

The American Songbook

Lesson Plan Series

By Elizabeth M. Kendall

MICHAEL FEINSTEIN'S AMERICAN SONGBOOK

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”.)

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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 time line 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

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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>

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IT'S MY DECADE

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.

Popular Songs

1. Title

Performing Artist

CD Title or Internet Source

2. Title

Performing Artist

CD Title or Internet Source

3. Title

Performing Artist

CD Title or Internet Source

4. Title

Performing Artist

CD Title or Internet Source

5. Title

Performing Artist

CD Title or Internet Source

Group Members _____

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.)

Songs:	
The students presented or played five popular songs from their respective decade.	
Title/Artist/Source:	
Title/Artist/Source:	
Title/Artist/Source:	
Title/Artist/Source:	
Title/Artist/Source:	
Historic Events:	
The students presented a minimum of three historic events from their respective decade.	
Event:	
Event:	
Event:	
Presentation:	
Option #1: The students presented a skit that incorporated the songs and events of their respective decade.	
Option #2: The students presented an oral report that represented the songs and events of their decade.	
Optional Bonus: The students wore costumes representative of their era.	

Group Members _____

Comments:	
Final Grade:	

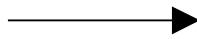
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Popular Music Jigsaw Puzzle

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.

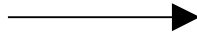
1750

Revolutionary
War

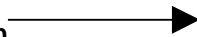


1800

War of
1812

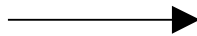


Minstrel Shows
Gain Popularity in
America

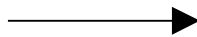


1850

California Gold
Rush



Civil War
Underground
Railroad



1900

NAME _____

Song Title Cards

“Yankee Doodle”

“Clementine”

“Follow the Drinking
Gourd”

“Star Spangled
Banner”

“Buffalo Gals”

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>

“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>

“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>

“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)
<http://freepages.music.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~edgmon/stbuffalogals.htm>