



## VH1 Rock Docs: NY77: The Coolest Year in Hell

VH1 Music Studio  
Cable in the Classroom

Lesson for Music Classes, Grades 7-12  
Lesson 1

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 be able to describe three diverse genres of music (hip-hop, disco, and punk) in terms of their origins and influences in society.
- Students will be able to identify the major venues and “major players” associated with each type of music.
- Students will be able to identify and describe the characteristic sounds and compositional elements of hip-hop, disco, and punk, and evaluate them through comparing and contrasting musical styles.

#### 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 or DVD Player
- Television
- Audio playback equipment and/or computer with Internet access and speakers
- *VH1 Rock Docs: NY77: The Coolest Year in Hell*
- Copies of the Video Guide Worksheet (provided below)
- Listening examples sampled or downloaded from iTunes

### **Prior Knowledge:**

- Students should have a basic understanding of music elements such as melody, rhythm, and tempo.
- Students should be able to identify common popular music instruments by characteristic sound/timbre or appearance.
- Students should understand or be introduced to improvisation as it relates to music.

## Procedures

1. Give a short introduction to *VH1 Rock Docs: NY77: The Coolest Year in Hell*, with the student-friendly objectives of listing 1) the three styles of music discussed, their origins, and their individual characteristics, as well as 2) the major places and people involved with each style. A fill-in chart for watching is included in supplemental resources.
2. Watch the video from the beginning through 20:38.
3. Lead a participatory class discussion using the listening guide as a point of departure. Students may use their notes for reference and/or fill in answers. Possible questions are included below. Note that general answers are provided, and that main points for follow-up questions or information are in bold type.
  - a. “What were the three styles of music that rose up in New York City in 1977? How and why did they come about?”
    - i. **Hip-hop** – grew out of the efforts of **Afrika Bambaataa, who convinced gangs and youth to participate in making hip-hop music** that served as entertainment in the **Bronx**. Often, their set-ups involved the hot wiring of **street lamps for electricity** at massive public **block parties**.
    - ii. **Disco** – grew in **Manhattan** parties and dance clubs, such as **The Loft** and **Paradise Garage**, where **all people regardless of age, sexual orientation, or ethnicity were welcome**.
    - iii. **Punk** – grew out of a **Lower East Side** population of **self-proclaimed misfits**, who performed largely at **CBGB** and were encouraged to **write their own songs based on feeling**, not virtuosity.
  - b. “Using your prior knowledge of instruments and music, as well as what you’ve seen and written today, what are some of the characteristics of each style?”
    - i. **Hip-hop** – This was performed with **previously recorded records** played on **individually-owned sound systems** with **improvisation** in the form of rhythmic **turn-table scratching**.

- The **lyrics, often sung over an existing beat source** were **rhymed** and also improvised at times.
- ii. **Disco** – This was played by bands that featured common **rock band instruments** (guitars, key boards, drums, and vocals). Disco was closely **related to dance**.
  - iii. **Punk** – Punk was also played by bands that featured **common rock instrumentation** (guitars, key boards, drums, and vocals). **The tempo was often fast** and songs often short. Performances and songwriting were driven by emotion, and often included “**nonsense syllables,**” shouts, etc.

This is also an excellent opportunity to have students share in demonstrations and explanations if any of them have playing experience.

4. Explain that the students will hear some examples of each type of music. Some examples will feature music and/or artists from the show. Have students listen quietly to each example, while deciding which type of music they believe it is, who might be performing it, and what their evaluation of the music is in terms of musical quality. The following examples are a recommended list that may be downloaded or sampled from iTunes.

- a. “Blitzkrieg Bop” by the Ramones
- b. “The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash” by Grandmaster Flash
- c. “I Will Survive” by Gloria Gaynor
- d. “The Breaks” by Kurtis Blow
- e. “Burning Down the House” by Talking Heads
- f. “The Hustle” by Van McCoy
- g. “One Way or Another” by Blondie
- h. “Rapper’s Delight” by Sugarhill Gang

To answer, students may raise hands, discuss this in groups, or write the answers on paper. Younger students may enjoy making a silent steady beat motion to indicate the style (i.e., guitar strums for Punk, dance moves with an arm for Disco, and turntable scratch for Hip-hop).

### **Extensions:**

Legs McNeil makes the quote about Punk rockers, stating “This is our Beatles.” Listen to some recordings of the Beatles, and compare and contrast their early music and lyrics to that of Punk artists such as The Ramones and Talking Heads.

In groups, explore YouTube and the Internet for dancing instruction resources. Devote time to a simple disco step or dance that can be learned in class as a part of a fun, retro lesson where students get to showcase what they learn with authentic disco music and dress.

## **Supplemental Resources:**

The Global Arts Coalition, whose mission is to help adolescents excel in the arts. There are links to the Hip Hop History Exhibition and Hip Hop Culture Center in Harlem:  
<http://www.globalartistscoalition.org/home.html>

Multiple music examples are available at iTunes

Multiple videos of disco dancing and instruction, which should be screened for appropriateness:  
<http://www.youtube.com>

## **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.

**Video Guide to VH1 Rock Docs: NY77: The Coolest Year in Hell**  
**Listening Guide – Part I**

<b>Types of Music in New York 1977</b>	<b>Hip-hop</b>	<b>Disco</b>	<b>Punk</b>
<b>List the major performers of each style of music.</b>			
<b>List any other major people and what role they played in the music.</b>			
<b>Name where this music was performed and the specific places it could be found.</b>			
<b>Why and/or how did this type of music come about?</b>			
<b>What were some characteristics of this style of music?</b>			



*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 Paige Rose, University of Central Arkansas, Conway, Arkansas.*