



BEHIND THE MUSIC

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

Lessons for High School Music Classes

Lesson 3

[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 identify different genres of music popular in the 1980s
- Students will learn about musicians of the 1980s examples of the songs that they made popular
- Students will program a radio play list with 1980s popular music
- Students will identify elements of music characteristic to 80’s popular music

National Standards 6, 9— Listening to, analyzing, and describing music; 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 CDs or recordings of music popular in the 1980s such as:

“Thriller” or “Beat It” by Michael Jackson

“Uptown Girl,” “Innocent Man,” “Piano Man” by Billy Joel

“Material Girl,” “Express Yourself,” “Like a Virgin” by Madonna

“With or Without You,” “Where the Streets Have No Name,” “Pride (In the Name of Love)” by U2

“Orange Crush,” “Shiny Happy People,” “It’s the End of the World as We Know It,” “Losing My Religion” by R.E.M.

“You Really Got Me,” “Jump” by Van Halen

2 class periods

Procedures

1. As students enter the classroom, have popular music selections playing that you’ve found in the school music library or in your personal collection from the 1980s.
2. When students are settled, ask students if they are familiar with music and musicians popular in the 1980s. Ask students to name those with whom they are familiar.
3. If students have not already seen VH1 Presents the 1980s, tell them they are going to watch a program about popular music in the 1980s. Have them be ready to name musicians, styles of music and some news events mentioned in the program. (If students have seen the program, skip step 4.)
4. Show videotaped program.
5. Have students name some of the music styles and musicians mentioned in the program. (Accept reasonable answers including New Wave, Punk, Heavy Metal, Rap; Michael Jackson, Madonna, R.E.M., U2, Bruce Springsteen, John Mellencamp, Tracy Chapman, Billy Joel, etc...)
6. Briefly discuss characteristics of some 1980s music styles, such as but not limited to the following:
 - Alternative—stylistically, music that is not pop, jazz, or classical, but draws on all three (U2, R.E.M., Jackson’s “Thriller” which combined soulful ballads with heavy metal and funk-disco as well as the video medium).

- Punk—an aggressive style of rock, often with challenging lyrics and a sense of confrontation, aggressive instrumental attack, lack of polish.
- New Wave—encompasses a range of pop music, often including styles of post-punk music that carried punk’s angry attitude along with a well-crafted, politically informed lyricism; keyboard runs and unusual time signatures as well as traditional methods of promotion and visual presentation. (U2 has new-wave roots)
- Heavy Metal—genre of hard rock, often using a distorted guitar sound with power chords, heavy riffs, wailing vocals virtuosic solos, and heavier drums and bass. (Van Halen, Jackson’s “Beat It”)
- Rap—spoken rhyme over a rhythmic background often manipulated from pre-existing recordings; part of the hip hop culture of African American urban life that emerged in the late 1970s.

7. Hand out copies of 1980s Listening Worksheet found below.

1980s Listening Worksheet

Characteristics	Selection #1	Selection #2	Selection #3
Subject			
Emotion Conveyed			
Tempo			
Form			
Musician Virtuosity (or lack thereof)			
Instrumentation (piano- acoustic or electric, drums, bass, guitar(s), brass, strings)			
Performance (polished, improvised, sloppy)			
Other Comments			

8. Tell students they are going to hear three selections of 1980s music (provided by teacher and chosen from list in Materials section.) Tell students they are to write the characteristics of the music selections they hear on the worksheet. Play selections as students note characteristics.

9. Have students name some of the news and political events that happened during the 1980s. (Accept reasonable answers, including John Lennon’s death, American hostages in Iran released, Reagan elected to two terms as president, Berlin Wall comes down, economic recession and unemployment, glasnost in the USSR, etc....)

10. Have students form groups of 3 or 4.
11. Tell students that the groups will be deciding on a play list of songs for a radio show that will feature a half-hour of 1980s music. As a group, they are to:
 - select representative musicians from the decade
 - choose 10 songs by those musicians
 - assign each group member two or three songs from that list to research on the Internet or in the school library by the next time the class meets
 - students should find: year of song's release, biographical background of composer, biographical background of the artist, if the music has a message, any other items of interest to bring back to the group
12. At the next class period, have each group select a line-up of the songs. The line-up can be chronological, grouped according to genre, or any other programming that seems logical to the students.
13. Have student groups write an introductory sentence for each song that the radio announcer will read, giving listeners background on the selection. The introduction can include a discussion of musical qualities characteristic of the style and period. The introduction could also combine a reference to political or news events occurring in the 1980s.
14. Have each group share their play lists and introductory sentences with the class in a brief oral presentation.

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.