

Goals

- You can analyze a protest song and discover the meaning behind it.
- You can make connections between the song and the time period when it was written.
- You can write a new verse to the song that is relevant today.

Language Learning Goals

- You can read the lyrics and analyze the author's meaning.
- You can write a new song verse.

SOCIAL JUSTICE: PROTEST MUSIC

B1/B2 – Get to Know

ANALYZE A PROTEST SONG

What is the song “99 Luftballons” protesting?



Lyrics

YOUR ASSIGNMENTS

1



Listen to the song “99 Luftballons” from 1983 by the German band Nena (German or English).



German



English

Read the lyrics to the song. What do you think it is about? What might they be protesting?
The questions below will help you analyze the song.

What's your first impression?

(thoughts, questions, what I noticed, etc.)

What might this line from verse one mean?

“Panic bells, it's red alert!

There's something here from somewhere else!”

What is happening in verse two when the
“Ninety-nine ministers meet”?

In the last verse, the author says,
“I'm standin' pretty In this dust that was a city”
What is she saying about war?

ANALYZE A PROTEST SONG

2



Read the article about the song and what was going on in the world when it came out.
What have you learned about the meaning behind the song and the time period when it came out?



3



Meet with your partner and discuss your ideas about “99 Luftballons.”
Work on the following together:

- ▶ In what ways could this song still be relevant today?
- ▶ Work together to write one or more verses to the song, making a connection to our world today. Think about what it would look like if Nena were writing this song today?
- ▶ Here are some things to consider when writing your verse.
- ▶ Look at the four verses of the song and notice any patterns you can use. For example, each verse starts with “Ninety-nine . . .” and ends with “ninety-nine red balloons go by.”
- ▶ What is happening in the world today that is relevant to the message of the song?
- ▶ Try making your verse match the melody of the song.
- ▶ Bonus: Sing your verse for another group!



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