



BEHIND THE MUSIC

VH1 Presents the 1980s VH1 Music Studio Cable in the Classroom

Lessons for High School Music Classes

Lesson 1

[Note to Teachers: Some of the scenes and topics in the videotaped program that these lessons accompany address social change, the sexual revolution, AIDS (auto immune deficiency syndrome), and drug culture. If your curriculum is subject to restrictions on any of these topics, you should review the videotape before using it in the classroom.]

The popular music of the 1980s both reflected and influenced everyday lives, says Shannon Daugherty, the host of “VH1 Presents the 1980s.” The popular music in the 1960s responded to the Vietnam War with anthems of peace and protest, and the music of the 1970s mirrored the cultural transition to a time when the once vibrant youth movement was feeling bitter and betrayed. During the 1970’s some popular musicians were laying aside political messages, some turning inward for themes, others rejecting any message at all. The music of the 1980s also reflected the culture of its decade. The popular music of the 80’s reflected both a culture focused on conspicuous consumption and wealth as well as a generation addressing social change with the emergence of concerts and albums to raise money for famines in Africa and the economic plight of America’s farmers.

Objective

Students will describe some of the varied uses of music in our culture

Students will describe similarities and differences in the roles of musicians in different societies

National Standards 9—Understanding music in relation to history and culture

Materials

VHS VCR player

Television

VH1 Cable in the Classroom program VH1 Presents the 1980s

Web-based lesson materials

Teacher-provided recording of “Revolution” by the Beatles

Audio-playback equipment

2 class periods

Procedures

1. Cue the program VH1 Presents the 1980s to the beginning.
2. As students enter the classroom, have recording of the Beatles’ “Revolution” playing.
3. As students are settled, ask students if they can identify the song they are hearing. Ask them what they think of when they hear the song? (Accept reasonable answers, like the Beatles, the 1960s, classic rock, and there may be a few who identify the song with the Nike television commercial.)
4. If students don’t know, tell them that “Revolution” written by John Lennon, was first released in 1968 as a hard-rocking single and then as a more subdued album track on the “White Album.” If they aren’t familiar with the use of it in the 1980s Nike television commercial, mention that it was one of the first 1960s songs that was used to sell a non-musical product. A brief discussion of Lennon’s original intent behind the lyrics may provide an opportunity to review the movement of popular musicians of the 1970s to create music which mirrored the cultural movement of that time period.
5. Tell students to watch for mention of the use of music to sell a product in the program they are about to view. Tell them they will also be asked to name some of the ways music is used to sell products.
6. Show program.
7. Repeat the following from the narration: “Music that had challenged authority in the 1960s and 1970s was fast becoming part of the establishment. Corporate America coopted the anthems of the antiwar and civil rights movements and used them to sell products to aging baby boomers.”
Lead students in a discussion of what they saw in the program that illustrates it. (Jovan Perfume’s sponsorship of a Rolling Stone tour in 1981, Michael Jackson selling rights of Beatles’ song “Revolution” to Nike, California Raisin Growers use of the song “Heard It through the Grapevine,” Jackson and others performing in commercials.)
8. Lead students in a discussion of why the business world would choose to sell products with musicians and music from the 1960s. (Lead students to consider that the adults who are spending the money in the 1980s were the very teenagers who listened, sang, and danced to that music in the 1960s. Corporations were using the music to which the potential buyers would relate)
9. Discuss with students how musicians earn a living today. (Recording artists, studio musicians, club performers, military musicians, concert performers, musicians at places of worship, music educators, composers, conductors, etc)
10. Ask students how they think musicians before the 20th century earned a living?

11. Assign groups of three or four students to research how musicians of either the 18th or 19th century earned a living. Suggest student groups use the library's set of Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians. Have each group select a musician such as Bach, Handel, Vivaldi, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Liszt, Debussy, or Schubert.

Have them find out how the musicians became musicians--did they begin as choristers, learn in school, or did a patron sponsored their lessons.

Are they from middle-class families or aristocratic?

Were there family members who were musicians?

Have students consider why the music was played or performed and who it was written for?

Where was the performance and who was the audience?

In what form did the musicians receive payment?

Have student groups prepare to share their findings in another class period either in a short written report or short oral presentation.

(Note to teachers: Musical patronage flourished in the 18th century. If your students haven't discussed this system, discuss with them how a composer/musician might sign a contract with a prince or aristocrat to fulfill duties such as maintain musical equipment, compose music, direct musicians, maintain good reputation, be available at all times, practice his own instrument, instruct children of the household, and more. In return, the composer/musician was paid and often provided with room and board. In the 19th century, however, this system began dying out and composers and musicians relied more on ticket sales to concerts and sales of printed music scores.)

12. When the student groups have shared their research findings with the class, lead the class in a discussion of the changing roles of musicians from church- or court-supported artists to teacher and salon artists performing for the aristocracy to today's concert and media artists who are paid, not only through record sales and contracts, but also through selling rights for commercial use and corporate sponsorships.

13. Ask students how musicians are earning a living today. Students may chose their favorite musical artist and explore sources of revenue. Are they just earning a living by selling recordings and tickets to their concert? Is their music being used to promote a product as was done in the 1980's? (Moby, Sting, Backstreet Boys etc.)

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.

Lesson One is derived from Strategies for Teaching: Middle-Level and High School Keyboard (MENC: 1996).



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