



## Bon Jovi Unplugged on VH1

VH1 Music Studio  
Cable in the Classroom

Lesson for Music Classes, Grades 7-12  
Lesson 3: What Makes Music “Country?”

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.

## Objectives

- Students will listen to and analyze music for its style.
- Students will discuss cultural and musical characteristics of country music.
- Students will discuss how musical style is created.

### National Standards:

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
- *Bon Jovi Unplugged on VH1*
- Audio playback equipment
- Copies of What Makes Music “Country?” Worksheet (provided below)

### Prior Knowledge:

- A basic prior knowledge of country music is helpful, but is not required to successfully complete the lesson.

## Procedures

1. Begin the lesson by providing the following information:

Bon Jovi came to prominence in the 1980s as a pop-metal band, selling millions of recordings and playing to sold-out stadiums. As rock/metal music faded in the 1990s, Bon Jovi shifted their sound to a more moderate pop/rock style.

Their latest release, *Lost Highway*, has been called a “country” recording by many music critics. The album was recorded in Nashville, Tennessee, produced by a noted Nashville record producer (Dan Huff), and includes appearances by such artists as LeAnn Rimes and Big and Rich.

2. Cue *Bon Jovi Unplugged on VH1* to the Bon Jovi/LeAnn Rimes duet, “Till We Ain’t Strangers Anymore.” View the recording, citing the instrumentation used in the song. Follow by playing a recording of LeAnn Rimes’ “Some People” (available for download at <http://www.itunes.com>).
3. Allow students to complete the “What Makes Music Country?” worksheet (below). [Note: All the artists listed in worksheet item number 5 have either recorded a country music song or album, or have expressed interest in singing and writing country music (Jessica Simpson and Justin Timberlake).]
4. Discuss answers and relate information in the “extensions” section to the class.

## **Extensions:**

In its early days, country music was known as “country and western” music, due to the influence of such artists as Roy Rogers and Gene Autry. Today, country music is a blend of various styles and influences.

While country is often viewed as having its roots in a predominant Caucasian American culture, Rufe Payne and DeFord Bailey, two early country artists, were African-Americans. In more recent times, Charley Pride and Cowboy Troy of Big and Rich have continued the trend of African-American involvement. Even the great Ray Charles recorded “Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music,” which was released in 1962.

Traditional country music is often identified with certain timbres, such as those of the steel guitar, fiddle and acoustic guitar. Bluegrass influences introduced the mandolin, banjo and string bass into many recordings and performances. The country “twang” is also evident in the voices of many past and current artists. However, Patsy Cline, one of country’s most well known female vocalists, was noted for her smooth, silky vocal delivery.

While Nashville continues to be the center of the country music world, country music is written and recorded all over the globe by artists who are not from the southern United States. Bon Jovi hails from New Jersey, a state not often associated with producing country music artists.

## **Supplemental Resources:**

History of Country Music: <http://www.roughstock.com/history/>

Can There Be Such a Thing as Black Country Music?:  
[http://racereactions.about.com/od/celebritiesandrace/a/blackcountry\\_2.htm](http://racereactions.about.com/od/celebritiesandrace/a/blackcountry_2.htm)

Country Music Instrumentation:  
<http://www.countrymusicHallofFame.com/site/experience-museum-programs-school-instruments.aspx>

## **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.

## What Makes Music “Country?”

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_

1. List instruments in the Bon Jovi/LeAnn Rimes video you identify with country music:
  
2. Do you hear similarities in sound and style between the “VH1 Unplugged” performance and the LeAnn Rimes recording? What are they?
  
3. Critics have identified “Till We Ain’t Strangers Anymore” as a country song. Do you agree? Why or why not?
  
4. Circle the following characteristics that work to make a song a “country” song:  

Birthplace of musician(s)	Choice of producer
Subject of song (love, heartbreak, etc.)	Recording location
Choice of instruments in recording	Vocal technique
Words and phrases used in lyrics	Race/ethnicity of artist

5. Circle the following artists who have recorded a “country” song or “country” album, or who have expressed interest in writing or recording “country” music:

Ray Charles

Kelly Clarkson

Carrie Underwood

Elvis Presley

Bon Jovi

Jessica Simpson

Justin Timberlake



*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 Brad Foust, Highland Oaks Elementary School, Memphis, Tennessee*