



AIDS: A Pop Culture History

VH1 Music Studio
Cable in the Classroom

Lesson for Music Classes, Grades 9-12

Lesson 3

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.

Important Note: Due to the nature of this program and the topics discussed through the lessons, teachers should use careful judgment when deciding whether to present this material to students younger than high school age.

Objective

- Students will discuss the musical characteristics that contribute to a song's popularity and the relationship between music and culture.
- Students will consider music as a means of conveying thoughts and emotions, and create personally meaningful text for a composition.
- Students will write a short song using correct rhythmic and melodic notation.
- Students will perform their compositions and evaluate those of the class.

National Standards for Music Education

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.

Materials

- VHS VCR Player
- Television
- Audio playback equipment
- VH1's *AIDS: A Pop Culture History*
- Web-based lesson materials
- Pencils/Pens and manuscript paper (students)
- Audio recording of Barry Manilow's "I Write the Songs"
- Rhythm and keyboard instruments

Prior Knowledge:

- Students are familiar with basic music notation and major chords.
- Students can create simple rhythmic patterns and notate them.
- Students have experience discussing musical genres, and can discuss music intelligently.
- Students have completed at least Lesson 2 of this series, and have seen all or portions of VH1's *AIDS: A Pop Culture History*.

Procedures

1. As students enter the class, have Barry Manilow's song "I Write the Songs" playing in the background to set the tone for the task at hand. When students are settled, encourage them to listen to the lyrics carefully so they can discuss them (see "Supplemental Resources" below for complete lyrics if needed). Have they heard the song, and do they know the artist (Barry Manilow is a soft-pop/rock singer who gained fame in the 1970s and continues to draw a large audience.)?
2. Guide students in discussing Manilow's song. If necessary, explain to them that "I Write the Songs" is a classic number that sings of the power of music to convey thoughts and emotions. Who is actually the "speaker" in the song? Ask students to comment on why they think the song was popular, and why the melody is one that remains familiar.
3. Have students refer to their notes and Music Listening Charts from Lesson two in which they discussed musical messages that related to AIDS and sex in order to refresh their memories about the connection between music and cultural/social ideas. Did the messages the artists were sending in their songs have the impact of "making the whole world sing," as Barry Manilow suggests of music's power to convey in "I Write the Songs?"
4. Ask students to brainstorm a list of topics that they and their peers face daily (if Lesson one of this series has been completed, topics discussed in Step one or the Extension could be used again here). Have them each jot notes about the topics and what they would like to convey that could encourage social change.
5. Tell students that they are going to develop their ideas into a short composition. Explain the importance of

establishing a text to set to music. Encourage them to create text that has a positive message and promotes a good cause, but suggest that they may take different approaches (serious, direct, imagery or symbolism, sarcasm, etc.)

6. Divide students into groups, and have them choose a topic from those discussed earlier (each group should have at least one student who is comfortable with music notation, chords, etc.). Have groups use their notes from earlier in the lesson to brainstorm an approach for their song lyrics. Guide them through this exercise by asking them to consider whether they want the music to be upbeat or slow, and to choose a genre (Rap, Pop, R&B, etc.). Remind students that the genre they select plays a key role in the text, its message, and the way in which it is conveyed.
7. Give students sufficient time to write one short verse for their composition, as well as a refrain/chorus. At this point, students should have a general idea of how they would like their song to sound. Remind them that this is a mini-composition designed to enforce a positive message.
8. Have students experiment in their groups with rhythmic patterns that suit their text, as well as the musical genre they have chosen. Assist them in deciding on a time signature as needed. Students should notate their rhythms on their manuscript paper without designated pitches. As students finish their lyrics and rhythm, allow them to work at a keyboard or other pitched instrument to compose a melody.
9. Ask students to put the elements of their composition together to create a short performance. One student should perform the lyrics, one should reinforce the rhythm by accompanying on a rhythm instrument, and one should play the melody on the keyboard. If the students are of sufficient musical ability, allow them to add basic chord progressions for accompaniment as well.
10. Have students perform their compositions, and ask the rest of the class to make notes regarding the overall performance. Their comments should focus on originality of lyrics and melody, how well the message was conveyed, how well they worked within their chosen genre, and creativity.
11. Ask students in each performing group to explain their motivation for writing their lyrics. Have the students in the rest of the class share their thoughts, based on their notes, about how well they understood the performers' intentions. How clear was the message? Guide students in discussing how effective their peers' compositions were, and how strongly they personally are affected by the music they listen to on a daily basis.

Supplemental Resources:

- "I Write the Songs" lyrics: www.aldielyrics.com/lyrics/barry_manilow/i_write_the_songs.html

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 Funmilayo Eke, Tutt Middle School, Augusta, GA.