Document Organizer

Your group will be assigned to one of the following positions: You May choose which side you would like

FOR the use of parental advisory labels, or
AGAINST the use of such labels.

Use the chart below to help organize the documents and the arguments they support or refute. This will help you prepare your statement and prepare for the class debate.

You may also wish to use any other materials used in this lesson

Document	Arguments that support your position	Arguments against your position	How will you refute the arguments against your position?
1			
2			
3			

4			
5			
6			
7			

List any additional materials used:

Document Set

DOCUMENT 1:
Statement of Susan Baker of the Parents Music Resource Center, 1985 Senate Hearings

The Parents Music Resource Center was organized in May of this year by mothers of young children who are very concerned by the growing trend in music toward lyrics that are sexually explicit, excessively violent, or glorify the use of drugs and alcohol.

Our primary purpose is to educate and inform parents about this alarming trend as well as to ask the industry to exercise self-restraint.

Some say there is no cause for concern. We believe there is. Teen pregnancies and teenage suicide rates are at epidemic proportions today. The Noedecker Report states that in the United States of America we have the highest teen pregnancy rate of any developed country: 96 out of 1,000 teenage girls become pregnant.

Rape is up 7 percent in the latest statistics, and the suicide rates of youth between 16 and 24 has gone up 300 percent in the last three decades while the adult level has remained the same.

There certainly are many causes for these ills in our society, but it is our contention that the pervasive messages aimed at children which promote and glorify suicide, rape… and so on, have to be numbered among the contributing factors….

Now that more and more elementary school children are becoming consumers of rock music, we think it is imperative to discuss this question. What can be done to help parents who want to protect their children from these messages if they want to?

DOCUMENT 2:
Statement of Tipper Gore of the Parents Music Resource Center, 1985 Senate Hearings

We are asking the recording industry to voluntarily assist parents who are concerned by placing a warning label on music products inappropriate for younger children due to explicit sexual or violent lyrics…

We have asked the record companies to voluntarily label their own products and assume responsibility for making those judgments. We ask the record industry to appoint a one-time panel to recommend a uniform set of criteria which could serve as a policy guide for the individual companies. Those individual recording companies would then in good faith agree to adhere to this standard, and make decisions internally about which records should be labeled according to the industry criteria.

We have also asked that lyrics for labeled music products be available to the consumer before purchase in the marketplace. Now, it is important to clearly state what our proposal is not.

A voluntary labeling is not censorship. Censorship implies restricting access or suppressing content. This proposal does neither. Moreover, it involves no government action. Voluntary labeling in no way infringes upon First Amendment rights. Labeling is little more than truth in packaging, by now a time honored principle in our free enterprise system, and without labeling, parental guidance is virtually impossible.

Most importantly, the committee should understand the Parents Music Resource Center is not advocating any federal intervention or legislation whatsoever. The excesses that we are discussing were allowed to develop in the marketplace, and we believe the solutions to these excesses should come from the industry who has allowed them to develop and not from the government.

The issue here is larger than violent and sexually explicit lyrics. It is one of ideas and ideal freedoms and responsibility in our society. Clearly, there is a tension here, and in a free society there always will be. We are simply asking that these corporate and artistic rights be exercised with responsibility with sensitivity and some measure of self-restraint, especially since young minds are at stake. We are talking about preteenagers and young teenagers having access to this material. That is our point of departure and our concern.

DOCUMENT 3:
Testimony of Musician Frank Zappa,
1985 Senate Hearings

The PMRC proposal is an ill-conceived piece of nonsense which fails to deliver any real benefits to children, infringes the civil liberties of people who are not children, and promises to keep the courts busy for years dealing with the interpretational and enforcemental problems inherent in the proposal's design.

The establishment of a rating system, voluntary or otherwise, opens the door to an endless parade of moral quality control programs based on things certain Christians do not like. What if the next bunch of Washington wives demands a large yellow "J" on all material written or performed by Jews, in order to save helpless children from exposure to concealed Zionist doctrine?

Record ratings are frequently compared to film ratings. Apart from the quantitative difference, there is another that is more important: People who act in films are hired to pretend. No matter how the film is

rated, it will not hurt them personally.

Since many musicians write and perform their own material and stand by it as their art, whether you like it or not, an imposed rating will stigmatize them as individuals. How long before composers and performers are told to wear a festive little PMRC armband with their scarlet letter on it?

Bad facts make bad law, and people who write bad laws are in my opinion more dangerous than songwriters who celebrate sexuality. Freedom of speech, freedom of religious thought, and the right to due process for composers, performers and retailers are imperiled if the PMRC and the major labels consummate this nasty bargain.

DOCUMENT 4:
"Rock Ruckus Is Not in Tune With the Times,"
Column by Carl Hiaasen, *The Miami Herald*, June 28, 1985

Rock 'n' roll is supposed to be raunchy.

I say this for the benefit of a woman named Tipper Gore, wife of a U.S. senator, who has apparently been living in a cave on the Potomac for the last 20 years.

Mrs. Gore and her friend Susan Baker, wife of the Treasury secretary, recently discovered that some rock 'n' roll music, videos and album covers contain violent or sexual content. Tipper and Susan swiftly formed a parents' group to lobby the music industry for a rating system, like the one used for movies.

This is an extremely dumb idea for an old and doomed cause. Slap an X rating on a Twisted Sister album and you can be sure it'll go triple platinum overnight.…

Mrs. Gore says some rock songs are offensive, but you know what's worse? Two wealthy housewives from Washington, D.C., arguably the most immoral city in America, telling us what's offensive….

"If you can ban records from the radio, then you can ban books from the bookstores," warns Rick Peters, vice president of rock station WSHE in Fort Lauderdale. "I don't think this group is giving the public enough credit."

There is a 14-year-old at my house who doesn't need Tipper Gore to protect him. He plays tennis, gets good grades, and listens to the Stones and Beatles and Led Zeppelin. Somehow these songs (which you probably won't hear at Vatican City) haven't turned this kid into a devil-worshiper, dope fiend or even an ax murderer.

Now this same young man happens to think Prince is dreck and MTV's a bore, but not because of the lyrics -- because of the music. Music, not raunch content, is what makes or breaks a rock record.

Says Peters: "The fastest way to make these kinds of records go away is having the public not buy them."

Peters believes broadcasters have a responsibility to screen records before playing them, and they do. Prince's crudest tunes get virtually no airplay, yet his records sell by the truckload. If Mrs. Gore doesn't want her kids buying them, she shouldn't give them the money….

Then there are the TV videos. Some are truly revolting, but none are more violent than The A-Team, or more ghastly than Halloween III and dozens of other mindless films available every week on your friendly cable stations.

There's a simple solution, Tipper. Turn off the tube….

From one concerned parent to another: Take a hike, Tipper.

And relax. It's only rock 'n' roll.

DOCUMENT 5:
Walmart Policy Statement

Music Content Policy

Parental Advisory Labels

The Parental Advisory program is a voluntary program created and administered by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA). Under the Parental Advisory program, individual record companies, working with their artists, decide which of their releases should be labeled with a Parental Advisory Label. Recordings identified with the Parental Advisory Label may contain strong language or depictions of violence, sex or substance abuse. Wal-Mart Stores, Sam's Club and Walmart.com (collectively "Wal-Mart") do not carry recordings designated with the Parental Advisory Label.

Source: www.Walmart.com

DOCUMENT 6:
Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) Statement on Freedom of Speech

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

-- First Amendment, ratified December 15, 1791

The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) takes an uncompromising stand against censorship and for the First Amendment rights of all artists to create freely. From the nation's capital to state capitals across the country, RIAA works to stop unconstitutional action against the people who make the music of our times -- and those who enjoy it.

Source: www.riaa.com

DOCUMENT 7:
Album Covers Introduced as Evidence, 1985 Senate Hearings

Statement Template

Use the chart in the Document Organizer to help complete the sentence stem below. Circle the appropriate phrase for the position to which your group has been assigned. Then use the statement as the topic sentence of your two-paragraph statement.

We believe that parental advisory labels SHOULD / SHOULD NOT be placed on certain recordings because _____