

STUDY GUIDE

DEAR CELEBRITIES: NO ONE CARES WHAT YOU THINK

KEY TERMS: celebrity
political

delusion
offensive

fair
reality

NOTE-TAKING COLUMN: Complete this section during the video. Include definitions and key terms.

CUE COLUMN: Complete this section after the video.

What do we do 'faster than science would believe humanly possible'?

What role do celebrities play in our lives?

Who publicly refused to dress the First Lady?

In what ways do celebrities 'cross the line' from enriching our lives to ranting?

Who is it that doesn't care whether a celebrity stays in America or moves to a foreign country or not?

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

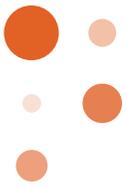
- Towards the beginning of the video, Ms. Owens addresses celebrities and states, “From this angle, I suppose it’s easy to believe that after all the adulation, all the fan mail and all the magazine covers, you may have actually come to believe that we care what you think. But you’re wrong. Nobody cares what you think.” Do you agree with Ms. Owens that nobody cares what celebrities think? Why or why not? Why do you think that many celebrities think that people will care what they have to say, outside the context of their known medium? Explain.
- Later in the video, Ms. Owens explains that, “I follow Beyoncé because, let’s face it, nobody does a break-up anthem better. But can someone please tell me why I should care if she’s for Hillary... or Garfield the Cat?” How would you respond to Ms. Owens regarding why she should care about Beyoncé’s political choices or not? Do you think that a celebrity like Beyoncé can actually significantly influence others to support political causes or can actually change people’s minds? If not, why not? If so, what might the consequences of such power be?
- Ms. Owens goes on to point out to celebrities that, “On the one hand, we should find all of this amusing; but on the other, it’s actually deeply offensive: It’s offensive that you confuse our admiration for blind faith.” Why might some people find celebrities throwing hissy fits ‘amusing?’ In what ways, specifically, is a celebrity thinking that because so many people engage with that person as a fan of their work that people should agree with their opinions ‘offensive?’
- Later, Ms. Owens makes the distinction to celebrities that, “What happens outside of your gated communities, chauffeured SUVs, and personal assistant’s iPhone...is the real world. It’s the rest of us, working very hard to earn a living; working toward that weekend break when we can perhaps afford to treat ourselves to your concerts, your movies, and your handbags.” What point is Ms. Owens really making here? What do you think Ms. Owens means by the ‘real world?’ What factors do you think push some celebrities to live further and further away from the ‘real world’ and to lose touch with the majority?
- Ms. Owens concludes the video by telling celebrities that, “...when you go on some political rant on late night TV or call your fans racist and sexist... just because they don’t think or vote the way you want them to, you cross a line. You lose touch with reality. You become just another shill for another politician. And who wants to be a fan of that?” What do you think Ms. Owens means by a celebrity becoming ‘a shill’ for a politician? Why do you think that some celebrities become so pretentious that they end up valuing a perception of righteousness over losing a percentage of fans that are now offended?

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Dixie Chicks

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “Is country music ready to forgive the Dixie Chicks?” then answer the questions that follow.

- Who were the Dixie Chicks? What did they do to create controversy? What reaction did the Dixie Chicks get after that incident?
- Do you think that people should care what celebrities have to say? Why or why not? Do you consider the act of using their celebrity to advance a political cause an abuse of de facto power and influence? Why or why not? When a celebrity throws a hissy fit, do you think that the celebrity is helping their cause or is compelling some people to stop taking that celebrity seriously? What’s the difference between expressing political views by speaking directly to an audience and by expressing political views through artistic work? Do you think the Dixie Chicks got what they deserved? Why or why not?
- Do you think that the author of the article shows bias in his writing? Why or why not? In what ways do the points raised in the article relate to the points made in the video? Explain.



QUIZ

DEAR CELEBRITIES: NO ONE CARES WHAT YOU THINK

- 1. What would make celebrities think their fans care about their political leanings?**
 - a. Camping out to buy tickets to sold-out shows.
 - b. Devouring their movies, TV shows, and Netflix specials.
 - c. Mastering the choreography to their every dance move.
 - d. All of the above.

- 2. Who plays an important role in celebrities' delusion that people care what they think?**
 - a. Their parents.
 - b. Government officials.
 - c. Their managers.
 - d. Adoring fans.

- 3. Celebrities often respect their fans political opinions, even if they differ from their own.**
 - a. True
 - b. False

- 4. Why does Ms. Owens follow Beyoncé?**
 - a. Because nobody does a break-up anthem better.
 - b. To stay informed on important political issues.
 - c. To admire Beyoncé's political activism.
 - d. Because Beyoncé imparts wisdom of all kinds.

- 5. _____ publicly refused to dress the First Lady of the United States.**
 - a. Dolce & Gabbana
 - b. Michael Kors
 - c. Marc Jacobs
 - d. Ralph Lauren



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/nov/19/the-dixie-chicks-tour-is-country-music-ready-to-forgive>

Is country music ready to forgive the Dixie Chicks?

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In 2003, the Dixie Chicks denounced George W Bush on stage in London and the country establishment turned against them. Now they're touring the US for the first time since 2006 – in an even more politically divided environment



The Dixie Chicks at the Grammys in 2007; while they won an award, their core audience had turned against them. Photograph: Hector Mata/AFP/Getty Images

After a nearly decade-long hiatus, the Dixie Chicks are finally ready to tour the US once again. On Monday, the country supergroup announced an American leg of their upcoming jaunt, which will kick off next year in Europe and arrive in Cincinnati, Ohio, on 1 June for a run of more than 40 dates in North America. The Dixie Chicks – Emily Robison, Martie Maguire, and lead singer Natalie Maines – have performed sporadically at various events over the past few years, but this tour marks their first string of headlining shows in the US since 2006, when they hit the road in support of their album *Taking the Long Way*, a collection recorded in the wake of Maines's comments about George W Bush and the Iraq war, which put the women at the center of a massive political firestorm.

Oh, you don't remember? Well, in case you blocked the whole controversy from your mind (and who could blame you?), here's a refresher. While performing in London in March 2003, just nine days before the US invasion of Iraq, Maines told the crowd: "Just so you know, we're on the good side with y'all. We do not want this war, this violence, and we're ashamed that the president of the United States is from Texas."

Almost immediately, Maines's statement proved explosive in the country music world, which has traditionally presented – and continues to present – a proudly patriotic front. In fact, tributes to American soldiers have become so commonplace in country music over the past 20 years that, these days, it almost

sounds normal for Cole Swindell to randomly proclaim, “I’m raisin’ my glass to those savin’ our ass overseas!” in the middle of a derivative breakup song.

At the time of Maines’s quote, though, not even two years after the 9/11 attacks, country music was *particularly* steeped in earnestly patriotic drum-banging. Toby Keith’s *Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue*, on which he promised, “You’ll be sorry that you messed with the US of A/ ’Cause we’ll put a boot in your ass – it’s the American way,” became his career-defining hit in 2002. And in 2003, just weeks after Maines’s comment, Daryl Worley’s *Have You Forgotten?*, which urged listeners to remember the shock that they first felt about the terrorist acts, stayed on top of Billboard’s Hot Country Songs chart for seven weeks. This was, of course, before doubt had set in about America’s presence in the Middle East, and Maines was seen as downright traitorous by many country fans for not voicing support for Bush and his war on terror.

The response from the country music establishment was swift: in one week, the Dixie Chicks’ single *Landslide* plummeted from 10 to 43 on the Hot 100, falling off the chart after that. A throng of ex-fans met in a parking lot and crushed their old Dixie Chicks CDs with a bulldozer. The band immediately lost their promotional deal with Lipton. DJs on many country stations were prohibited from playing their music at all, and two Colorado DJs were suspended for doing so. Despite the group’s attempts to alleviate the fallout with a PR campaign, the damage had already been done. The Dixie Chicks, the single bestselling female group of all time, had been blackballed by country music overnight.

In 2006, the Dixie Chicks released a pop-rock album called *Taking the Long Way*, which featured the unapologetic single *Not Ready to Make Nice*. The album won them critical acclaim and a Grammy in 2007, but its sales paled in comparison to their previous efforts, and country radio wouldn’t touch it with a 10-foot pole. And after the release of their documentary, *Shut Up and Sing*, the Dixie Chicks weren’t ready to make much of anything for a while. Maguire and Robison released two albums as a duo called *Court Yard Hounds*, but Maines, always the spark plug of the trio, kept a lower profile. It’s hard to blame her.

But now the Dixie Chicks are making their comeback in what is arguably an even more politically divisive time than a decade ago. The conservative/liberal divide remains vitriolic and unhelpful as the US continues to debate its role in the Middle East – a question that’s returned to the forefront of people’s minds in the wake of the Paris terrorist attacks. Add on the fact that we’re entering an election year already marked by absurd overstatements from both parties, and it seems that the Dixie Chicks could be headed for a second round of political criticism. I can only assume Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton will both have something to say about them soon.

It’s not clear whether the trio will release new music ahead of their tour, and for now, the Dixie Chicks aren’t making a peep about their plans. (Two of them did sign a new publishing deal last December, though.) If they do decide to release new material, it will be very interesting to see whether they will attempt to return to country music, and, if so, whether country radio will be willing to play them. We can only hope that both things happen. It would be a huge deal, not just for country music’s reputation as a “community” that’s able to accept political differences – even though (shocker!) Nashville is, privately at least, a pretty liberal town – but also for the state of thriving female talent in the genre.

The Dixie Chicks’ swift removal from country radio in 2003 is one of the key reasons that country music has developed such a woman problem over the past 15 years. At the time of the Dixie Chicks’ album *Fly in 1999*, female-led songs made up 38% of the annual top 100 country songs. But since their ousting from the airwaves, that number has dwindled at an alarming rate. Last year, the percentage of songs led by a female vocalist on that list had sunk to just 18% – and one programmer ruffled feathers earlier this year when he suggested that radio stations could garner higher ratings if they’d further reduce women’s airplay.

All of this has not gone unnoticed. In the past few years, radio conglomerates and programmers have continually claimed that they’re committed to developing and supporting female talent – never missing a chance to pat themselves on the back for doing so. Most of this talk has been hot air, and critical darlings

like Kacey Musgraves and Ashley Monroe still aren't getting played on radio despite good album sales. But lately, a few women do seem to be making an impact, providing a glimmer of hope for aspiring female artists wanting to make it big in the mainstream. In the past year alone, Kelsea Ballerini, Maddie & Tae, Jana Kramer, and Cam have all had breakthrough moments with viable radio hits, and although Kramer and Ballerini tread in much poppier territory than the Dixie Chicks ever did, Cam and Maddie & Tae actually hark back to the fiddle-driven sound and lyrical sass that made the Chicks famous. From a sheer numbers standpoint, the fact that these talented women are actually getting played at all is a small but significant step in the right direction.

This bit of progress is encouraging, no doubt, but what would be even more encouraging and more galvanizing for country music's quest to showcase great female talent would be a full re-embracing of the Dixie Chicks. Whether that means allowing them to perform at the Academy of Country Music awards, reincorporating their old catalogue back on to country radio, or (fingers crossed) even playing their new material on the same stations, the powers that be in country music (including its listeners) need to admit that they overreacted, and welcome back one of the genre's biggest acts with open arms.

The Dixie Chicks play their own instruments, write their own songs, and, before they were backed into a corner and forced to endlessly defend themselves for a single political comment made 12 years ago, they were viewed as beloved storytellers who stirred up feelings of wide-eyed romance, humorous revenge, and big-dreaming adventure. If country music doesn't want those traits and doesn't want pitch-perfect songs like *Wide Open Spaces* and *Cowboy Take Me Away* on its stations – and if it really can't handle a little political commentary from grown women – then that's the genre's loss, and sane country fans' loss, too.