



Cultural Tapestry Arts Lesson: Steely Dan

Barrytown

I'm not one to look behind, I know that times must change -
But over there in Barrytown they do things very strange.
And though you're not my enemy,
I like things like they used to be,
And though you'd like some company,
I'm standing by myself -
Go play with someone else...
I can see by what you carry that you come from Barrytown

Don't believe I'm taken in by stories I have heard -
I just read the Daily News and swear by every word.
And don't think that I'm out of line
For speaking out for what is mine.
I'd like to see you do just fine -
But look at what you wear,
And the way you cut your hair...
I can see by what you carry that you come from Barrytown

In the beginning we recall that the word was hurled -
Barrytown people got to be from another world

Leave me or I'll be just like the others you will meet -
They won't act as kindly if they see you on the street!
And don't you scream or make a shout,
There's nothing you can do about.
It was there where you came out,
It's a special lack of grace,
I can see it in your face...
I can see by what you carry that you come from Barrytown

Lyrics & Music: Walter Becker and Donald Fagen (1974) - Becker and Fagen founded Steely Dan in 1971. The duo worked with a variety of highly regarded talent, creating extremely popular music heavily influenced by jazz. Lyrics often addressed societal issues and the tensions between classes or groups.

NOTES:

Let's Explore

Spend several minutes to read the lyrics a few times...

- *What do you notice?*
 - *Who or what is the subject(s) and why was the writer inspired to write about them?*
 - *What do you learn about the subject - where might this be taking place, and when?*
 - *What makes this subject different or special?*
- *What do you wonder?*
 - *What is going on? What surrounds the subject of the song?*
 - *What happened before the time of the song, and what might come next?*
 - *Are there different ways to see the situation, or is it clear what is happening?*
 - *Have you ever seen someone or something like the subject? If you have, where did you see them or it?*
- *How does it make you feel?*
 - *If the song describes an action, would you ever like to do something similar?*
 - *Do you see yourself in the song? In what way?*
 - *Do things or feelings in the song remind you of anything?*
 - *Does the title of the song affect how you feel about it?*

Write down your thoughts and share with family and friends...

The Four Artistic Processes



RESPOND: Explore and Understand

- What words have impact? Why do you think the author chose them?
- What do you notice about tone, rhythm, pattern and mood of the song?

CONNECT: Relate to the artwork

- How does the song make you feel? Why?
- If you could interview the author or the subject, what questions would you ask?
- What do you think the subject (person) in the song is doing? If there isn't a person, do you feel an emotion in what is written, such as affection, tension, or creativity?

CREATE: Make your own art

- Write a poem or short essay reflecting on the way the song makes you feel, or a subject similar to that of the song.
- Draw or paint an artwork or take a photograph that has a subject similar to that in the song.
- Imagine you are the artist who created the song. Write what they might say to describe their reason for writing the song, from their point of view.

PRESENT: Share your artwork

- Share your creation with family or friends.
- Take a moment to share what you have discovered.