



VH1 Rock Docs: NY77: The Coolest Year in Hell

VH1 Music Studio
Cable in the Classroom

Lesson for Music Classes, Grades 7-12
Lesson2

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 identify and understand historical and societal factors that lead to the decay of New York City in 1977.
- Students will be able to describe the performance practice and venues of three diverse styles of music (hip-hop, disco, and punk) in 1977 New York.
- Students will be able to demonstrate hip-hop traits of music by performing a short composed/improvised chant or rap over a provided beat source.
- Students will listen, describe, and evaluate the music of hip-hop, disco, and punk by comparing and contrasting an example of each of the styles.

National Standards:

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
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 lyrics for listening examples (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 be able to identify measures and understand the basic idea of a 4 bar phrase.

Procedures

1. Give a short introduction to *VH1 Rock Docs: NY77: The Coolest Year in Hell* by reviewing the three styles of music that rose up in New York City in 1977:
 - i. **Hip-hop** – grew from gangs in the Bronx
 - ii. **Disco** – grew from parties and clubs in Manhattan where all were welcome
 - iii. **Punk** – grew out of Lower East Side misfits who were writing new songs based on their feelings
2. Give the student-friendly objectives of 1) making note of what hardships and events were occurring in New York in 1977, and 2) describing how and where hip-hop, disco, and punk were performed.
3. Watch the video from the 22:13 through 40:52.
4. Split students up into small groups, making sure that students of varying abilities are in each group. Give them the task of composing a 4-measure hip-hop style rap that outlines one of the historical and societal factors that lead to the decay of New York City in 1977. They may also plan to improvise any available sound sources or vocalizations that emulate the style. This task will not only serve as a review of previous historical material, but will also reinforce the performance practice of hip-hop and the possible interdisciplinary connection of poetry. This task also allows students to compose “musical text.” Students may choose their own topic, or the teacher could assign one of the following ideas:
 - i. Son of Sam killings resulting in public anxiety
 - ii. Blackout and ensuing riots resulting in fear
 - iii. Laying off and termination of police and fire unit jobs
 - iv. General increase in crime, prostitution, drugs due to lack of public security
 - v. Arson and general decay of public property

- vi. Gang membership as a mode of belonging and safety in numbers

Students may perform this in groups, taking turns from one group to the next, thus, creating a longer hip-hop “song.” If students are advanced, they may perform this over a pre-made track on a CD or recording. Tracks are available for sample or download at sites such as <http://music.download.com> (under Hip-hop...Beats).

5. Lead a participatory discussion, which includes the following possible questions:

- a. Describe the way that Hip-hop’s “Battles” took place.
- b. Carmen D’Alessio founded Studio 54. Describe the atmosphere inside that club.
- c. Who founded CBGB, and what did it stand for?
- d. Describe how Blondie became famous, and how this paved the way for punk popularity?
- e. Describe how Talking Heads were discovered.
- f. Review the atmosphere of CBGB’s and how punk bands interacted with each other.

6. Have students listen to music of artists highlighted in the program. These recordings can be downloaded or sampled from iTunes, or videos may be found at online sources such as YouTube. Teachers should screen all audio and videos in advance for appropriateness and authenticity. Suggested songs are as follows, and lyrics are included as supplemental resources.

- a. Listen to “I Wanna be Sedated” (1978) by The Ramones, followed by “Stayin’ Alive” (1977) by Bee Gees, and “It’s Like That” (1984) by Run-DMC.
- b. Describe, then compare and contrast the instruments and vocals in both songs.
- c. Describe, then compare and contrast the songs in terms of lyrics, topics, and moods.
- d. Evaluate the songs according to your personal preferences, backing your decisions with musically appropriate reasons.

Extensions:

Supplement the listening examples above with examples that artists released much later. Have students describe how the music and artists’ approaches to their styles have changed over the years. Ideas include the following:

Add “Wild Wild Life” by Talking Heads (1986) to the punk examples.

Add “Intergalactic” by Beastie Boys (1998) to the hip-hop examples.

DJ Caz and DJ Wiz described the Blackout and ensuing riots in New York. Listen to music that has reflected social situations during and after the Civil Rights Movement, Hurricane Katrina, etc. Throughout history, how has music played a part in coping with and recovering from tragedy?

Supplemental Resources:

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum devotes lesson plans and information that relate the impact of popular music on the Civil Rights Movement:
<http://www.rockhall.com/teacher/sti-lesson-1/>

As an educational Web site, this contains historical information, lyrics, and authentic sound samples. Recordings are of famous original groups, such as the SNCC Freedom Singers of the Civil Rights Movement:
<http://www.wesleyan.edu/afam/afam238/music.html>

An outgrowth of a non-profit cultural group, this Web site contains numerous links to African American music. The freedom songs page contains historical information, lyrics to Civil Rights songs, and links to sound files:
http://www.cocojams.com/freedom_songs.htm

This Web site from MENC: The National Association for music education, contains resources about the hurricane's effect on education, information on donations for children and music programs:
<http://www.menc.org/katrina/>

Launched by numerous musicians with several music industry partners, this site details the efforts of the campaign to raise money and awareness for the plight of music in post-Katrina New Orleans:
<http://www.musicrising.org>

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.

“I Wanna Be Sedated”
by The Ramones (1978)

Twenty-twenty-twenty four hours to go I wanna be sedated
Nothin' to do and no where to go-o-oh I wanna be sedated
Just get me to the airport put me on a plane
Hurry hurry hurry before I go insane
I can't control my fingers I can't control my brain
Oh no no no no no

Twenty-twenty-twenty four hours to go....
Just put me in a wheelchair, get me on a plane
Hurry hurry hurry before I go insane
I can't control my fingers I can't control my brain
Oh no no no no no

Twenty-twenty-twenty four hours to go I wanna be sedated
Nothin' to do and no where to go-o-o I wanna be sedated
Just put me in a wheelchair get me to the show
Hurry hurry hurry before I go loco
I can't control my fingers I can't control my toes
Oh no no no no no

Twenty-twenty-twenty four hours to go...
Just put me in a wheelchair...

Ba-ba-bamp-ba ba-ba-ba-bamp-ba I wanna be sedated
Ba-ba-bamp-ba ba-ba-ba-bamp-ba I wanna be sedated
Ba-ba-bamp-ba ba-ba-ba-bamp-ba I wanna be sedated
Ba-ba-bamp-ba ba-ba-ba-bamp-ba I wanna be sedated

“Stayin’ Alive”
by Bee Gees (1977)

Well, you can tell by the way I use my walk, I’m a woman’s man: no time to talk.
Music loud and women warm, I’ve been kicked around since I was born.
And now it’s all right. It’s OK. And you may look the other way.
We can try to understand the New York Times’ effect on man.

Whether you’re a brother or whether you’re a mother,
you’re stayin’ alive, stayin’ alive.
Feel the city breakin’ and everybody shakin’,
and we’re stayin’ alive, stayin’ alive.
Ah, ha, ha, ha, stayin’ alive, stayin’ alive.
Ah, ha, ha, ha, stayin’ alive.

Well now, I get low and I get high, and if I can’t get either, I really try.
Got the wings of heaven on my shoes. I’m a dancin’ man and I just can’t lose.
You know it’s all right. It’s OK. I’ll live to see another day.
We can try to understand the New York Times’ effect on man.

[Chorus]

Life goin’ nowhere. Somebody help me.
Somebody help me, yeah.
Life goin’ nowhere. Somebody help me.
Somebody help me, yeah. Stayin’ alive.

Well, you can tell by the way I use my walk, I’m a woman’s man: no time to talk.
Music loud and women warm, I’ve been kicked around since I was born.
And now it’s all right. It’s OK. And you may look the other way.
We can try to understand the New York Times’ effect on man.

[Chorus]

Life goin’ nowhere. Somebody help me.
Somebody help me, yeah.
Life goin’ nowhere. Somebody help me, yeah.
I’m stayin’ alive.
Life goin’ nowhere. Somebody help me.
Somebody help me, yeah.
Life goin’ nowhere. Somebody help me, yeah.
I’m stayin’ alive.

"It's Like That"
by Run-DMC (1984)

Unemployment at a record high
People coming, people going, people born to die
Don't ask me, because I don't know why
But it's like that, and that's the way it is

People in the world tryin' to make ends meet
You try to ride car, train, bus, or feet
I said you got to work hard, you want to compete
It's like that, and that's the way it is
Huh!

Money is the key to end all your woes
Your ups, your downs, your highs and your lows
Won't you tell me the last time that love bought you clothes?
It's like that, and that's the way it is

Bills rise higher every day
We receive much lower pay
I'd rather stay young, go out and play
It's like that, and that's the way it is
Huh!

Wars going on across the sea
Street soldiers killing the elderly
Whatever happened to unity?
It's like that, and that's the way it is

Disillusion is the word
That's used by me when I'm not heard
I just go through life with my glasses blurred
It's like that, and that's the way it is
Huh!

You can see a lot in this lifespan
Like a bum eating out of a garbage can
You noticed one time he was your man
It's like that (what?) and that's the way it is

You should have gone to school, you could've learned a trade
But you laid in the bed where the bums have laid
Now all the time you're crying that you're underpaid
It's like that (what?) and that's the way it is
Huh!

One thing I know is that life is too short
So listen up homeboy, give this a thought
The next time someone's teaching why don't you get taught?
It's like that (what?) and that's the way it is

If you really think about it times aren't that bad
The one that flexes with successes will make you glad
Stop playing start praying, you won't be sad
It's like that (what?) and that's the way it is
Huh!

When you feel you fail sometimes it hurts
For a meaning in life is why you search
Take the bus or the train, drive to school or the church
It's like that, and that's the way it is

Here's another point in life you should not miss
Do not be a fool who's prejudiced
Because we're all written down on the same list
It's like that (what?) and that's the way it is
Huh!

You know it's like that, and that's the way it is
Because it's like that, and that's the way it is



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.