

## 200 Greatest Pop Culture Icons

VH1 Music Studio  
Cable in the Classroom

Lesson for Music Classes, Grades 7-12

Lesson 4



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 discuss the style and characteristics of the Romantic and 20<sup>th</sup> century periods of music.
- Students will compare and contrast modern day popular icons to musical icons throughout history.

*NOTE to teachers: In Lesson 1 of this series, musical time periods are discussed in broad terms, giving the main points of each era and an “icon” of proportions comparable to modern day icons with which students are familiar. Lessons 2-4 delve deeper into the chosen time periods, while taking a closer look at present day “icons” that bring shared musical ideals to each generation. Lesson 4 provides activities that summarize the previous lessons*

#### 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.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
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
- Audio playback equipment
- VH1's *200 Greatest Pop Culture Icons*
- Web-based lesson materials
- Pencils/pens and paper (students)
- Students' completed Musical Styles and Composer/Artist worksheets from Lesson 1
- Teacher selected recordings of The Beatles, David Bowie, Bruce Springsteen, Charles Ives, Ludwig von Beethoven, and Philip Glass

### Prior Knowledge:

- Students have experience discussing various musical styles.
- Students have completed Lesson 1 of this portion of the series.

## Procedures

1. Ask students to refer to the Musical Styles worksheet from the previous lesson, this time focusing on the Romantic period. Use the following to guide the discussion:

As Classical reflected Baroque, the Romantic period was again a reflection on the previous Classical era. Romanticism brought expression and emotion and connected it to the structure of the Classical period. Beethoven is considered a “bridge” composer, because his style began in the Classical period and evolved into what others defined as the Romantic period.

Play teacher selected recordings of Beethoven, such as “Fur Elise”, to represent the Classical period, and then excerpts from “Missa Solemnis,” representing Romanticism. As students listen, request that they write down adjectives for each selection. Some examples for “Fur Elise” may be “melancholy,” “pretty,” and “repetitive,” while examples for “Missa Solemnis” may be “powerful,” “emotional,” and “intense.” Ask students if they are able to hear the differences between Beethoven’s stylistic periods, and have them describe the obvious changes. Why is Beethoven considered an icon in music history? Have students suggest several modern day artists who have “bridged a gap” between musical styles (Madonna, Billy Joel, Sting, Elton John, etc.).
2. Suggest to students that The Beatles can be considered “bridge” composers in the more modern idea of music. Early in the band’s career, their music was pure rock and roll, inspired by Elvis Presley and other American rock and rollers.
3. Show VH1’s *200 Greatest Pop Culture Icons*: Elvis Presley, #3, Hour 5; The Beatles, #12, Hour 5.
4. Play teacher selected recording of “I Wanna Hold Your Hand,” followed by “Dig a Pony” directly afterward. Have students write down similarities and differences between the two songs. Discuss with students the

ways in which the raw emotion is more clearly evident in “Dig a Pony” than in the naive “I Wanna Hold Your Hand.” Was the later form as structured as the former?

5. Explain to students that nationalism was a large part of the later Romantic period, as well as in much of 20<sup>th</sup> century music. Composers from Franz Liszt to Aaron Copland, from Antonin Dvorak to Ralph Vaughan Williams, used the folk music of their culture to enhance the already emotional music they composed. Even as 20<sup>th</sup> century music began its journey into atonal conquests, composers frequently quoted folk songs. If desired, play teacher selected recording of Charles Ives’ “They Are There!” (A War Song March).
6. Show VH1’s *200 Greatest Pop Culture Icons*: Bruce Springsteen, #76, Hour 4.
7. Lead students in a discussion of Springsteen’s music. He has been said to be a true American musician, a blue-collar representative of the workingman. With songs such as “Born in the U.S.A.,” released in the 1980s, Springsteen created a feel of patriotism during a time when Americans truly needed it.
8. Ask students to reflect on the developments of 20<sup>th</sup> century music. They should be aware that 20<sup>th</sup> century music (and beyond) has surpassed all existing boundaries. Use the following as needed:

Composers continuously argue over what is “real music,” whether traditional melodic phrasing surpasses new thought or originality. One composer who has pushed this ideal of new thought is Philip Glass. “Most upsetting to traditionalists was the lack of a narrative progression in Glass’ music...Because Glass’ music repeated and varied a very small library of basic musical ideas, the term “minimalism” began to be applied to it.” (from [www.philipglass.com](http://www.philipglass.com)) Glass has composed various types of musical works, from opera scores to orchestral pieces. He has also scored several movie soundtracks.

Play teachers selected recording of “Dreaming of Fiji” from *The Truman Show*. Ask students to try to categorize this music. Does it reflect any particular musical style?

9. Show VH1’s *200 Greatest Pop Culture Icons*: David Bowie, #147, Hour 2.
10. Tell students that David Bowie has been said to be the “original chameleon.” He is credited as the creator of “glamrock,” as the artist who first combined pop music and theatrics in order to invent a type of performance unique from anything that came before it. If desired, play teacher selected recording of David Bowie’s (as Ziggy Stardust) “Changes.” Ask students if they notice any similarities between Glass and Bowie. Both artists are experimental, transforming music into something entirely distinctive. Have students consider whether this classifies them as icons of their respective genres.
11. Guide students in reviewing the criteria they discussed in Lesson 1 that typically produce an “icon”. Would they add any criteria to the list now? Are “pop icons” a modern day creation, or have they been evident throughout time? Ask students to again consider the artist they suggested as an icon in Lesson 1, and comment on whether the class discussions have changed or confirmed their choice.

### **Summary Activity:**

Ask students to divide themselves into groups based on the musical time period they enjoyed learning about the most (teacher should try to maintain a balance in group numbers). Students should create a presentation that appropriately represents their chosen time period and present their projects to the class for discussion. Project should discuss the musical time period and identify icons from the time period. Some examples might be:

A. Baroque – drawing an ornament and writing the style of the music, the composers, etc.

- B. Romantic – using a previously learned song, enhancing the style through expression, or creating more emotional, personal lyrics.
- C. 20<sup>th</sup> Century – incorporating a patriotic song into a previously learned song and performing with uncommon instruments from their opera scene for the class.

Supplemental Resources:

Definitions, biographical, and historical information for the *200 Greatest Pop Culture Icons* lesson series has been excerpted primarily from the following sources:

- [www.webster.com](http://www.webster.com)
- [http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/the\\_greatest/68029/episode.jhtml](http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/the_greatest/68029/episode.jhtml)
- [http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/the\\_greatest/68030/episode.jhtml](http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/the_greatest/68030/episode.jhtml)
- [http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/the\\_greatest/68031/episode.jhtml](http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/the_greatest/68031/episode.jhtml)
- [http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/the\\_greatest/68032/episode.jhtml](http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/the_greatest/68032/episode.jhtml)
- [http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/the\\_greatest/68033/episode.jhtml](http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/the_greatest/68033/episode.jhtml)
- [http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/the\\_greatest/68034/episode.jhtml](http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/the_greatest/68034/episode.jhtml)
- [http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/the\\_greatest/68035/episode.jhtml](http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/the_greatest/68035/episode.jhtml)
- [http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/the\\_greatest/68036/episode.jhtml](http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/the_greatest/68036/episode.jhtml)
- [http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/the\\_greatest/68037/episode.jhtml](http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/the_greatest/68037/episode.jhtml)
- [http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/the\\_greatest/68038/episode.jhtml](http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/the_greatest/68038/episode.jhtml)
- Baroque Music: <http://baroque-music.com/frames/frames.shtml>

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.



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 Amy Rosenthal, Vocal Music, Cayuga Elementary, Lake Grove, NY.