

Teaching American History Project

Lesson Title: Reflection on the 1990s through Music From Peter Rodrigues

Grade: 11

Length of Class Period: 1 hour (multiple classes)

Inquiry:

How does the music from a decade reflect the social, political, and economic qualities of that time period?

Objectives:

Students will share and analyze music from the 1990s and identify how that music reflects the decade.

Materials:

- You will need a computer/laptop that supports audio and/or a set of speakers. An ipod can be used as well. Youtube contains many/most of the songs that may be used.
- Multiple copies of the music review sheets (depending on the size of your class).

Activities:

Step 1: Introduce the class to the lesson. Go over the directions with the class (attached). Students must bring in music (CD, Ipod, and other media that can be supported within your classroom) that reflects the 90s in some way (socially, politically, and/or culturally).

Step 2: At the beginning of the following class, hand out copies of the music review sheets (attached). Students then will take turns sharing their songs with the class. For each song, students must fill in the required information for each song played on their music review sheets. After each song, have a brief discussion with the class about the song (message, lyrics, and significance).

Step 3: When all songs have been played, hand out a sheet of blank paper to each student and have them answer the following **Essential Question**: “Pretend you know nothing about the 90s. Based on the music we listened to, how would you describe the decade?” Give the students at least 20 minutes to respond. Afterwards, discuss the essential question and allow students to share their responses.

Assessment:

Collect all analysis sheets and essential questions for assessment.

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards:

2.2 – Interpret information from a variety of primary and secondary sources (maps, charts, graphs, images and print materials).

Music and how it revolutionized America

The Jazz Age (1920s- 1950s)

- Jazz started in the south as a blend of West African and Blues music with improvisation thrown in.
- Jazz was a holdover from slave era music and has its' roots in African American communities.
- Because of its' association with African American culture, lively dancing, and speakeasies, Jazz was the 1st "immoral" music to enter into our subconscious and cause controversy.
- **Swing (1930's-40s)** takes Jazz into its' next phase, or "big" bands. Swing becomes a popular form of dance.

Jazz Artists:

Duke Ellington

Miles Davis

Dizzy Gillespie

Charlie Parker

Louis Armstrong

Rock n' Roll (1950's)

- Origins are debated to this day, though many say its roots are in rhythm and blues and country western. The electric guitar was the key invention that allowed Rock n' Roll to take off.
- 1st Rock n' Roll played by African Americans. As it is adopted by white kids, the music is called **Rockabilly**.
- **Sun Records** becomes the 1st Rock n' Roll label.
- Rock n' Roll became mainstream with the introduction of **Elvis Presley** in 1954, who had been signed by Sun Records. Presley is the most popular and controversial artists of his time. Many adults accused him of sexualizing music because of his hip gyrations and suggestive lyrics.

Early Rock n' Roll Pioneers:

Elvis Presley

Chuck Berry

Jerry Lee Lewis

Johnny Cash (country-western)

Little Richard

1960's: Rebellion in America

- The counter-culture movement of the 1960s leads to an edgier Rock n' Roll, one that tells stories about love, drugs, and society.
- **The British Invasion:** Name for the early 60s period where British Rock groups came over and became extremely popular. Groups like the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin and The Who revolutionize popular music.
- **Singer/Songwriters:** The youth movement, hippie movement, drug culture, and anti-war protest all culminate in "music with a message". Singer/songwriters like Bob Dylan, Janis Joplin, The Doors, Crosby Stills and Nash, and Creedance Clearwater Revival become the voice of a generation.
- **Woodstock 1969:** Peaceful gathering of 500,000 music lovers that became "the most famous event in rock history." Some of the acts were Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Santana, and The Grateful Dead. Came to symbolize the spirit of the 1960s counterculture movement through music.

1970's: Lets Dance!

- **Disco:** Dance music that mixed "elements of soul music, a strong Latin American beat, and simple and repetitious lyrics". Disco represented the happy feelings and good times of the 1970s. Dance clubs started to sprout up all over America. Groups like The Bee Gees and The Village People defined this music.
- **Psychedelic Rock:** Also known as Progressive Rock, this was a blend of Rock with many genres to create a unique sound. Drugs were still a big part of American culture and were heavily influential in this music. Pink Floyd was the group that pioneered Psychedelic music.
- **Punk Rock:** Music that started in the UK and spread to America. It combines heavy guitar riffs with higher decibels. It appealed to all the disenchanting youth who were fed up with the status quo. To this day, Punk Rock is associated with rebellion and a particular style. Pioneers of Punk include The Ramones and The Sex Pistols.

The 1980s- Present: What a ride!

The 1980s to today saw many new waves of music enter our culture and define America.

- **Pop Music:** Term for any “popular music” at the time that tops the charts and /or fits multiple genres. Michael Jackson is the King of Pop, and most mainstream groups of today fit in this category.
- **Heavy Metal:** While the original Metal Bands were Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, and AC/DC, the music evolved in the 1980s into a darker, heavier brand. Groups like Metallica and Judas Priest created a music that was/is “very loud, brash rock music, often with shouted, violent lyrics” (definition). Today, Metal has branched off in many directions with groups like Pantera, System of a Down, Megadeath, and Alice in Chains.
- **Grunge/Alternative:** Alternative Rock started in the 1980s as a collection of independent subgenres, followed by Grunge in the early 90s. The music characterized by angst filled, moody lyrics that define Generation X and modern youth. Alternative music has often been controversial and is often an outlet for disillusioned youth and political anthems. The list is huge, but some of the better known groups in this category are Nirvana, Foo Fighters, NIN, The Cure, Pearl Jam, and Radiohead.
- **Rap:** It is the main element of Hip Hop that uses rhymes spoken lyrically over a beat and musical instruments. Rap is one of the most political and socially aware genres, tackling racism, urban life, and society. Some of the most influential rappers are Big E, Tupac, NWA, Public Enemy, Dr. Dre, and Nas.

The 1990s in music

Directions: Bring in an influential song (Ipod, CD, MP3, online) to class. This song must be from the 1990s (1990-1999) and in some way represent the 1990s (culturally, socially, politically) or cover a specific topic that relates to the era.

Essential Question

On your sheet of paper, complete the following: Pretend you know nothing about the 90s. Based on the music we listened to, how would you describe the decade?

Music Review

Song Name:

Artist(s):

What is the message in this song? What is the Artist(s) trying to say?

3 interesting lines from the song:

1.

2.

3.

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