



[Note to Teachers: This series of lessons uses songs that address the use of drugs for recreation and escape. If your school policy allows, you might take advantage of opening a discussion on the topic of inappropriate use of drugs. If your curriculum is subject to restrictions on the topic, you should review the videotape before using it in the classroom.]

BEHIND THE MUSIC

Music in America 1968

Lessons for Music and Social Studies Classes, Grades 9-12

A Song for Every Headline

Lesson 1 of 4

Objective

- Students will identify popular songs from 1968 and make connections with the year's current events
- Students will recognize popular music as a reflection of the culture
- Students will consider the effectiveness of music to communicate ideas

National Standards for Music Education 8, 9— Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts; Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

Materials

VHS VCR Player

Television

VH1 Cable in the Classroom program Behind the Music: Music in America 1968

Web-based lesson materials



Procedures

1. Show students first 10 minutes of video Behind the Music: Music in America 1968. You may show the entire video, but questions in this lesson are related to the video's first segment.
2. Briefly outline some major current events of 1968 covered in this section of the video (Vietnam War, Tet Offensive, anti-war protest movement, civil rights movement)
3. Review, with students, songs they heard in this segment of the video ("We Gotta Get Out of this Place" — Eric Burden and the Animals, "Ball of Confusion" — The Temptations, "Fortunate Son" — Creedence Clearwater Revival)
What do these titles reflect? — Open discussion. You may expect answers such as:
 - "We Gotta Get Out of this Place" — Eric Burden and the Animals
(We've got to get out of: Vietnam, turmoil of teen-age years, establishment control)
 - "Ball of Confusion" — The Temptations
(Lyrics of "Run, run, run, but you sure can't hide" implied running from: draft and war; "confusion" refers to young adult alienation, inability of young people to effect change)
 - "Fortunate Son" — Creedence Clearwater Revival
(Inequity of draft reflected in social class and race, vocal style reflects frustrations and anger)
4. Ask the students "What was the Tet Offensive?" (The Tet Offensive was a coordinated attack by the North Vietnamese, January 30, 1968, on major U.S. facilities in South Vietnam. The Viet Cong infiltrated Saigon, seized the perimeter of the U.S. embassy, and captured the Citadel at Hue. While Tet was a military disaster for the Communists [they lost 10,000 men and did not accomplish many objectives], it marked a victory in altering Americans' perception of the war.)
5. Ask students "How did the Tet Offensive change public perception of the Vietnam War?" (Americans who believed the war was being won had a change of view with photos and film of the Viet Cong holding the U.S. embassy in Saigon.)
6. See if students can tell how songs from around the time of the Tet Offensive reflected a trend to escape the horrors of war through the use of drugs, altered states of reality, or through cynical political and social humor.
 - New music, which included The Doors, Jimi Hendrix, and Jefferson Airplane, pointed to psychedelic drugs as a path to knowledge and reflected a trend to escape the horrors of war through the use of drugs.
 - Anti-war music like "The Feel Like I'm Fixin' To Die Rag" by Country Joe McDonald and the Fish, written to protest the war, ironically may have comforted American POWs in Vietnam who heard these songs and felt a sense of connection with their homes. POW Phillip Butler said that 'black-humor' music like Country Joe's "helped us to stay sane."

7. Lead the class in a discussion about ways that cynical or political humor is used as a coping mechanism in entertainment both then and now. Cite other examples of political humor in entertainment — M.A.S.H. movie and television series, Catch 22 (both book and movie); Saturday Night Live, The Simpsons, Mad TV, MAD Magazine, The Onion, various political cartoonists--and write examples on the chalkboard. Accept any reasonable suggestions. On the chalk board, list current songs that address today's social or political issues. (You might get answers such as Will Smith's "The Two of Us," a rap song dealing with single parenthood.) Ask the students what topics are reflected. Ask students to invent song titles about today's issues.
8. As an assignment, ask students to think of some protest songs from circa 1968 that have been discussed. Ask them to think of today's songs that address current issues. In a short written essay, have students compare and contrast the topics of songs mentioned in the video and today's songs that they listed on the chalkboard during class discussion. In addition, in their written essays have students address the question "Has the way musicians deal with issues changed in the thirty-some years since 1968?" To add perspective to their essays, students could seek the views of local musicians (rock, popular, and classical) or interview family members .

VH1, in partnership with Cable in the Classroom, collaborated with MENC: The National Association for Music Education to develop this series of lessons.

National Standards for Music Education

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.