



# BEHIND THE MUSIC

## Behind the Music: 1992 VH1 Music Studio Cable in the Classroom

Lesson for Music Classes, Grades 11-12

### Lesson 3

Note to Teachers: The content of the videotape may be found, in many communities, to be inappropriate for classroom use because of references, consistent with the era portrayed, to sexual, political, and violent lyrics and acts. You are strongly encouraged to review this program before presenting it to your students.

## Objective

Students will identify different genres of music popular in the 1980's  
Students will learn about musicians of the 1980's and examples of the songs they made popular  
Students will identify elements of music characteristics to 90'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 Behind the Music: 1992

Web-based lesson materials

Teacher approved recordings of music popular in the 1990's such as:

Nirvana

Pearl Jam

Alice in Chains

Ice Cube

Ice-T

Teacher approved recordings of music popular in the 1960's such as:

Bob Dylan

Phil Ochs

Joan Baez

The Staple Singers

James Brown

Marvin Gaye

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 1960's.

2. Ask students what social issues were prevalent during the 1960's. (Acceptable answers include the Civil Rights movement, racism, drugs, the Vietnam War, unemployment, and urban blight.)

The U.S. war in Vietnam was the longest and second most costly in U.S. history. Public opinion polls show Americans were divided in their support for the engagement, primarily along generational lines. Conflicts and protests arose in the form of sit-ins, protest marches, rallies, and various other forms of civil disobedience.

After the assassination of John F. Kennedy, President Lyndon Johnson enacted the Civil Rights act of 1964. It prohibited discrimination in employment and established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The Civil Rights Act of 1968 extended these rights to housing. This created a rise in expectations in the black community. The reality of the times did not meet the expectations causing frustration. This frustration was evident in the riots of the sixties: Harlem in 1964, Watts in 1965, and Detroit in 1967. The focus of protest turned to social and economic deprivation rather than segregation.

- Jose Munoz, Analysis of Cultural Expression – Black Music During the Sixties and Seventies

3. Play the following excerpts of 1960's music with the following descriptions of their social relevance.

- Bob Dylan: "Blowin in the Wind" – This song became central to the Civil Rights Movement of the Sixties, serving to promote peace and tolerance as it posed the questions of where life's most elusive answers could be found.

- The Supremes: "Love Child" – One of a group of Motown message songs that depicted challenges of the Civil Rights campaign and problems of living in the urban ghetto.

- Phil Ochs: "Draft Dodger Rag" – A song detailing the opposition of this singer to involvement in what he believed to be an immoral war by any means necessary.

- James Brown: "Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud" – Became an anthem for the black community, creating a sense of identity and unity within the black community.

- Marvin Gaye: "What's Going On" – A commentary on societal problems of the times, including unemployment, inflation, police brutality, and taxes.

- Joan Baez: "We Shall Overcome" – The archetypal protest song, whose roots began as "I Will Overcome" sung by slaves to help endure the long, suffering years of slavery. Co-opted by white folk singers in the sixties, it

offered words of support during events like sit-ins, voter registration drives, and protest marches.

4. Ask students to name music and musicians they are familiar with from the early 1990's.

5. If students have not already seen *Behind the Music: 1992*, tell them they are going to watch a program about popular music in 1992. 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.)

6. Show the videotaped program.

7. Have students name some of the music styles and musicians mentioned in the program. (Acceptable answers include Pop, Middle of the Road, Grunge, Rap, Hip-Hop, Mariah Carey, Whitney Houston, Jon Secada, Ice-T, Ice Cube, Public Enemy, Nirvana, Sound Garden, and Pearl Jam.)

8. Have students name some of the social issues from the 1990's addressed and not addressed in the program. (Acceptable answers include the L.A. race riots, police brutality, the recession, the AIDS epidemic, drug abuse, rejection of materialism of the 1980's, school violence, rising divorce rates, suicide).

9. Play the following examples of 1990's music. Teachers please note you are strongly encouraged to review this music before presenting it to students due to its content. Ask students for examples of each song's 1990s social relevance.

- Pearl Jam: "Jeremy" – A song that questions not what was wrong with teenagers who would resort to school violence, but rather what is wrong with a society that will not accept people for who they are and drives them to these frustrated actions.

- Nirvana: "Lithium" Addressed the issue of alienation of youth by representing their angst, rebellion, and low self-esteem lyrically.

- Alice in Chains: "Them Bones" – An anthem of loneliness, seclusion, and despair shared by a seemingly growing number of adolescents at that time.

- Ice-T: "Cop Killer" – A song dedicated to "All our Friends" at the Los Angeles Police Department and mentioning major figures in the LA Race Riots.

- Ice Cube: "Say Hi to the Bad Guy" – A scathing critique of all those who are seen trying to keep African Americans subservient, including critics, corrupt police officers, and the black bourgeoisie.

10. Have students compare music of the 1990s with music of the 1960s. Guide students in discovering the musical elements that help to relay the message the lyricist is trying to convey. If the students are familiar with analyzing a piece of music, identifying its unique instrumentation, use of rhythm, harmony, tempo, etc, allow students to compare and contrast the musical elements used in the 60's and 90's. If students have not had experience with music analysis, you may guide them through this process, using music from the 60's and 90's. How are the selected examples different or similar? Using correct musical terms, have students address musical elements such as harmony, rhythm, timbre, orchestration/technology, audience, vocal style, appearance of artists, etc.

11. Ask students what current social issues exist that could be addressed through music. (Ex: Genetic testing, terrorism, internet privacy, cloning, school violence, personal safety, social stratification, race relations). Are protest songs still present in popular music? Who are the artists? What is their subject matter? How does their style compare musically with the artists of the 1960s and 1990s? Teachers please note you are strongly encour-

aged to review this music before presenting it to students due to its content.

- Rage Against the Machine: “New Millenium Homes” – A simultaneous warning to those who continue to ignore the plight of the homeless disadvantaged and call for others to rise up in violent rebellion.
- WuTang Clan: “I Can’t Go To Sleep” – A depiction of the social climate in the black community, claiming little has changed since the Civil Rights Era.
- CityHigh: “What Would You Do” – A song depicting the life and struggles of a single-mother as she struggles to survive through whatever means necessary.

OR

Are we in a time where music has little social relevance as a reaction to music of social messages? Using correct musical terminology, compare and contrast these pieces with the aforementioned.

- Brittany Spears: “I’m a Slave 4 U” – A song about the singer’s attempts to seduce a man and prove that she is becoming a woman
- NSync: “Pop” – A song of complaint that pop music is not taken seriously
- Pink: “Get This Party Started” – A song about going to a party and having fun

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.