



ROYAL  
COLLEGE  
OF MUSIC  
*London*



# RCM Sparks

## Protest Songs: Music Used For Social Change

Accompanying information for teachers/leaders

RCM Sparks is the Royal College of Music's learning and participation programme.  
To find out more and get involved visit [www.rcm.ac.uk/sparks](http://www.rcm.ac.uk/sparks)

## Example tracks

- In addition to the backing tracks, we have also provided example tracks to show how the songs could sound when they have lyrics added
- Before you run your song-writing activity, please have a listen to these examples as this will help you hear how the songs might go and the structure of the songs. Lyrics from the example tracks are provided on the next page
- As the aim of the activity is for your new protest song to be as original as possible, it is better not to play these example tracks for your participants. However, they could be useful if your group needs to hear an example, or if you're having to work quickly

1. **Change** (example track)
2. **Protest** (example track)
3. **March** (example track)

## Advice for leading the song-writing activity

- Start by deciding, as a whole group, which backing track you will use and the cause you will be writing about
- Write slogans to focus the message of your protest. Ask participants to practice saying/shouting them like they are at a rally, and ask others to repeat it back
- If you are working in a group where you'd like to represent lots of different causes, you can work together to create verses about protesting in general. Then in the chorus you can shout slogans for separate causes. Another idea is to write different verses for different causes
- Stand in a circle while your chosen track is played – participants will need to hear it a few times in a row to get ideas
- Ask everyone to sing along with the parts that are already in the tracks, like the words 'Change' and 'Protest'. Then ask them to 'fill in the gaps' with singing and lyrics – some participants might start to have ideas for movements/actions too
- Stay together and keep working while listening to the song – if the participants sit and write their own parts it will be more difficult to fit everything together
  - The guide melodies on the tracks are there to help you mould your songs – use them freely, as a shape, and don't worry too much about getting every syllable in place

- In Protest, there is a descending five-note pattern which happens several times in the song and could be attached to a slogan – I have used 'It's our protest song!' on the Example Track
- Shout your slogans where there is space in the song to do so!
- Keep playing the song and rehearse the different sections people have suggested
- Write down your ideas, and at the end, write up the finished song lyrics on a flipchart so everyone can see it and sing the song through (unless you can all remember it!)
- Repeat as much as you like – one verse and one chorus can be repeated each time they appear, or you can write individual verses if you have time
- Actions – marching in the March and stepping and clapping in the choruses of Change and Protest, will help bring the songs to life. The participants can punch the air as they shout their slogans! Make placards to make your message visual too!

## Lyrics on the example tracks

### Change

#### Verse 1:

There's plastic in the sea, forests are dying,  
 The world is getting hotter each year  
 I wish they would see sense, no more lying, no pretence,  
 Cos the world is taking more than it can bear.

#### Chorus:

**Change!** (Fight for what you believe in!)  
**Change!** (Make the world a better place!)  
**Change!** (Find a brighter tomorrow!)  
**Change!** (We can do our best!)

#### Verse 2:

How to save the Amazon from burning?  
 How to save the birds from oil spills?  
 We must do our best, and learn to teach the rest,  
 We must save it from its oceans to its hills.

#### Slogans:

**If you want things to change** - Write to your MP!  
 Turn off taps! Take plastic from the seas!  
**If you want things to change** - Take the bus, not  
 the car! Walk to school – it's not that far!

## Protest

### Verse:

You betta listen up cos we're here to say,  
Equal rights for all, don't get in our way,  
You betta listen up cos we're here to say,  
It's our protest song!  
We're gonna make some noise and we'll march the streets,  
Shouting out loud, our beliefs,  
We're gonna make some noise and we'll march the streets,  
It's our protest song!

### Chorus:

**Protest!** (Yeah, you better listen up!)  
**Protest!** (We want equal rights!)  
**Protest!** (Use your ears, use your head!)  
(It's our protest song!)

## March

### Verse:

Stand arm in arm, join the parade,  
Stay free from harm, friends shall be made,  
We are shouting – "No more war!"  
That's a cause worth fighting for!

### Slogans:

**Shout out your slogans 1 2 3 4!**  
Give peace a chance!  
Talk to each other to find the answer!  
Friends not foes!  
Learn from history!