



***Vh1 Rock Docs:  
The Night James Brown Saved Boston***

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.

## Objectives

- Students will learn of the impact of the James Brown concert in Boston in the wake of the shooting of Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Students will examine the ways in which music can help people to express or handle their feelings and emotions in a positive, healthy, and constructive way.

### **National Standards for music education:**

6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

## Materials

- Television
- DVD or VCR player
- CD player and speakers
- Recordings of James Brown songs (available on iTunes, amazon.com, and your local music store)
- Recordings of a variety of styles and genres of music which have strong expressive emotional qualities or symbolism. (suggestions listed below)
- Video recording: *Vh1 Rock Docs: The Night James Brown Saved Boston*
- Lesson 2 Reference Sheet – *Brief background information on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and James Brown* (below)
- Lesson 2 Worksheet – *Video Discussion Questions* (below)
- Lesson 2 Worksheet – *Music, Important Events, and Emotions* (below)
- Lesson 2 Reference Sheet – *Music Example Suggestions and Ideas* (below)
- Pens/Pencils (students)

### **Prior Knowledge:**

- Students have a basic understanding of the musical elements of music (style, timbre, expression, melody, rhythm, harmony, form, and lyrics).
- Students are able to identify ways in which music and musical elements can express feelings and can help and/or empower people during emotional times.
- Lesson 1 (optional)

## Procedures

1. As students enter class, have a recording of one of James Brown's songs playing (your choice).
2. Preface the viewing of the video with the following discussion questions.
  - a. Discuss what students already know.
    - i. What do you know about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.? Who was he? What did he represent? What can you tell me about the Civil Rights Movement? How did Dr. King die?
    - ii. How many of you know of a singer named James Brown? What can you tell me about him? Do you know any of his songs?
  - b. Distribute and read the handout "Brief background information on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and James Brown" in class.
3. Watch the video "Vh1 Rock Docs: The Night James Brown Saved Boston" in its entirety.
4. After viewing the video, instruct students answer the questions on the hand-out "Video Discussion Questions" (provided below). Allow the students time to write, and then discuss their answers together in class.

5. Discuss with students how music can have a strong effect on people's emotions. Play several examples of music (clips or entire songs) that have strong emotional symbolism. (suggestions below) Lead discussion in response to each song.
  - a. What do you feel when you hear this music?
  - b. When have you heard this song? What does it remind you of?
  - c. How could this music help people to express or handle their feelings and emotions in a positive or constructive way?
  - d. How do the musical elements (style, timbre, expression, melody, rhythm, harmony, form, and lyrics) help to communicate the emotion of the song?
  
6. Instruct students to answer the questions on the hand-out "Music, Special Events, and Emotions" (provided below). Allow students time to write. Invite students to share their answers and their songs with the class.

**Extensions:**

1. Students can bring in recordings of the songs which they described in the hand-out "Music, Special Events, and Emotions" and share them with the class, along with their analysis of how the musical elements of the song communicate.
2. Student/Class exploration of music associated with the African-American history and the Civil Rights movement, and how these songs empowered and comforted Americans during this turbulent period. (Lessons 1 & 3)
3. Students/class exploration of other important historical events (September 11, Vietnam War, Civil Rights Movement, WWII, The Depression, etc.) and how music helped people to cope with these events.

**Supplemental Resources:**

- **VH1 Website:** [http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/vh1\\_rock\\_docs/134183/episode.jhtml](http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/vh1_rock_docs/134183/episode.jhtml) which includes links to videos, interviews, and a list of "Ten Essential James Brown Tracks"
- **Television Station WGBH – Boston** [http://www.wgbh.org/article?item\\_id=3196439](http://www.wgbh.org/article?item_id=3196439) . This site has a link to view the 1968 James Brown Live at the Boston Garden concert in its entirety.
- **Wikipedia – James Brown** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_Brown](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Brown) A comprehensive biography and resource on James Brown with many links.
- **Wikipedia - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin\\_Luther\\_King](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther_King) A comprehensive biography and resource on Dr. King, with many links and references, including links to web-based video and audio materials

## **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.

## Lesson 2 Work Sheet – Brief background information on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and James Brown

**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**, born January 15, 1929, was a prominent leader in the American civil rights movement. He entered Morehouse College at age 15, continuing his education at seminary, and eventually earning his doctorate at Boston University. As a Baptist minister, Reverend King preached for peaceful actions, demonstrations, and government lobbying to end segregation and racial discrimination. He championed the rights of African-Americans through civil obedience and non-violent means. His efforts led to several historic events in the civil rights movement, including the 1963 March on Washington, where King delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. In 1964, King became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his work promoting civil rights. Dr. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee. He was only 39 years old. Although Dr. King preached non-violence and civil obedience, his tragic death led to a nationwide wave of riots across the country. His death had shaken the nation, causing great sadness and anger. President Lyndon B. Johnson declared a national day of mourning for the lost civil rights leader in the days following his death. Years later in 1986, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day was established as a national holiday in the United States to honor this American leader's life and remember his important message of peaceful actions and civil rights.

**James Brown**, known as the "The Godfather of Soul", the "King of Funk", and "The Hardest Working Man in Show Business", was born May 3, 1933. He is recognized as one of the most influential figures in 20th century popular music and was renowned for his singing, his energetic and theatrical concerts, and his signature dance moves. Brown began his professional music career in 1953, and rose to fame during the late 1950s and early 1960s on the strength of his thrilling live performances and numerous hit songs. In addition to his acclaim in music, Brown was a presence in American political affairs during the 1960s and 1970s, noted especially for his activism on behalf of fellow African Americans and the poor. During the early 1980s, Brown's music helped to shape the rhythms of early hip-hop music, with numerous groups sampling his funk grooves and turning them into what became hip hop classics and the foundations of the music genre. During his long career, James Brown received several prestigious music industry awards and honors, including being named as one of the first inductees to the Rock-n-Roll Hall of Fame, and receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 1992 Grammy Awards Ceremony. In 2004, *Rolling Stone* magazine ranked James Brown as #7 on its list of the 100 Greatest Artists of All Time. On Christmas Day, 2006, James Brown died from congestive heart failure resulting from complications of pneumonia. Brown's relatives and friends, who included several celebrities and African-American leaders, along with thousands of fans attended public memorial services at the Apollo Theater in New York.

Source:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin\\_Luther\\_King](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther_King)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_Brown](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Brown)

## Lesson 2 Worksheet – Video Discussion Questions

1) What emotions did the African-American community feel upon hearing the news of Dr. King's assassination?

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2) How did James Brown's concert help "save" Boston? How did this concert help people deal with their emotions?

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3) What affect did this have on James Brown's career? How did the African-American community view him? What was the response to his song "Say It Loud: I'm Black and I'm Proud"?

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**Lesson 2 - Music Example Suggestions and Ideas**  
(All recordings can be found on iTunes, amazon.com, or at your local music store.)

- “I Feel Good” – James Brown
- The National Anthem
- “Taps”
- A recording of your school fight song or alma mater
- “Olympic Fanfare” – John Williams
- “We Will Rock You/We Are the Champions” – Queen
- “Rodeo” by Aaron Copland
- “For Good” *Wicked* – Original Broadway Recording
- “Seasons of Love” *Rent* – Original Broadway Recording
- “I Will Survive” – Gloria Gaynor
- “Let It Be” – The Beatles
- “The Story” – Brandi Carlile
- “Moonlight Sonata” – Beethoven
- “The Distance” – Cake
- “I Will Remember You” – Sarah McLachlan
- “Beautiful” – Christina Aguilera
- “Clocks” – Coldplay
- “Glasgow Love Theme” – *Love Actually* Soundtrack
- “Shepherd Moons” – Enya
- “Hallelujah Chorus” – *Messiah* G.F. Handel
- “Falling Slowly” – Once Soundtrack
- “Somewhere Over the Rainbow/Wonderful World” Israel Kamakawiwo’ole
- “You’ve Got a Friend” – James Taylor
- “The Time of My Life” – David Cook
- “A Moment Like This – Kelly Clarkson
- Amazing Grace
- “O Happy Day” - I recommend a traditional southern gospel style
- “Hurt” – Johnny Cash
- “Alive” – Pearl Jam
- “Hey There Delilah” – Plain White T’s
- “Everybody Hurts” – REM
- “New Slang” – The Shins
- “William Tell Overture” – Rossini
- “Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy” – *The Nutcracker*, Tchaikovsky



*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 Kathryn E. Briggs, St. Mary’s Academy, Portland, Oregon.*