



CMT Crossroads **Sheryl Crow and Willie Nelson** VH1 Music Studio Cable in the Classroom

Lesson for Music Classes, Grades 7-12

Lesson 2

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 use appropriate terminology to describe the instrumentation and style of a musical example.

Students will identify common elements between musical styles.

Students will compare contrasting vocal styles.

National Standards:

6 - Listening to, analyzing, and describing music;

9 - Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

Materials

VHS VCR Player

Television

CMT Crossroads program, Sheryl Crow and Willie Nelson

Web-based lesson materials

Index cards of varying colors with questions for students (matching questions should be on the same color index card)

Pencils

Lyrics for “Jackson” and Crow’s “Abilene” to distribute to students. (NOTE: Lyrics

for “Abilene” can be found at: www.songlyrics.co.nz/lyrics/s/sherylcrow/Sheryl_Crow_abilene.htm

Prior Knowledge:

Students are familiar with instrument names and sounds.

Procedures

1. As students enter the classroom, hand them lyric sheets for “Jackson” and “Abilene”, and an index card with one of the following questions on it:

- Name or describe all of the instruments or accessories you see and hear. Are there any you don’t recognize? If so, describe them. (Students will probably have no trouble identifying the piano, electric guitar, keyboards, harmonica, and acoustic guitar, but may not be able to distinguish between the electric guitar and bass guitar. In addition, the drummer uses what is often called a shaker, which is simply an egg-shaped plastic ball filled with beads. The most unusual instrument is the lap-style steel guitar, which was imported from Hawaii around 1900. It is played with a bottleneck slide and fingerpicked. It is this instrument and the slides that the other guitar players use that gives the music its Country feel.)
- Is there a common theme in the lyrics of the two songs? (This is somewhat open to interpretation. However, themes such as relationships or the love of a person or place are present in both songs.)
- Do any of the band members play different instruments during the second song? If so, who and how does the change affect the sound of the second song? (The drummer changes from brushes to sticks and the pianist plays electric keyboards for the second song, giving the music a Rock and Roll sound.)
- How does Willie Nelson’s singing differ from Sheryl Crow’s? (Willie is slightly less articulate, keeps his mouth closed, and doesn’t use as much vibrato as Crow. Sheryl sustains her notes much more than Willie, whose vocal style resembles speaking. Willie often sings slightly behind the beat, whereas Sheryl sings much more rhythmically.)
- How does the instrumentation of this style of music differ from the instrumentation of the style of music you enjoy? Are there any similarities? (This is open to interpretation. Encourage students to think critically about

the music they enjoy. It is good for them to discuss it as a class as well since many of them will have similar interests.)

- How does the singing of this style of music differ from the singing of the styles of music you enjoy? Are there any similarities? (This is open to interpretation. (As with the question above about instrumentation, encourage students to think critically about the music they enjoy.)
- Describe Sheryl's guitar playing style. (Sheryl typically plays one of the least important parts of the song - the strummed chords. Another guitarist and the pianist also play these chords, so it is often impossible to distinguish her playing from that of someone else. She also uses a capo to help facilitate playing in different keys.)
- Describe Willie's guitar playing style. (Willie generally plays solo licks and finger picks.)

Extension Question:

- If students have taken part in CMT Crossroads lesson 1, "Roots and Elements of Country Music" have students identify the characteristics demonstrated by Willie Nelson, Cheryl Crow and the music performed in this program which are characteristic of "country music."
2. Have students take their seats quietly and read the question on their card.
 3. Show CMT Crossroads, Sheryl Crow and Willie Nelson, Part 1. Remind students to keep the question on their index card in mind as they watch.
 4. After watching the video, have students organize themselves into groups based on the color of their card. Ask them to discuss their observations about the similarities and differences between Sheryl Crow and Willie Nelson's performance styles within their small group, writing down their responses. Keep the discussion time to a set limit and monitor students' progress.
 5. Have students elect one person from the group to read the question aloud to the class, one person to discuss the group's observations, and one person to call on classmates who have questions or wish to share their observations. If possible, each person in the group should have a job.
 6. Lead students in a whole-class discussion by encouraging each group to present their question and the group's answers. Other groups should contribute their own observations or questions.
 7. After each group has presented, have students return to their seats and ask them to create one question they have in regards to the music, the group discussion, or the performers. Guide students in discussing the ways that Crow and Nelson's music cross over between country and pop. What elements make their music distinctly one style or another (lyrics, rhythms, instrumentation, etc.)? Does their musical style change when they are singing the music of the other performer? Have students discuss the elements they think contribute to a performer being a crossover artist.

Lesson One is derived from Strategies for Teaching: Middle-Level and High School Keyboard (MENC: 1996).



These standards-based materials are provided through a partnership with MENC: The National Association for Music Education. This lesson plan provided by MENC member Melissa Harris, Trevor Day School, New York, NY