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**STOP** and write your essay before scrolling down.

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*(Several answers are possible.)*

As listeners, we sometimes ignore the deeper meaning of song lyrics as we simply enjoy music at a surface level. At the same time, there are lyrics that capture our attention with something more profound. Dolly Parton and Lauryn Hill are artists whose feminist messages were groundbreaking in their day, and their work still resonates with many listeners.

**Dolly Parton** represents the world of country music, and was a **prolific songwriter**, penning over 600 songs. In an era in which many country women artists were singing lyrics such as “Stand by Your Man,” (as he cheats), Parton’s **lyrics were decidedly feminist**, even while the sound of her works was traditionally “country.” The **range of Parton’s topics was wide**, from “Coat of Many Colors,” in which she celebrated the **strength of her own mother** in the face of poverty, to “Down from Dover,” where she addressed the **topic of being pregnant and abandoned**. Parton’s lyrics, written during an era of women’s empowerment, were **strikingly different from many country lyrics of her day**.

**Lauryn Hill’s** work, representing a different era and genre from Parton’s, also carried significant weight, and **brought attention to some of the tenets of Black feminism**. Perhaps most notable is Hill’s album

*The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*, where she wrote or co-wrote songs that **addressed themes such as Black motherhood, self-respect, and independence**. “To Zion,” a song from that album written by Hill, is an example of Hill’s **lyrical focus on the importance of family and motherhood**. It was an album that **resonated with many women at the time, as they worked to juggle motherhood and career**. Hill also used song lyrics to encourage Black women to be their **authentic selves**, encouraging them with such advice as to not be afraid of their natural hair, among other things.

While the work of Parton and Hill represent widely different genres, both artists created and performed lyrics that expressed ideas not being voiced by many other artists in their respective fields at the time.