



music studio

LESSON PLAN

BEHIND THE MUSIC

Behind the Music: 1992

VH1 Music Studio
Cable in the Classroom

Two Lessons for Music Classes, Grades 11-12

Styles in Context: Is it Music?

Lesson 1 of 2

Warning to Teachers: The content of the videotape contains references, consistent with the era portrayed, to sexual, political, and violent lyrics and acts. You are urged to review this program before presenting it to your students.

Objective

Students will be able to use at least one criterion for making and expressing judgments about musical styles

National Standards for Music Education: Content Standard 7: Evaluating music and music performances

Materials

Behind the Music: 1992 videotape
Television and VCR equipment
Various student-supplied recordings
Chalkboard



Procedures

1. Have the students listen to the first full segment of the program, Behind the Music: 1992.
2. Review for the students the historical context: "Heading into 1992, the pop charts were ruled by glittering stars.... Showstopping entertainers who overwhelmed fans with spectacle." Then, "What had been thought of as "alternative" music now was mainstream ... so what was it alternative to?" Point out that artists such as Madonna and Michael Jackson were supplanted by "Grunge" bands centered in Seattle and "Rap" bands centered in Los Angeles.
3. Based on the program, ask students to summarize the differences between the traditional pop and the new genres. Accept any reasonable answers, but try to guide the class toward a general identity of the traditional "hair band" pop as based in showmanship and production values (that is, the musical surface), and an identity of the newer styles as focusing on social, political, or emotional subject matter (that is, the musical content).
4. Write the two headings, "Musical Surface" and "Musical Content" at opposite ends of the board. Ask students to name other popular musical genres and to reach a consensus on where each genre should be placed along the continuum between the two extremes. Be prepared to cut off debate on the positioning of styles especially valued by the students by taking a vote by show of hands for relative positions along the board.
5. Ask students to consider how other genres you have studied in class would fit along the surface-content continuum. You may include Classical, Romantic, Jazz, various folk musics, or any other types of music with which the students are familiar.
6. As a homework assignment, ask each student to ask his or her parent for a recording of a style of music valued by that parent and write a paragraph defining its position along the surface-content continuum. The students should each justify their opinions based on their understanding of the music and the artists' intentions.
7. On another day, ask students to volunteer to play their parents' selections and to present to the class their evaluations of the selections. Point out to the students that great changes in the musical surface of the prevailing style have often, in the past, led to some people saying that the new style "is not music." (For example, this was said of Jazz, of Rock, of Schoenberg's 12-tone school, and so forth.)
8. As a final assignment, ask each student to write a short essay telling whether they think that surface or content is more important in music and why. Also ask them to come up with a personal definition of what surface or content elements must be present to make a given style "music."

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.**