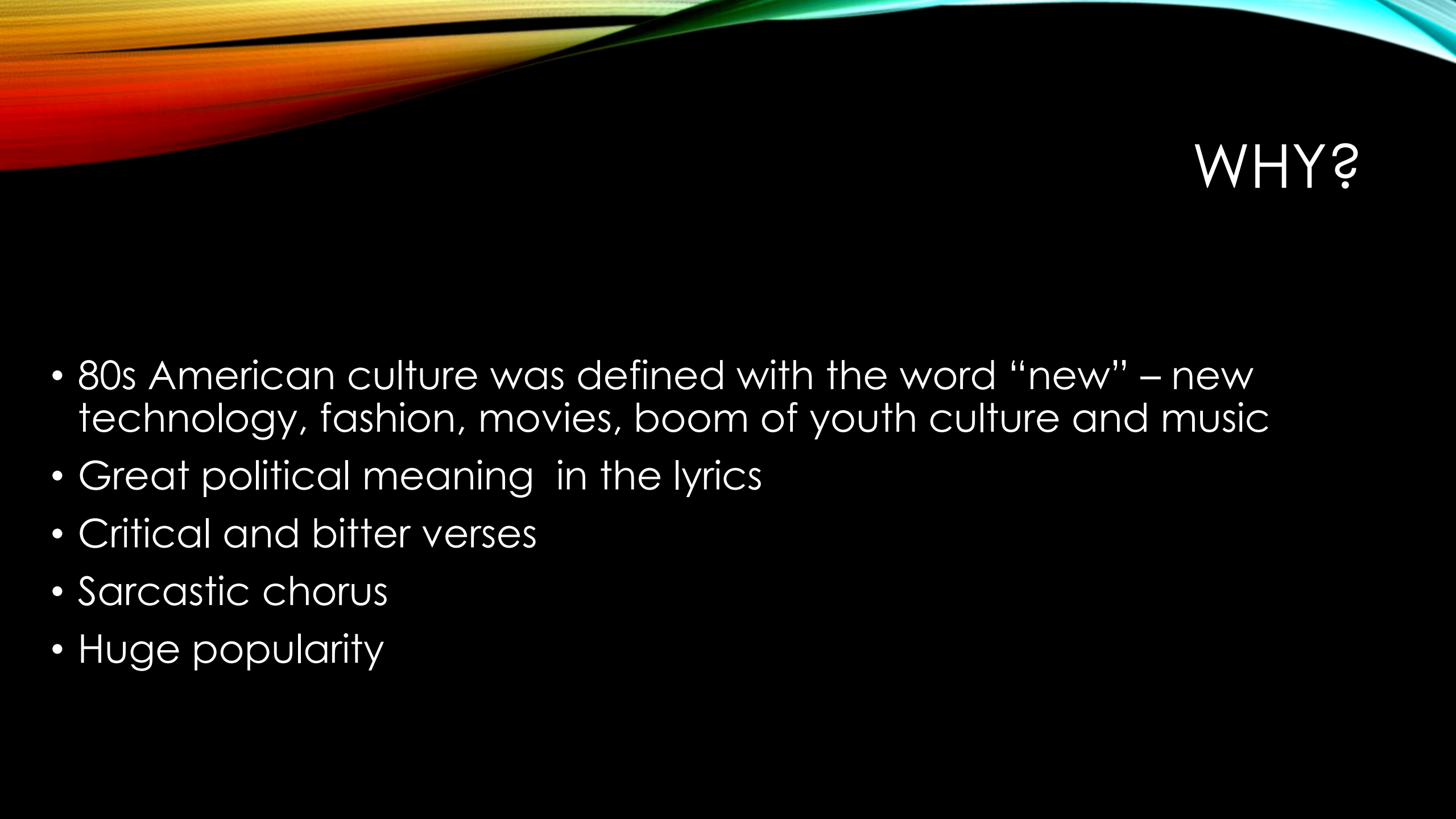




# BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN – 'BORN IN THE USA'

By Nikki Atkins (1901918)



# WHY?

- 80s American culture was defined with the word “new” – new technology, fashion, movies, boom of youth culture and music
- Great political meaning in the lyrics
- Critical and bitter verses
- Sarcastic chorus
- Huge popularity

- Commentary on the return of an American soldier after serving in the Vietnam War
- Depicts veteran as tragic and alienated figure
- Isolated from everything and everyone on return home
- Battle of Khe Sanh – eventually won, withdrew only a few months - became media symbol of futility of the war effort

## THEMES



Source: A burning fuel dump after a mortar attack at Khe Sanh -

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Khe\\_Sanh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Khe_Sanh)

# THEMES

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Born\\_in\\_the\\_U.S.A.\\_\(song\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Born_in_the_U.S.A._(song))

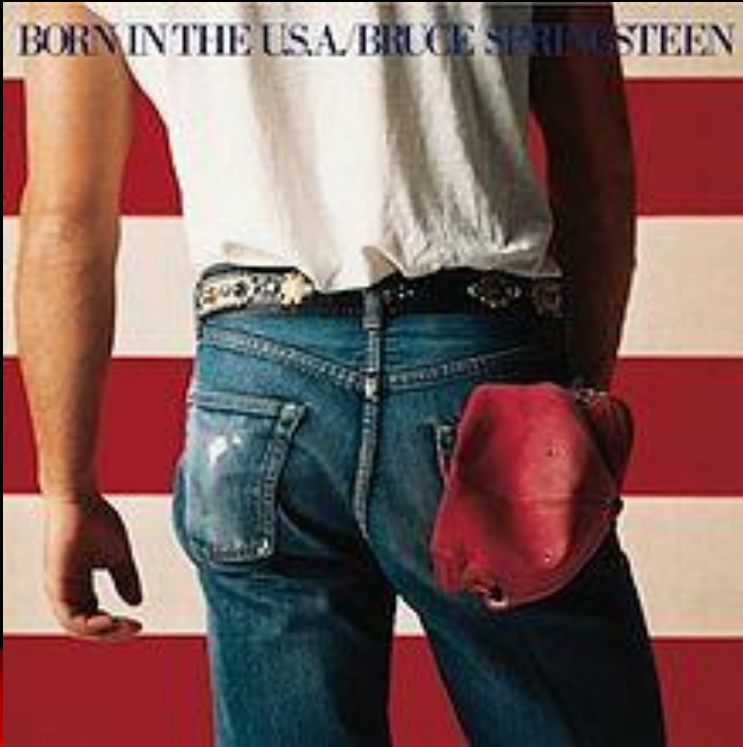


- Chorus considered very nationalist
- Verses filled with bitter desperation and sacrifice
- Song is a metaphor – social and economical siege of America<sup>1</sup>
- Discussion of economic devastation and the lyrics are symbolic of the effects of blind nationalist in the working-class
- Nationalistic chorus overwhelms verses<sup>1</sup>

# REACTIONS

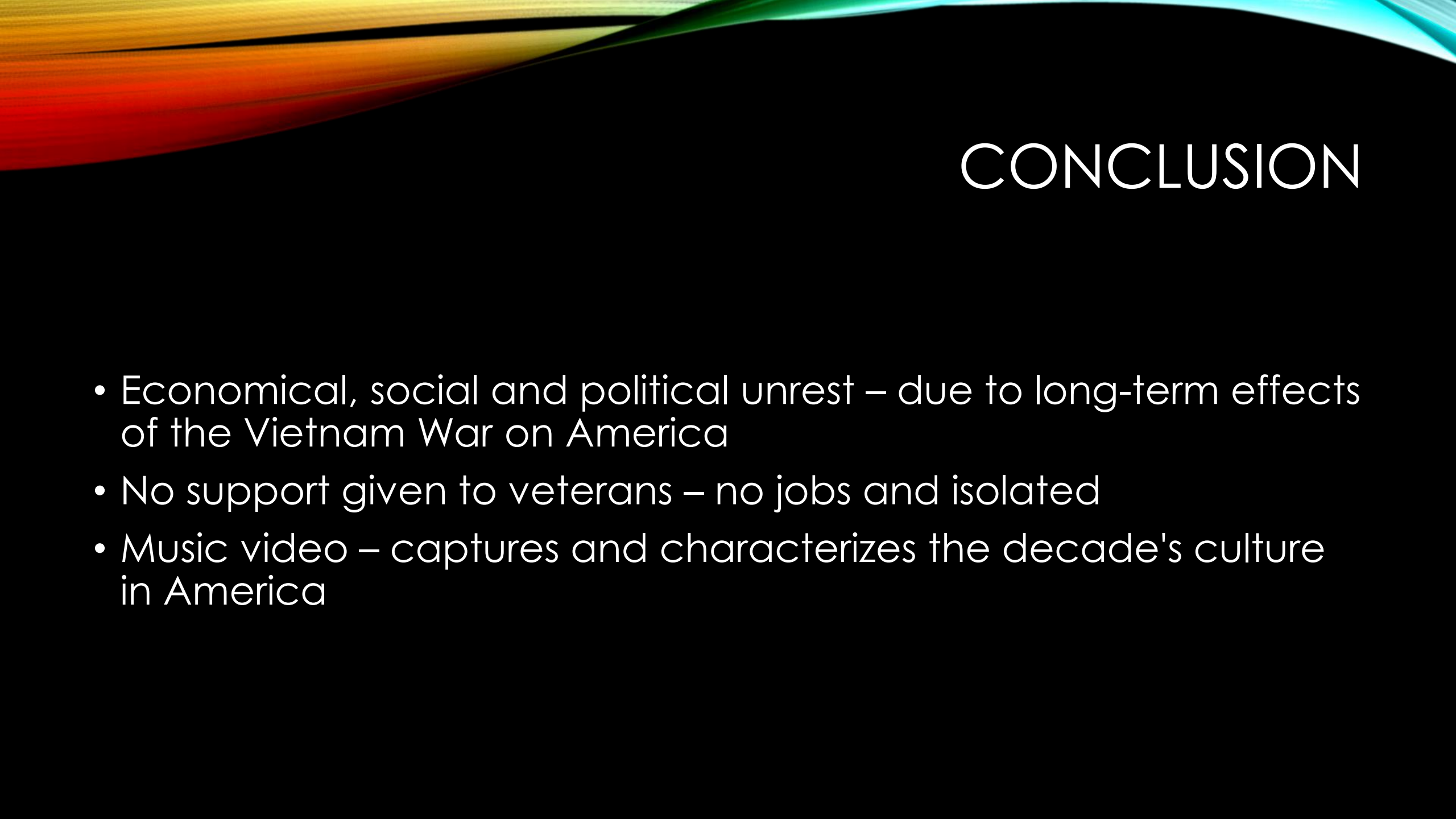
- Album selling well and frequently on the radio
- Peaked at number 9 in the US Billboard Hot 100
- Reached number 5 in the UK Single Charts
- Presidential election campaign wanted to use the song<sup>2</sup>
- Song is widely misinterpreted as nationalistic – anthemic chorus
- 'Born in the USA' is anti-republican
- Wrote the song about working-class men facing 'spiritual crisis, in which, man is left lost. Its like he has nothing left to tie him into society anymore. He's isolated from the government. Isolated from his job. Isolated from his family to the point where nothing makes sense.'<sup>1</sup>

Source:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Born\\_in\\_the\\_U.S.A.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Born_in_the_U.S.A.)



## MUSIC VIDEO

- Opening – American flag
- Sequences of Bruce Springsteen singing and performing on stage
- Clips of American working-class people, living their lives – examples of 80s culture especially fashion, activities and popular hobbies<sup>3</sup>
- Video connects to lyrics – soldiers with guns and white war graves
- Ending – Bruce Springsteen in front of the American flag



# CONCLUSION

- Economical, social and political unrest – due to long-term effects of the Vietnam War on America
- No support given to veterans – no jobs and isolated
- Music video – captures and characterizes the decade's culture in America

# REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Boehm L, Cowie J.R (2006). Dead Man's Town: 'Born in the USA,' Social History, and Working-Class Identity. Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 353-378.

<sup>2</sup> Born in the USA (2011), shmoop.com - <https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/music/born-in-the-usa/technique>

<sup>3</sup> Bruce Springsteen (1984), 'Born in the USA', Sony ATV Publishing, US - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EPhWR4d3FJQ>