Overview Lesson

Unit Title
The American Songbook

Lesson Title
There Was Royalty before the “King of Pop”: An Examination of Popular Music throughout the Ages

Lesson Focus
Overview unit in preparation of The American Songbook—Popular Music from the 1920s through the 1960s

Purpose
The introductory lesson sets the tone for the series, linking the “known” of the student with the “unknown” to be presented.

Objective
Students will be able to:
- Identify elements that define “popular” music
- Survey popular music of different decades
- Relate the importance of music to culture and historical events

MENC Standard
Content Standard #6: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
Content Standard #9: Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

Cross-Curricular Tags
American History—American Culture

Materials
Wiki/Discussion Board posting or Three-Minute Round Table
Popular Music Jigsaw Puzzle
Time Line
Title Cards
Lyric Sheets

It’s My Decade Research Project Handout with Grading Rubric
Computer with Internet and speakers
LCD projector, SMART board, or appropriate technology to view the computer screen
Paper/pencil or small dry-erase boards
Glue sticks

Lesson Introduction
(If a distance-learning site is in place, the following introduction can be done online prior to class. The introductory questions can be part of a discussion board, and a class Wiki will allow the students to add their definition to the term “popular music”.)
Lesson Introduction, continued

1. Introductory discussion—The importance of history and cultural artifacts
   1.1. Why do people collect antiques?
   1.2. Can popular music be considered “antique”?
   1.3. Do any of you listen to music that might be considered “antique” (for example, Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix, or The Beatles)?
   1.4. Ask an older adult for the name of the popular artist or song he or she listened to around 11 to 13 years of age.

2. Three-Minute Round Table
   2.1. Put students in small group (two to four) and have them answer the question, “What makes music popular?”
   2.2. Discuss everyone’s response and agree on a class definition. Keep this definition posted.

Learning Activity

1. Activity—Popular Music Jigsaw Puzzle
   1.1. Students are given a timeline with historic landmarks (Revolutionary War; California Gold Rush; Civil War).
   1.2. Students are provided the lyrics while they listen to a montage of “popular songs” available online, from the eighteenth century and nineteenth centuries (“Yankee Doodle”; “Clementine”; “Star Spangled Banner”).
   1.3. Students coordinate the song titles with the appropriate year based on the lyrics or sound.

2. Compare the class definition of “popular music” to discuss why these songs are appropriate.

Reinforcing Activity

1. To make the purpose of The American Songbook relevant to the students, pose the following scenario:
   *You have a very special iPod. It has recorded all of the special music of your life: your favorite songs over every stage of your life. Jump ahead 80 years. Surprisingly, your iPod still works! You’ve willed your very special iPod to your favorite grandchild, who keeps it safely tucked away in the attic. After 50 years, your grandchild decides to move. The iPod finally stops working, so he or she throws it away. All of the music that was so very important to you is now gone, because everyone else has done the same thing. The purpose of this video series is to make a new generation aware of the music that was so very important to so many people. It was what your grandparents and great-grandparents listened to while doing their homework. It was the music from their first dance, their first date, all of the music that stayed with them as they were growing up.*

2. Assign student groups. Give each group a decade (1950 through 2000). They are to research their decade for five popular songs of the times. They will present these songs to the class along with a summary of the historic events. They may dress in
Reinforcing Activity, continued
“period costumes” for their presentation. Recordings of the music can be secured from the library or Internet.

Measurement
Teacher Observation—It’s My Decade Grading Rubric

Online Resources
Parlor Songs: Popular Sheet Music from the 1800s to the 1920s
http://www.parlorsongs.com

100 Years of Jazz and Popular Music
http://musicforpianos.com/jazzandpopularmusic.htm

American Popular Music 1900-1950
http://kclibrary.lonestar.edu/music-2.html

American Popular Music/America.gov
http://www.america.gov/publications/books/american-popular-music.html

Popular Songs in American History
http://www.contemplator.com/america/

Pop Culture Madness
http://www.popculturemadness.com/
(select Pop Music from the menu bar to select the decade—1950s to 2000s)

American Cultural History
http://kclibrary.lonestar.edu/decade00.html

American History Timeline 1780–2005
http://www.animatedatlas.com/timeline.html
Your groups will be taking the class on a trip back to the _________s. To do this, you will need to:

- research five popular songs of this decade
- provide recordings of these songs (either CD or Internet source)
- research important historic events (three minimum) of this decade

You will present these songs to the class and inform us of the important historic events. You may also research the popular styles and dress “in character” for your presentation. Your presentation can take any of the following forms, just as long as the above information is presented and all group members participate:

- short skit
- oral presentation with visuals (posters, slide show, etc.)
- class participation activity

Use the questionnaire below to help shape your presentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Popular Songs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performing Artist</td>
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<tr>
<td>CD Title or Internet Source</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performing Artist</td>
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<td>CD Title or Internet Source</td>
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<td>3. Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performing Artist</td>
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<td>CD Title or Internet Source</td>
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<td>4. Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performing Artist</td>
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<td>5. Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing Artist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD Title or Internet Source</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Historic Events
1. Event

2. Event

3. Event

Were any of these events reflected in the music? If so, how?

Presentation
Use the spaces below to structure your presentation. Will you be doing a skit? Are you doing an oral presentation with visual aids? If so, what are the visual aids? Will you be in costume?
Grading Rubric: **IT’S MY DECADE**

*(Teacher’s Note: As the grading system for the performing arts varies greatly between schools, the following rubric merely establishes the measurable criteria. Additions and subtractions should be made to fit the individual situation.)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Songs:</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The students presented or played five popular songs from their respective decade.</td>
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<td><strong>Title/Artist/Source:</strong></td>
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<td>Title/Artist/Source:</td>
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<th>Historic Events:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The students presented a minimum of three historic events from their respective decade.</td>
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<td><strong>Event:</strong></td>
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<td>Event:</td>
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<tr>
<th>Presentation:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Option #1: The students presented a skit that incorporated the songs and events of their respective decade.</td>
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<td>Option #2: The students presented an oral report that represented the songs and events of their decade.</td>
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<td>Optional Bonus: The students wore costumes representative of their era.</td>
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<td>Comments:</td>
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<th>Final Grade:</th>
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Popular Music Jigsaw Puzzle

You have been given cards with song titles on them. After singing the songs and reading the lyrics, see if you can match the song title with the event on the timeline. After hearing all of the songs, glue your answers down on the page.

1750
- Revolutionary War

1800
- War of 1812
- Minstrel Shows Gain Popularity in America

1850
- California Gold Rush
- Civil War Underground Railroad

1900
Song Title Cards

“Yankee Doodle”

“Follow the Drinking Gourd”

“Buffalo Gals”

“Clementine”

“Star Spangled Banner”
Song Lyrics

(Teacher’s Note: These songs are curricular standards and can be found in most Music Curriculum Series. Full lyric sheets can be found online for download.)

“Follow the Drinking Gourd”
Follow the drinking gourd.
Follow the drinking gourd.
For the old man is a waiting for to
Carry you to freedom
If you follow the drinking gourd

Traditional American Folk Song
http://www.songsforteaching.com/folk/followthedrinkinggourd.htm

“Yankee Doodle”
Yankee Doodle came to Boston
Riding on a pony
Stuck a feather in his hat and
Called it macaroni

Yankee doodle, keep it up,
Yankee doodle dandy;
Mind the music and the step,
And with the girls be handy

Traditional American Folk Song
http://www.kididdles.com/lyrics/y004.html

“The Star Spangled Banner”
Oh, say can you see by the dawn's early light
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars thru the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

Francis Scott Key
http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/lyrics/spangle.htm

“Clementine”
In a cavern, in a canyon,
Excavating for a mine,
Lived a miner forty-niner,
And his daughter Clementine.

Oh my darling, oh my darling,
Oh my darling Clementine,
You are lost and gone forever,
Dreadful sorry Clementine.

Percy Montross, circa 1880
http://www.greatdreams.com/clem.htm

“Buffalo Gals”
Buffalo Gals, won't you come out tonight,
Come out tonight, come out tonight.
Buffalo Gals, won't you come out tonight
And dance by the light of the moon.

As I was walking down the street,
Down the street, down the street,
A pretty little gal I chanced to meet,
Oh, she was fair to see.

Cool White (John Hodges)