

# **Lesson Plan for Ovation documentary**

## ***Song by Song: Dolly Parton “I Will Always Love You”***

### **Grade Level – 9-12**

- Music

### **Materials for teacher**

- Ovation’s website [www.ovationtv.com/educators](http://www.ovationtv.com/educators)

Note: It is recommended that teachers view all programming clips prior to using the content in class.

### **National Standards for Arts Education**

#### **Music – Grades 9-12**

Standard 6 – Listening to, analyzing and describing music

Standard 7 – Evaluating music and music performances

Standard 9 – Understanding music in relation to history and culture

### **Lesson Overview**

Students will gain an understanding of the life, career and music of legendary country music artist Dolly Parton, by viewing and discussing segments of a documentary. They will learn about the distinctive musical talents of Parton, the influences on her music, and the personal qualities that made her a renowned performer. The students will analyze and discuss musical elements of the hit song composed by Parton *“I Will Always Love You.”*

They will compare and contrast Parton’s performance of the song *“I Will Always Love You,”* with the performance of renowned female vocal artist Whitney Houston. Students will enhance their reading and research skills, exploring related websites on the Internet.

## **Length of Lesson:**

**4 – 45-minute class periods**

**Part I            Introduction to Dolly Parton – Life, Career, Musicianship and Inspiration to the Song “*I Will Always Love You*”**

**Part II           Performances of Dolly Parton and Whitney Houston**

## **Instructional Objectives**

- Students will understand aspects of the life, career, and musicianship of a legendary country music artist.
- Students will identify song structure indicating expressive qualities.
- Students will understand how a composer uses, life experience to contribute to meaning and mood of a song.
- Students will understand the process of comparing and contrasting musical performances.
- Students will enhance research skills, exploring topic-related websites on the Internet.

## **Supplies**

- computers with Internet access and a printer
- equipment for screening documentary footage
  - White Board, or
  - laptop computer, projector with speakers, screen
- Ovation’s documentary, *Song by Song: Dolly Parton “I Will Always Love You”*
- audio recordings of “*I Will Always Love You*” sung by Dolly Parton and sung by Whitney Houston
- audio playback equipment
- blank pieces of paper and pens
- journals in binder format – for students’ notes and assessments

## **PART 1**

### **Lesson 1 – Day 1**

#### **Class work**

**Topic:            Dolly Parton – life, career, musicianship**

**Inspiration to the Song “*I Will Always Love You*”**

The teacher will inform students that there are two parts to the lessons. In **Part I** students will be viewing programming segments from a documentary about Dolly Parton and they will discuss aspects of her life, career and music, based on the content of the programming. Each programming segment ranges from two to three minutes in length. The documentary provides an account of portions of her legendary career as a singer, songwriter and producer, and focuses on a particular hit song Parton composed and sang “*I Will Always Love You*,” inspired by a special person and significant event which took place early in her career. The program spans the period before and during the years when she was acknowledged as a leading country music artist. In **Part II** students will listen to the song “*I Will Always Love You*,” to analyze the lyrics. They will also compare and contrast performances of two renowned vocal artists, Dolly Parton and Whitney Houston, singing their own renditions of the song “*I Will Always Love You*.”

### **Subject-related words**

The teacher will relate the following list of words and definitions to the students for use during class discussions and in their writing assignments. These specific definitions were selected for their correlation to words used in association with this lesson, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> The students can obtain additional meanings for these words, and usage, from this website.

**agility** *noun* :the quality or state of being agile: NIMBLENESS, DEXTERITY <played with increasing agility>

**articulate** *adjective* 1 a: divided into SYLLABLES or words meaningfully arranged: INTELLIGIBLE b. able to speak c: expressing oneself READILY, clearly, or effectively

**chord** *noun* :three or more musical tones sounded simultaneously

**chorus** *noun* 1 c: an organized company of singers who sing in concert: CHOIR, especially: a body of singers who sing the choral parts of a work (as in opera)  
2 a :a part of a song or hymn recurring at intervals

**interpret** *verb - transitive verb* 1: to explain or tell the meaning of: present in understandable terms <interpret dreams> <needed help interpreting the results>

**intonation** *noun* 3: the ability to play or sing notes in tune

**key** *noun* 7 :a system of tones and harmonies generated from a hierarchical scale of seven tones based on a tonic <the key of G major> 8: a: characteristic style or tone  
b: the tone or pitch of a voice

**lyric** *noun* 1 :a lyric composition; specifically : a lyric poem 2: the words of a song – often used in plural

**melody** *noun* 1: a sweet or agreeable succession or arrangement of sounds: TUNEFULNESS 2 :a rhythmic succession of single tones organized as an aesthetic whole

**mood** *noun* 1: a conscious state of mind or predominant emotion: FEELING; also: the expression of mood especially in art or literature

**note** *noun* 1 a (1) obsolete: MELODY, SONG (2)a (3): CALL, SOUND; especially: the musical call of a bird b: a written symbol used to indicate duration and pitch of a tone by its shape and position on the staff

**octave** *noun* 3 a: a musical interval embracing eight diatonic degrees b: a tone or note at this interval c: the harmonic combination of two tones an octave apart d: the whole series of notes, tones, or digitals comprised within this interval and forming the unit of the modern scale

**phrase** *noun* 3 : a short musical thought typically two to four measures long closing with a cadence 4: a word or group of words forming a syntactic constituent with a single grammatical function <an adverbial phrase>

**rhythm** *noun* 2 a: the aspect of music comprising all the elements (as accent, meter, and tempo) that relate to forward movement

**soprano** *noun* 1 :the highest singing voice of women or boys and formerly of castrati; also: a person having this voice 2 :the highest voice part in a 4-part chorus

**timbre** *noun* :the quality given to a sound by its overtones: as a: the resonance by which the ear recognizes and identifies a voiced speech sound b: the quality of tone distinctive of a particular singing voice or musical instrument

**tone** *noun* :vocal or musical sound of a specific quality <spoke in low tones> <masculine tones>; especially: musical sound with respect to timbre and manner of expression 2 a:a sound of definite pitch and vibration

**verse** *noun* 1:a line of metrical writing 2 a(1):metrical language (2):metrical writing distinguished from poetry especially by its lower level of intensity (3): POETRY

## Homework

Following are suggested Internet websites, containing information, images and examples of music and performances by Dolly Parton, Whitney Houston, and country music artists, Porter Wagoner, Vince Gill, Carrie Underwood, Kenny Rogers, and Mac Davis. It is suggested that the teacher and students explore some or all of these resources (in particular Dolly Parton, Whitney Houston, and Porter Wagoner) prior to

and throughout the class experience. The teacher will ask the students to keep notes in their journals about class discussions, and to log their observations.

### **Related Websites and Resources**

Note: The “Song by Song: Dolly Parton” programs include highlights and interviews with many artists, colleagues, and friends who have known and worked with Dolly Parton over the years. In addition to those individuals featured below, the programs include Lily Tomlin, Kristin Chenoweth, Kellie Pickler, Miley Cyrus, Miranda Lambert, Brad Paisley, Janis Ian, record producer Kent Wells, recording executive Jody Williams, record producer Steve Buckingham, Parton’s band leader Michael Davis, director Duncan Tucker, singer/songwriters Lindi Ortega, Marty Stuart, Mindy Smith, Brandi Carlile and Jim Lauderdale, the Bluegrass group Grascals and biographer Alanna Nash. The series is narrated by Ray Van Ness.

Following are some of the artists featured in the programs.

#### **Dolly Parton**

*Dolly Parton: Home* – Recordings, Dollywood, Imagination Library

<http://www.dollyparton.com/>

*Dolly Parton: Home* - Biography

<http://dollypartonmusic.net/bio>

AZLyrics.com – Lyrics to “*I Will Always Love You*”

<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/dollyparton/iwillalwaysloveyou.html>

Youtube.com – Performance of “*I Will Always Love You*”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gS-F4rfU4ns>

#### **Whitney Houston**

IMDb – biography

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001365/bio>

Youtube.com - Performance of “*I Will Always Love You*” (video from the film)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQIq9ZgHjCs>

#### **Porter Wagoner**

About.com – biography, music, career milestones

<http://countrymusic.about.com/od/porterwagoner/p/Porter-Wagoner-Biography.htm>

## **Vince Gill**

Vince Gill's official website

[http://www.vincegill.com/wired/?page\\_id=306](http://www.vincegill.com/wired/?page_id=306)

## **Carrie Underwood**

Carrie Underwood's official website

<http://www.carrieunderwoodofficial.com/us/node/60851>

## **Kenny Rogers**

Kenny Rogers' official website

<http://kennyrogers.musiccitynetworks.com/>

## **Mac Davis**

*Songwriters Hall of Fame* – biography, music, career, photos

<http://www.songwritershalloffame.org/exhibits/C350>

## **Review Sheets**

The teacher will print copies of the biographical information of Dolly Parton's life and accomplishments (on page 7) and distribute it to students, prior to engaging in the lessons.

The teacher will access lyrics to the song "*I Will Always Love You*" at the following website: <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/dollyparton/iwillalwaysloveyou.html> -

The teacher will distribute printed copies of these resources to each student, prior to engaging in the lesson activities.

## **Dolly Parton – Biographical Information & Career Highlights**

- Dolly Rebecca Parton, born January 19, 1946 in Sevierville, Tennessee
- Fourth of twelve children of Robert Lee Parton, a tobacco farmer, and his wife Avie Lee
- American singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, record-producer, actress, author, businesswoman and philanthropist
- Best known for work in country music
- Parton describes her family as being “dirt poor”
- Outlined her family poverty in early songs, including “*Coat of Many Colors*”
- Began as child performer, showcasing distinctive soprano voice
- Moved to Nashville the day after she graduated from Sevier County High School in 1964, to pursue career in music
- Met Carl Dean when she was 18 and married him two years later
- Came to prominence in 1967, as featured performer on Porter Wagoner’s weekly TV program *The Porter Wagoner Show*
- Recorded several duet singles with Wagoner including “*The Last Thing on My Mind*,” a top-ten hit on country singles charts
- Ended the partnership with Wagoner in 1974
- A string of pop-country hits followed into the mid-1980s, including the very successful “*9 to 5*” (from the film of the same title)
- Has written over 650 songs and sold more than 100 million albums
- One of the best known songs is “*I Will Always Love You*” (a two-time U.S. country chart-topper, as well as an international pop hit for Whitney Houston)
- In the late 1990s, returned to classic country/bluegrass with a series of acclaimed recordings
- One of the most-honored female country performers of all time, having received eight Grammy Awards (including 2011 Lifetime Achievement Grammy), and many other awards at the American Music Awards, Country Music Association, Academy of Country Music
- Has also been nominated for two Academy Awards and a Tony Award
- As an actress, starred in the movies *9 to 5*, *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, *Rhinestone*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Gnomeo & Juliet*, *Straight Talk*, *Unlikely Angel*, and *Joyful Noise*.
- Non-musical ventures include co-ownership of The Dollywood Company, which operates Dollywood and several other related ventures, located in the Smokey Mountains in Tennessee
- Founded Imagination Library, on behalf of childhood literacy

Sources: *Dolly Parton: Home* <http://www.dollyparton.com/> & IMDb <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000573/bio>

## **Class Work**

The teacher will stream some or all of programming clips 1 through 4, from the documentary *Song by Song: Dolly Parton "I Will Always Love You."* Each clip is two to three minutes in length. Following each clip the teacher will engage the students in discussions about the content. The teacher may decide to use the discussion points below, or include other points in the student dialogue.

### ***Song by Song: Dolly Parton "I Will Always Love You"***

#### Clip 1

##### Discussion Points

- The day after graduating from high school Dolly Parton packed her bags and moved to Nashville. What does that one act tell you about the personality of Parton?
- In your opinion, what were the probable benefits to Parton from her upbringing in poverty as she embarked on a career as a country music artist?

#### Clip 2

##### Discussion Points

- Take time to discuss the importance of Parton's role on Porter Wagoner's weekly program.
- Given what you learn from this clip about his program, her musical collaborations with him, and the exposure it afforded her talents, discuss the impact this experience likely had on Parton's early career.
- Parton has been married to Carl Dean since her early career. In your opinion, do you think the fact that Dean has no desire to be in the lime light has been a benefit to their marriage? If so, state your reasons.

#### Clip 3

##### Discussion Points

- Discuss the career decision Parton made leaving Porter Wagoner's program. In your opinion, what personal qualities must she have possessed to have made that decision and follow through on it?
- As you listen to Parton describe her personal traits, after summing them up, discuss how they most likely helped or hindered Parton as she set out on her own to grow as a country music artist?



#### Clip 4

##### Discussion Points

- Take some time to summarize the environment Parton likely experienced during the years collaborating with Porter Wagoner and being featured on his program.
- As you listen to Parton singing the lyrics and the melody of “*I Will Always Love You*” try to summarize the emotions she most likely felt towards Wagoner.
- As you listen to Parton’s comments about Wagoner’s reaction to hearing the song, make a list of three feelings Wagoner likely experienced.
- Watch and listen as Parton sings a portion of the song. Discuss the attributes of her performance and the relevance of the lyrics to the situation.

#### Day 2

##### Class Work

The teacher will continue to stream some or all of programming clips 5 through 7, from the documentary *Song by Song: Dolly Parton “I Will Always Love You.”* Each clip is two to three minutes in length. Following each clip the teacher will engage the students in discussions about the content. The teacher may decide to use the discussion points below, or include other points in the student dialogue.

#### ***Song by Song: Dolly Parton “I Will Always Love You”***

#### Clip 5

##### Discussion Points

- A statement is made here, that writing the song was a brave thing, and that “you feel like you’re reading her diary.” In your opinion, what specific phrases in the lyrics would indicate Parton as being brave? Expand on your opinion.
- Do you think lifting passages from a personal diary serves as an effective foundation for song lyrics? If so, or if not, discuss your ideas.
- It is stated a lot of people thought that Parton’s leaving was career suicide. Understanding what you do about Parton’s personality traits and talents, would you have agreed that this move indicated career suicide? If so, or if not, expand on your opinion.

#### Clip 6

##### Discussion Points

- In this program segment, it is noted that the song “*I Will Always Love You*” would go on and have five incarnations, including Whitney Houston’s recording for the film *Bodyguard*.

- As you listen to portions of the song, what musical elements do you hear in it that you believe made it an enduring hit song?
- Discuss the components: phrases, specific words, melody and mood of the song.
- Do you agree or disagree that "*I Will Always Love You*" is equally wonderful, whether sung as a parting song by Parton from her years with Wagoner, and from Houston as she sings goodbye to a lost lover?

## Clip 7

### Discussion Points

- A comment is made that Parton has a way of writing feelings that everyone can understand. As you listen to the song, cite two or three lines or phrases that you believe can be perfectly understood by everyone.
  - Go on listening, and find the lyrics and accompanying music that you believe convey "heartbreak." Discuss the aspects of those lyrics and music.
  - Do you agree that use of the word "love" was one of the most compelling words in the lyrics and in the title? If so, why?
  - List three other words in the English language you believe would bring equal weight and impact to a song.
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## PART II

### Lesson 2 – Days 3-4

Over these next two lessons the teacher will engage the students in activities where they listen to and analyze the song "*I Will Always Love You*" composed and sung by country music artist Dolly Parton. Day 4 will be dedicated to analyzing the song interpretations of "*I Will Always Love You*" performed by Dolly Parton and by Whitney Houston.

Before beginning each activity, the teacher will review with the students the lyrics to the song "*I Will Always Love You*." The teacher will ask the students to have the printed lyrics of the song with them during the classroom activities.

On the second day, the teacher will stream a performance of Dolly Parton singing "*I Will Always Love You*," which can be accessed at the website:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gS-F4rfU4ns>

After listening to and watching the performance, the teacher will ask the students to analyze the performance and the lyrics.

The teacher will do the following:

### Day 3

1. Stream a recording (or play a track from a CD on an audio player) of Dolly Parton singing the song "*I Will Always Love You*."
2. Display the lyrics to this song to the students, available at: <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/dollyparton/iwillalwaysloveyou.html>
3. Review the lyrics (in printed form) with the students.
4. Explain that song lyrics are often based on poems.
5. Ask a student to read the lyrics to "*I Will Always Love You*" aloud.
6. Ask the students the following:
  - a. List elements of the lyrics that appear to be poetic.
  - b. Which phrases in the lyrics have the strongest impact conveying meaning and mood?
  - c. Where is the climax of the song?
7. Ask the students to make notes in their journals about what feelings the lyrics evoke.
8. Ask the students to summarize the two most compelling statements the lyrics convey.

### Day 4

1. Stream two recordings (or play two tracks from CDs on an audio player) of Dolly Parton and Whitney Houston's renditions of the song "*I Will Always Love You*." (see resources section on pages 12 and 13 for web links to performances by both artists)
2. Review the lyrics (in printed form) with the students.
3. Break up students in groups of five students per group.
4. Ask the students to compare and contrast the two performances of the song "*I Will Always Love You*" sung by Dolly Parton and by Whitney Houston.
5. Ask the students to focus on the following areas:
  - a. overall tempo of the piece
  - b. Does the tempo of the piece enhance the emotions being expressed in the lyrics?

Ask the student to assess the following:

- mood
- agility
- intonation
- timbre
- rhythm

- range
  - phrasing
  - technique
  - musical accompaniment
6. Ask the students to make notes in their journals about these various aspects of the performances.
  7. Designate one student from each group to relate overall assessments of the two performances of “*I Will Always Love You.*”
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**Assessment for these lessons, to be determined by the teacher**

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*I never consider myself a superstar, because I know myself too well. I am not better than anyone else, but I do know that I try each day to try a little harder. That's my confidence.*

**Dolly Parton**

Dolly Parton, *Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, (New York, NY, Penguin Group, 2012)

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## **Related Websites and Resources**

### **Dolly Parton**

*Dolly Parton: Home* – Recordings, Dollywood, Imagination Library

<http://www.dollyparton.com/>

AZLyrics.com – Lyrics to “*I Will Always Love You*”

<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/dollyparton/iwillalwaysloveyou.html>

*Dolly Parton: Home* - Biography

<http://dollypartonmusic.net/bio>

*Youtube.com* – Performance of “*I Will Always Love You*”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gS-F4rfU4ns>

### **Whitney Houston**

IMDb – biography

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001365/bio>

*Youtube.com* - Performance of “*I Will Always Love You*” (video from the film)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQIq9ZgHjCs>

### **Porter Wagoner**

*About.com* – biography, music, career milestones

<http://countrymusic.about.com/od/porterwagoner/p/Porter-Wagoner-Biography.htm>

### **Vince Gill**

Vince Gill's official website

[http://www.vincegill.com/wired/?page\\_id=306](http://www.vincegill.com/wired/?page_id=306)

### **Carrie Underwood**

Carrie Underwood's official website

<http://www.carrieunderwoodofficial.com/us/node/60851>

### **Kenny Rogers**

Kenny Rogers' official website

<http://kennyrogers.musiccitynetworks.com/>

### **Mac Davis**

*Songwriters Hall of Fame* – biography, music, career, photos

<http://www.songwritershalloffame.org/exhibits/C350>

### **Book**

Dolly Parton, *Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, (New York, NY, Penguin Group, 2012)