you get home (just a little bit)

Hey baby (just a little bit) when you get home”

“I'm about to give you all of my money

And all I'm askin' in return, honey

Is to give me my propers”

She is demanding this because although her man has a job and has been working hard all day, so has she. Many men in those times believed that being a stay home wife was a simple job with no effort having to be put into it. This on the other hand is incorrect because as many women know

there is the same amount of work that has to be put into being a stay at home wife as going into a real job. This song is empowering to many women and made many stick up for themselves which was a rare thing to do in the 60s for women. Aretha is basically saying “if you treat me right, I will treat you right”, this is how respect works. Her point in this song was simple and it goes back to the saying “treat others the way you want to be treated”. The song was also widely used in both the civil rights movement and the women's liberation movement.

The next song is by Madonna called “What it Feels Like For a Girl”. This song is moving to women because all their life they are taught to never live up to their full potential and this song really highlights that. This song is about girls and what society's misconceptions are on how a girl is to be, act, look, portrayed, etc. Girls are seen as being emotional, sensitive, weak, etc. but really they are strong and can be great but are discouraged to live up to their potential. This song is more targeted towards teenagers and the emotions the struggles and misconceptions that they face at such a young age.

“Girls can wear jeans and cut their hair short  
 Wear shirts and boots 'cause it's okay to be a boy  
 But for a boy to look like a girl is degrading  
 'Cause you think that being a girl is degrading  
 But secretly you'd love to know what it's like wouldn't you  
 What it feels like for a girl”

This stanza is talking about how if a woman dresses up like a man it is completely fine because being a man is “powerful and cool”. If it were the other way around though, a man would be teased and mocked because women are apparently known for being weak. This song reveals the

real truth of how men think of women in degrading ways and Madonna did an amazing job of highlighting this in the song. The whole point of the song is saying girls are conceived as beautiful and vulnerable, and therefore men wouldn't want to be them. However, women are actually very strong. Women have no problem looking like men, but men have a problem looking like women: because they don't understand them, and so, in a way, men are perhaps weaker than women.

The next feminist anthem is UNITY by queen Latifah. Queen Latifah takes a stand in this song and encourages black women to respect themselves and not accept the abuse from men who try to put them down. During the 90s when hip hop was really becoming popular, this is where men would really put down women. In almost every rap song there was a stanza about a women and was somehow referred to her in a derogatory way. Latifah was over this and did not stand for it at all. She did not want young men to follow the footsteps of these rappers. U.N.I.T.Y speaks out against the disrespect that men treat women with and encourages black women to respect themselves and not accept the abuse from men who try to put them down.

“But I don't want my kids to see me getting beat down

By daddy smacking mommy all around

You say I'm nothing without ya, but I'm nothing with ya”

This song is filled with scenarios that women go through due to mens behavior, but this one stood out the most. Latifah touches on abusive relationships in this stanza which is something that not many songs go into. This song was awarded for a grammy..

“Can't Hold us Down” by Christina Aguilera is the next song that has made a huge impact on the feminist movement. This song is more recent coming out in 2003 and is an attack

on the double standard in society where men are praised for their sexual prowess while women with the same habits are looked down upon. The opening lyrics of this song set the tone for the rest of the song.

“So what am I not supposed to have an opinion  
Should I keep quiet just because I'm a women”

Aguilera immediately addresses a huge problem women face, that their opinions mean nothing. She responds against a double standard that women are expected to stay quiet while men can say anything without any consequences. This song encourages self-confidence and the power of standing up for yourself.

The last song is the most popular out of them all and the most recent. “Flawless” by Beyonce is a song that makes women feel powerful and worth something. In the song, beyonce uses an excerpt of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s TED talk to further dispel her critics by attacking patriarchy and sexism. This ted talk explains what the true meaning of a feminist is by clearly explaining the definition in the middle of the song.

“We raise girls to each other as competitors  
Not for jobs or for accomplishments  
Which I think can be a good thing  
But for the attention of men  
We teach girls that they cannot be sexual beings  
In the way that boys are  
Feminist: the person who believes in the social  
Political, and economic equality of the sexes”

When Beyoncé is calling herself flawless it is not meant to be narcissistic but rather for positive self-esteem. Beyoncé references her body parts as flawless, something not to be criticized for their sexual characteristics or lack thereof, but something which is just perfect simply because it was made that way.

### **DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION:**

After careful consideration of these song lyrics and what they did for women, it is clear to see that these songs truly helped impact the feminist movement. Each song touches on a different topic that women go through on a daily basis. From discrimination and misogyny all the way to how a woman looks and dresses. If it weren't for these artists, the feminist movement would not be the way that it is today. Thanks to these artists, they raised awareness on the topics and used their voices to speak up for those of us who cannot.

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**AP<sup>®</sup> RESEARCH**  
**2018 SCORING COMMENTARY**

**Academic Paper**

**Sample: G**

**Score: 2**

The paper earned a score of 2 because it presents a narrowing topic of inquiry (page 3, paragraph 1: “This research seeks to delve into the lyrics of women empowering songs from these five artists ... and understand how they impacted the feminist movement”) that is not carried through in the paper's method. The method is incomplete because, while the student does “... look into the lyrics ...” (page 8, bottom of page) there is no process identified that allows the reader to “... understand how these lyrics helped the women and men of the times to promote feminism” (page 8, bottom of page). The exploration of the lyrics is conducted through an unidentified content analysis process.

The paper did not score a 1 because it identifies an answerable research question and implies a method for analyzing at least a part of its inquiry.

The paper did not score a 3 because of insufficient evidence and hyperbolic statements, which both imply a failure to understand significant details of its identified topic (e.g., page 9, paragraph 1: “The feminist movement started around the 19th and 20th century. Although it was not very supported or popular during those times”). In addition, selection of data sets to be considered is insufficiently justified and questionably aligned with the research topic (see page 3 where the student notes that: “The way that these five women were picked out was from simply researching a list of feminist musicians and handpicking the ones with the most songs with lyrics related to feminism .... The songs were chosen by simply researching ‘Most feminist song by’ and then placing in the selected artists [sic] name”). There are insufficient in-text citations (particularly in the literature review) that do not credit the correct songwriters and fail to define key terms (such as feminism).