

# Making Connections in English

## Offensive Band Names

### Warm up

Look at the band names. Where do you think their names come from?

Warsaw    The Dixie Chicks  
Led Zeppelin    Dead Kennedys  
Preoccupations    Franz Ferdinand  
Lady Antebellum    Joy Division  
The Decemberists    Sex Pistols  
British Sea Power    Viet Cong

### Summary: [Click here for podcast](#)

Listen to the snippet of a podcast and choose the best summary from the choices below. Which bands above were mentioned?

1. Bands are not rebranding even if their names are offensive. They have artistic license and freedom to be provocative.
2. Bands are being forced to alter their names because of social justice warriors and intensifying political correctness.
3. Bands are rethinking their names due to political and social pressures. They are doing this willingly.

### Useful vocabulary

What are all of these verbs or expressions related to?

to rebrand | rethink their image | to alter  
formerly known as | to shorten | to shift

### Listening Comprehension

Answer the questions below.

1. Why did bands change their names in the past? Why are they changing them now?
2. Which musical era known for intentional provocation was mentioned in the podcast? Which band was cited as an example?
3. In your own words, what does “historical sensitivity” mean?
4. What recent events have motivated some American musical groups to change their names?
5. Why was the Black blues singer Anita White angry with the band Lady Antebellum?
6. What role does social media play in name changes?

### What do you think?

In pairs, read these statements and tell your partner why or why not you agree with them.

It is the artist's job to provoke people.

Nobody should make fun of historic atrocities.

Artists don't need to change in the wake of protest.

Bands who rebrand for political reasons are cowards.

Social media does a good job policing offensive behavior.

Most cultures find the same things distasteful.

## Making connections

Name the band from the podcast associated with each phrase.

- They wanted an ironic **nod to** the militarism of Britain's past.
- ...because of fear of being **linked to** atrocities committed by...
- ...to remove **associations with** the confederacy, a group of slave states that fought the American civil war...
- ...they changed their name to remove **reference to** the period before the civil war.
- ...**take your name from** the abuse of women in concentration camps...

## Vocabulary

Look at these other ways to make connections in English.  
Answer the questions in pairs or as a class.

- The band name The Decemberists **pays tribute to** a revolt in Imperial Russia during the month of December in 1825. Do you know any other band names that **make mention of** a revolution?
- According to Jello Biafra, the vocalist for The Dead Kennedys, the name was not meant as an insult, and instead **alludes to** the end of the American Dream. Do you think this band name is insulting?
- The name Alt + J **hints at** the idea of change as Alt + J is the keyboard code for  $\Delta$ , which is the mathematical symbol for change. Do you know other musical groups that use symbols in their names?
- Led Zeppelin **refers to** the Hindenburg disaster which caused the death of 35 people. Would this band name be appropriate today since it is **connected to** a tragedy?

**weaker connection**

**stronger connection**

## Exercise

Put a word that fits into the blank.

- Our company does not want to be \_\_\_\_\_ with criminal activity.
- The eagle on the Mexican flag is a \_\_\_\_\_ to its indigenous origin story.
- The flowers on my wedding dress are a \_\_\_\_\_ to my grandmother. Daisies were her favorite.
- That company is \_\_\_\_\_ to all sorts of environmental atrocities around the world. Why are you wearing their clothes?
- I'm not sure but I think the song he wrote \_\_\_\_\_ to the time he spent in prison and \_\_\_\_\_ at addiction and alcoholism.
- The name of Apple's new product, iSteve, pays \_\_\_\_\_ to its original founder.
- The report also \_\_\_\_\_ to a similar drop in sales last year.

## Speaking activity

As a class, come up with 3-4 historical events or time periods. Then, individually, come up with band names that reference them. Share with the class. Others guess which events they are associated with.

Event:	Band name:
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Event:	Band name:
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Event:	Band name:
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Event:	Band name:
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## Homework

Choose a band name below that may be offensive or insensitive. Write to the band explaining why and ask them to change.

Special Olympics

Closed Borders

Dog Eaters

Holocaust Survival Syndrome

Hitler's Best Friend