



100 Greatest Women of Rock and Roll



VH1 Music Studio
Cable in the Classroom

Lesson for Music Classes, Grades 7-12

Lesson 6

Note to Teachers: The programs viewed in conjunction with these lesson plans may include references, consistent with the eras portrayed, to substance abuse, violent acts, and topics of a sexual and/or political nature. Because this may be considered inappropriate for classroom use in some communities, you are encouraged to review the programs before presenting them to your students, and if necessary, choose those sections that enhance your lesson and are acceptable for use in your classroom

Objective

- Students will analyze vocal styles and techniques in various genres.
- Students will objectively critique the vocal performances.

National Standards for Music Education

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.

Materials

- VHS VCR Player
- Television
- Audio playback equipment
- VH1's *100 Greatest Women of Rock & Roll*, Episode 4
- Web-based lesson materials
- Pencils/pens (students)
- Copies of Informational and Critique Charts (included with lesson) for students
- Teacher selected recordings of Kate Smith's "God Bless America," Whitney Houston's "The Star Spangled Banner"

Prior Knowledge:

- Students are able to use correct musical and descriptive terms to discuss vocal and music styles.

Procedures

1. Ask students to consider the following: a singer's voice is their instrument, a tool for conveying emotions and ideas. Explain to them that although they have studied many areas of music through many different female singers, there is a common thread within the styles: the use of the voice.
2. Certain musicians have an energy flowing in their instrument, and have the capability of giving to one person what is commonly known as "goose bumps," while another will listen to the same song and feel nothing. Personal preference has as much to do with popularity as actual talent does. Ask students how they would objectively critique a singer. Would it be based on overall performance, tone quality, stage presence, repertoire, emotional affect, etc.?
3. Distribute copies of the Informational and Critique Charts to students, and ask them to complete them as appropriate throughout the lesson.
4. Linda Ronstadt is known as having one of the most beautiful voices in the industry. Prior to showing the Linda Ronstadt segment, share brief biographical information with the students, using the following as needed:
 - b. Linda Maria Ronstadt, 15 July 1946, Tucson, Arizona, USA. The daughter of a professional musician, Ronstadt's first singing experience was gained with her sisters in the Three Ronstadts. She met guitarist Bob Kimmel at Arizona's State University and together the two aspirants moved to Los Angeles, where they were joined by songwriter Kenny Edwards. Taking the name the Stone Poneys, the trio became popular among the city's folk fraternity and had a US Top 20 hit with "Different Drum". Ronstadt embarked on a solo career in 1968. Her early solo albums, *Hand Sown ... Home Grown* and *Silk Purse*, signaled a move towards country-flavored material, albeit of a more conservative nature. The singer's third album marked a major turning point and featured a core of excellent musicians, including Don Henley, Glen Frey, Bernie Leadon and Randy

Meisner, who subsequently formed the Eagles. The content emphasized a contemporary approach, with songs by Neil Young, Jackson Browne and Eric Anderson, and the set established Ronstadt as a force in Californian rock.

The artist's subsequent two albums showed the dichotomy prevalent in her music. *Don't Cry Now* was largely undistinguished, chiefly because the material was weaker, while *Heart Like A Wheel*, paradoxically given to Ronstadt's former label to complete contractual obligations, was excellent. This platinum-selling set included "You're No Good", a US number 1 pop hit, and a dramatic version of Hank Williams' "I Can't Help It", which won Ronstadt a Grammy Award for best female country vocal. This highly successful release set the pattern for the singer's work throughout the rest of the decade. Her albums were now carefully constructed to appease both the rock and country audiences, mixing traditional material, singer-songwriter angst and a handful of rock 'n' roll/soul classics, be they from Motown Records ("Heat Wave"), Roy Orbison ("Blue Bayou") or Buddy Holly ("That'll Be The Day"). Despite effusive praise from the establishment media and a consistent popularity, this predictable approach resulted in lethargy, and although *Mad Love* showed a desire to break the mold, Ronstadt was increasingly trapped in an artistic cocoon.

The singer's work during the 80s has proved more divergent. Her performance in Joseph Papp's production of *The Pirates Of Penzance* drew favorable reviews, although her subsequent role in the more demanding *La Boheme* was less impressive. Ronstadt also undertook a series of releases with veteran arranger/conductor Nelson Riddle, which resulted in three albums - *What's New*, *Lush Life* and *For Sentimental Reasons* - consisting of popular standards. In 1987 a duet with James Ingram-produced "Somewhere Out There", the theme to the movie *An American Tail*; this gave her a number 2 US hit (UK Top 10) hit, while that same year her collaboration with Dolly Parton and Emmylou Harris, *Trio*, and a selection of mariachi songs, *Canciones De Mi Padre*, showed an artist determined to challenge preconceptions. Her 1989 set, *Cry Like A Rainstorm*, revealed a crafted approach to mainstream recording and included "Don't Know Much", a haunting duet with Aaron Neville, which gave Linda Ronstadt another number 2 hit in the USA (and the UK). The highly acclaimed *Winter Light* was produced by her and George Massenburg, and came across as a personal and highly emotional album. Ronstadt, while hugely popular and successful, has never been truly recognized by the cognoscenti. Her change in styles may have been a contributing factor. She has courted (with great success) country rock, country, rock 'n' roll, Latin, standards, opera, light opera, AOR and white soul. In 1996 she was firmly in the middle of the road with *Dedicated To The One I Love*, an album of lullabies and love songs "for the baby you love ages 1 to 91", although this was redressed in 1998 with the more familiar *We Ran*. The following year Ronstadt reunited with Parton and Harris for a second *Trio* album, and with the latter for an excellent duo album.

5. Show VH1's 100 Greatest Women of Rock & Roll: Episode 4 with Courtney Cox, #21 – Linda Ronstadt segment.
6. Ask students to objectively critique Linda Ronstadt's performance. Do they agree with the artists who voted for the 100 best, placing her at #21? Why/why not?
7. Whitney Houston is one of the most famous singers, holding informal titles such as the "new goddess of pop music." She was the first female to debut at #1 on the billboard charts. Like Linda Ronstadt, Whitney Houston's voice is also enveloping, however, she allows for improvisation and "riffing." Her voice is quite natural, and moves easily along with the music. Prior to showing the Whitney Houston segment, share brief biographical information with the students, using the following as needed:

b. 9 August 1963, Newark, New Jersey, USA. This pop and soul singer followed the traditions of her mother, Cissy Houston, and cousin, Dionne Warwick, by beginning her vocal career in gospel. There was much diversity in her early performances, however. These included engagements as backing singer with established acts, such as Chaka Khan, as well as lead vocals on the Michael Zager Band's single "Life's A Party". She also appeared as a model in various magazines, and as an actress in television shows such as *Give Me A Break*. By 1983, she had entered a worldwide contract with Arista Records, and the following year had her first commercial success when "Hold Me", a duet with Teddy Pendergrass, crept into the US Top 50. However, the rest of that year was taken up with the recording of a debut album. Clive Davis, the head of Arista, had taken a strong personal interest in the vocalist. *Whitney Houston* was finally released in March 1984, from which time it would begin its slow stalking of the album charts, topping them early the next year. Its steady climb was encouraged by the success of the singles "You Give Good Love" and "Saving All My Love For You", which hit numbers 3 and 1, respectively. The disco-influenced "How Will I Know" and the more soul-flavored "Greatest Love Of All", both topped the US charts in rapid succession. Her domination was acknowledged by a series of prestigious awards, notably a Grammy for "Saving All My Love For You" and an Emmy for Outstanding Individual Performance in a Variety Program on US TV.

"I Wanna Dance With Somebody (Who Loves Me)", released in 1987, topped the charts on both sides of the Atlantic, paving the way for *Whitney* to become the first album by a female artist to debut at number 1 on the US album chart, a feat it also achieved in the UK. The album included a version of "I Know Him So Well", sang as a duet with her mother Cissy, and the ballad "Didn't We Almost Have It All", which became her fifth successive US number 1 shortly afterwards. However, even this was surpassed when "So Emotional" and "Where Do Broken Hearts Go" continued the sequence, breaking a record previously shared by the Beatles and the Bee Gees. In 1988, she made a controversial appearance at Nelson Mandela's 70th Birthday Party, where other acts accused her of behaving like a prima donna. By September, "Love Will Save The Day" had finally broken the winning sequence in the USA where it could only manage number 9. Another series of awards followed, including Pop Female Vocal and Soul/R&B Female Vocal categories in the American Music Awards, while rumors abounded of film offers alongside Robert De Niro and Eddie Murphy.

Houston's recording of the title track to the 1988 Olympics tribute, "One Moment In Time," restored her to US Top 5 prominence and topped the UK singles chart. The follow-up "I'm Your Baby Tonight" put her back on top of the US singles chart. Despite the relatively modest success of the album of the same name (number 3 in the US charts), "All The Man That I Need" compensated by becoming her ninth number 1. She became permanently enshrined in the hearts of the American public, however, when she took the microphone to perform "The Star Spangled Banner" at Super Bowl XXV in Miami. The public response ensured that the version emerged as a single shortly afterwards. She also performed the song at Houston as she welcomed back US troops returning from the Gulf War. Such open displays of patriotism did not endear Houston to all. Her remarkably rich voice also caused some debate, with some critics claiming that her masterful vocal technique is not equaled by her emotional commitment to her music.

In July 1992, Houston married singer Bobby Brown (the relationship would prove tempestuous). The same year she made a credible acting debut in the movie *The Bodyguard*. Four songs recorded by her were lifted from the phenomenally successful soundtrack album - cover versions of Dolly Parton's powerful "I Will Always Love You", which topped the US chart for 14 weeks and the UK charts for nine, and Chaka Khan's "I'm Every Woman", and "I Have Nothing" and "Run To You". Houston spent most of the 90s concentrating on her acting career, but made a surprise return to the studio for 1998's *My Love Is Your Love*. Enlisting the songwriting help of Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott, Diane Warren and Wyclef Jean, the album was a confident attempt by Houston to reclaim ground lost to the new diva superstars Mariah Carey and Celine Dion. "When You Believe", a duet with Carey taken from the animated DreamWorks movie *The Prince Of Egypt*, was a transatlantic hit. With the album selling poorly, however, Houston's fortunes were revived by the US number 2 single, "Heartbreak Hotel", and the atypical and hard-hitting "It's Not Right But It's Okay", a US/UK Top 5 hit single.

8. Show VH1's 100 Greatest Women of Rock & Roll: Episode 4 with Geri Halliwell, #61 – Whitney Houston segment.
9. Play the teacher selected recording of Houston's "The Star Spangled Banner" and have students objectively critique her performance. Follow up by playing the selected recording of Kate Smith's "God Bless America", and ask students to compare the two. Both are patriotic songs sung by very powerful voices, so why do they produce different reactions?
10. Barbra Streisand is said to be perhaps the greatest entertainer of all time, although her vocal quality is not one of typical beauty. Her voice does not fit the mold of standard aesthetics, however, she holds a power that is very rare. Her phrasing is impeccable and she engages the audience with every note she sings. Prior to showing the Barbra Streisand segment, share brief biographical information with the students, using the following as needed:

Barbra Streisand was born on April 24th, 1942 in Brooklyn, New York, USA. Barbra is an actress, director, producer and writer. Amongst her many films are *Hello Dolly!* (1969), *A Star Is Born* (1976), *Yentl* (1983), and *The Mirror Has Two Faces* (1996). As a child, she attended the Jewish school, Beis Yakov School in Brooklyn, New York, USA. Barbra is a good friend with fellow Jewish singer/songwriter, Neil Diamond and duetted with him on the smash hit song, "You Don't Bring Me Flowers". They attended the same high school and sang together in the school choir. Barbra has one son, Jason, with ex-husband, fellow Jewish actor, Elliott Gould. She is now married to actor, James Brolin. Barbra has won many awards, including two Oscars, five Emmys, eight Golden Globes, three People's Choice Awards, two Women in Film Crystal Awards and two ASCAP Film and Television Music Awards. Barbra has also received an American Film Institute award and a Cecil B. DeMille Award.

If America can be said to have a Queen of Show Business, then Streisand surely fills the bill. Absolutely uncompromising in her determination to excel in whatever she attempts, this performer/producer/director has fought every step of the way for respect in an industry that doles it out sparingly to women. A cabaret singer and recording artist who burst onto Broadway in 1962's "I Can Get It for You Wholesale," Streisand wowed audiences with her seemingly boundless energy and astonishing vocal range. She subsequently won a Tony nomination for her characterization of show-biz legend Fanny Brice in "Funny Girl," and taped a number of TV specials (one of which, 1965's "My Name Is Barbra," won her an Emmy) before starring in the movie adaptation of *Funny Girl* (1968), which earned her a Best Actress Oscar (in a rare tie, with Katharine Hepburn for *The Lion in Winter*).

Hello, Dolly! (1969) and *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever* (1970) followed, and despite their shortcomings, Streisand joined the firmament of great movie-musical stars. The genre was on the wane, though, and she elected to broaden her range in non-musical vehicles. She scored as a comically crude hooker in *The Owl and the Pussycat* (also 1970) and as the madcap heroine of *What's Up, Doc?* (1972). *Up the Sandbox* (also 1972) gave her a more serious role. She was then paired with 1970s dreamboat Robert Redford in the romantic *The Way We Were* (1973, Oscar-nominated), a smash hit she followed with the feeble comedy *For Pete's Sake* (1974) and a surprisingly lame sequel, *Funny Lady* (1975).

With then-boyfriend Jon Peters, Streisand turned producer; her 1976 remake of *A Star Is Born* earned her a Best Song Oscar with Paul Williams for "Evergreen," but irritated some observers who felt she lost objectivity as both producer and star. She slipped further with a pair of flop comedies, *The Main Event* (1979) and the underrated *All Night Long* (1981); in the latter she hurriedly replaced Lisa Eichhorn in midproduction, taking her only supporting role to date. Since then, her output has been meager, but she has revealed, from movie to movie, an increasingly impressive grasp of the filmmaking process. She donned the director's cap (as well as men's clothing) for the ambitious musical *Yentl* (1983; she also produced and co wrote), played a psychotic hooker in *Nuts* (1987), and directed, produced, and costarred in *The Prince of Tides* (1991), enduring critical snipes along the way, but earning a growing degree of respect as well for her accomplishments.

11. Show VH1's 100 Greatest Women of Rock & Roll: Episode 4 with Courtney Cox, #31 – Barbra Streisand segment.
12. Have students objectively critique her performance. Is her voice stereotypically "beautiful", in their opinion? Why is she one of the most admired entertainers in the world?
13. Diana Ross was first noticed as the lead singer in the famous girl group, The Supremes. Her vocal quality is not at all like that of Barbra Streisand or Whitney Houston, as it is bright and wispy, floating into the ears of her audience. Her voice has been the inspiration of many current female artists, and she has been given the title of "Diva," meaning "great female performer." Prior to showing the Diana Ross segment, share brief biographical information with the students, using the following as needed:

b. 26 March 1944, Detroit, Michigan, USA. While still in high school, Ross became the fourth and final member of the Primettes, who recorded for Lu-Pine in 1960, signed to Motown Records in 1961, and then changed their name to the Supremes. She was a backing vocalist on the group's early releases, until Motown boss Berry Gordy insisted that she become their lead singer, a role she retained for the next six years. In recognition of her prominent position in the Supremes, she received individual billing on all their releases from 1967 onwards. Throughout her final years with the group, Ross was being groomed for a solo career under the close personal supervision of Gordy, with whom she was rumored to have romantic links. In late 1969, he announced that Ross would be leaving the Supremes, and she played her final concert with the group in January 1970. The same year, following the relative failure of "Reach Out And Touch (Somebody's Hand)", Ross began a long series of successful solo releases with the US chart-topping "Ain't No Mountain High Enough". She continued to enjoy success with lightweight love songs in the early 70s, with "I'm Still Waiting" topping the UK charts in 1971, and "Touch Me In The Morning" becoming her second US number 1 in 1973.

In April 1971, she had married businessman Robert Silberstein (they were divorced in 1976). Motown's plan to widen Ross' appeal led her to host a television special, *Diana!*, in 1971. In 1972, she starred in Motown's film biography of Billie Holiday, *Lady Sings The Blues*, winning an Oscar nomination for her stirring portrayal of the jazz singer's physical decline into drug addiction. However, subsequent starring roles in *Mahogany* (1975) and *The Wiz* (1978) drew a mixed critical response. In 1973, she released an album of duets with Marvin Gaye. She enjoyed another US number 1 with the theme song from *Mahogany*,

subtitled “Do You Know Where You’re Going To”, in 1975. Her fourth US chart-topper, “Love Hangover” (1976), saw her moving into the contemporary disco field, a shift of direction that was consolidated on the 1980 album *Diana*, produced by Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards of Chic. Her choice of hit material continued to be inspired and the 80s started with a major hit, “Upside Down”, which rooted itself at the top of the US chart for a month, and reached number 2 in the UK. Similar but lesser success followed with “I’m Coming Out” (US number 5) and “It’s My Turn” (US number 9), although she enjoyed another UK Top 5 hit with the jaunty “My Old Piano”. The following year a collaboration with Lionel Richie produced the title track to the movie *Endless Love*; this tear-jerker spent more than two months at the top of the US chart. By now, Ross was as much a media personality as a soul singer, winning column inches for her liaison with Gene Simmons of Kiss. There was also intense speculation about the nature of her relationship with Michael Jackson, whose career she had helped to guide since 1969.

After months of rumor about her future, Ross left Motown in 1981, and signed contracts with RCA Records for North America, and Capitol Records for the rest of the world. She formed her own production company and had further hits. A reworking of Frankie Lymon’s “Why Do Fools Fall In Love” (US number 7/UK number 4) and Michael Jackson’s “Muscles” confirmed her pre-eminence in the field of disco-pop, but during the remainder of the 80s only 1984’s “Missing You”, a tribute to the late Marvin Gaye, brought her the success to which she had become accustomed. In Britain, however, she achieved a number 1 hit in 1986 with “Chain Reaction”, an affectionate recreation of her days with the Supremes, written and produced by the Bee Gees. In 1986, Ross married a Norwegian shipping magnate, Arne Naess, effectively quashing renewed rumors that she might wed Berry Gordy and return to Motown. She won more publicity for her epic live performances, notably an open-air concert in New York’s Central Park in a torrential storm, than for her sporadic releases of new material, which continue to occupy the lighter end of the black music market. She continued to be more successful in the UK, reaching number 2 in late 1991 with “When You Tell Me That You Love Me” and number 10 the following year with “One Shining Moment”. She announced the break-up of her marriage in 1999.

14. Show VH1’s 100 Greatest Women of Rock & Roll: Episode 4 with Courtney Cox, #38 – Diana Ross segment.
15. Ask students to objectively critique Diana Ross’ performance in the video segment.
16. Lead students in a discussion about vocal quality as part of an overall critique of each performer. Whose voice did they find the most pleasing to listen to? Whose voice best conveyed what they were singing about? Whose voice did they find the most captivating? Why? Encourage students to use specific comments from the notes they took during the lesson regarding tone color, vocal quality, voice clarity, vocal strength, etc. (*Teachers may find the lesson “Sing What You Mean, Mean What You Sing” from the MENC Takes It From the Top lesson series to be useful: www.menc.org/connect/fromthetop/Collinssykissingwhatyoumean.html.)*
17. Ask students who their favorite performer was overall, and why. Could their opinion be influenced by factors outside of the artists’ performances themselves? Did the lyrical meaning of the songs have any influence on them? What about the artists’ images?
18. Have students consider several contemporary female artists with which they are familiar (e.g. Michelle Branch, Norah Jones, Pink, Vanessa Carlton, Ashanti, Alicia Keys, Eve, The Dixie Chicks, Faith Hill, Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, Avril Lavigne, Mariah Carey, etc.). If they had a crystal ball and could see the future, are there any current female musicians that they believe have the talent to become as influential as the artists discussed today?
19. Guide students in a closing discussion on the influence of female musicians on society, the music business, and on the students themselves as they have studied them. Encourage student remarks, and connect to the five previous lessons if desired.

Extensions:

- Exploration of female classical composers (e.g. Clara Schumann, Amy Beach, Nadia Boulanger, Ruth Crawford Seeger, Hildegard von Bingen, Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel).
- Discussion of women in musical theater and opera.

Informational Chart - Student Copy

<i>Artist</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>Biographical Notes</i>	<i>Notes on Video Segment</i>
Linda Ronstadt	Vocal		
Whitney Houston	Vocal		
Barbra Streisand	Vocal		
Diana Ross	Vocal		

Critique Chart - Student Copy

<i>Artist</i>	<i>Tone Quality</i>	<i>Stage Presence</i>	<i>Repertoire</i>	<i>Overall Performance</i>
Linda Ronstadt				
Whitney Houston				
Barbra Streisand				
Diana Ross				

Vocal Critique- Student Copy

Artist	Genre	Biographical Notes	Notes on Video Segment
Linda Ronstadt	Vocal	Soprano	
Whitney Houston	Vocal	Mezzo Soprano	
Barbra Streisand	Vocal	Mezzo Soprano	
Diana Ross	Vocal	Soprano	

Supplemental Resources:

Definitions, biographical information, and historical information for the *100 Greatest Women of Rock & Roll* lesson series has been excerpted primarily from the following sources:

- www.webster.com
- www.vh1.com
- Women in Early Music: <http://150.252.8.92/www/iawm/pages/>
- Women in Music: informational Web site with contacts and mentoring, www.womeninmusic.com/
- www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/WomensStudies/othsubj.htm

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.



These standards-based materials are provided through a partnership with MENC: The National Association for Music Education. This lesson plan was created by MENC member Amy Rosenthal, Vocal Music, Cayuga Elementary, Lake Grove, NY.