Preview: The album’s lyrical content is inspired by band members Win and William Butler’s upbringing in The Woodlands, Texas, a suburb of Houston. According to Win Butler, the album “is neither a love letter to, nor an indictment of, the suburbs – it’s a letter from the suburbs.”

Directions: Read the song lyrics below. Highlight 3-5 lines that stand out to you as you read. When you are finished reading answer the questions below with detailed responses. The more detailed, the more points you will receive.

Song Title: “Sprawl II (Mountains Beyond Mountains)” (2010)
Artist: Arcade Fire

They heard me singing and they told me to stop,
Quit these pretentious things and just punch the clock,
These days, my life, I feel it has no purpose,
But late at night the feelings swim to the surface.
Cause on the surface the city lights shine,
They're calling at me, "come and find your kind."

Sometimes I wonder if the world's so small,
That we can never get away from the sprawl,
Living in the sprawl,
Dead shopping malls rise like mountains beyond mountains,
And there's no end in sight,
I need the darkness someone please cut the lights.

We rode our bikes to the nearest park,
Sat under the swings, we kissed in the dark,
We shield our eyes from the police lights,
We run away, but we don't know why,
And like a mirror these city lights shine,

They're screaming at us, "we don't need your kind."

Sometimes I wonder if the world's so small,
That we can never get away from the sprawl,
Living in the sprawl,
Dead shopping malls rise like mountains beyond mountains,
And there's no end in sight,
I need the darkness someone please cut the lights.

They heard me singing and they told me to stop,
Quit these pretentious things and just punch the clock.

Sometimes I wonder if the world's so small,
Can we ever get away from the sprawl?
Living in the sprawl,
Dead shopping malls rise like mountains beyond mountains,
And there's no end in sight,
I need the darkness someone please cut the lights.

Guiding Questions:
1. What is the overall attitude of this song? How are the artists expressing life in the classic American suburbs?

2. “They heard me singing and they told me to stop, quit these pretentious things and just punch the clock.” What image(s) come to mind when you read this line? What is its meaning?

3. What is the tone of this song? Do you feel it has a negative or positive vibe? Explain your answer.
Song Title: “Little Boxes” (1962)

Preview: Words and music by Malvina Reynolds; copyright 1962. Malvina and her husband were on their way from where they lived in Berkeley, through San Francisco and down the peninsula to La Honda where she was to sing at a meeting of the Friends’ Committee on Legislation. As she drove through Daly City, she said “Bud, take the wheel. I feel a song coming on.”

Directions: Read the song lyrics below. Highlight 3-5 lines that stand out to you as you read. When you are finished reading answer the questions below with detailed responses. The more detailed, the more points you will receive.

Little boxes on the hillside,
Little boxes made of ticky tacky
Little boxes all the same.
There’s a green one and a pink one
And a blue one and a yellow one,
And they’re all made out of ticky tacky
And they all look just the same.

And they all play on the golf course
And drink their martinis dry,
And they all have pretty children
And the children go to school,
And the children go to summer camp
And then to the university,
Where they are put in boxes
And they come out all the same.

And the people in the houses
All went to the university,
Where they were put in boxes
And they came out all the same,
And there’s doctors and lawyers,
And business executives,
And they’re all made out of ticky tacky
And they all look just the same.

And the boys go into business
And marry and raise a family
In boxes made of ticky tacky
And they all look just the same.
There’s a green one and a pink one
And a blue one and a yellow one,
And they’re all made out of ticky tacky
And they all look just the same.

Guiding Questions:
1. What is the artist referring to as “little boxes”? What are these “little boxes” described as during the American suburban sprawl of the 1950s?
2. “And they’re all made out of ticky tacky, and they come out all the same.” What do you think the term “ticky tacky” symbolizes?
3. How does this song reflect the idea of conformity in America during the 1950s?