



200 Greatest Pop Culture Icons



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.

Objective

- Students will review and discuss the definitions of “pop culture” and “pop culture icon.”
- Students will discuss the characteristics of a female role model.
- Students will evaluate role models and consider their qualifications for “pop icon” status.

National Standards for Music Education

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

Prior Knowledge:

- Completion of previous lessons in the *200 Greatest Pop Culture Icons* series is helpful, but not necessary for students to successfully participate in this lesson.

Procedures

1. Ask students to define the term “role model,” and give a few examples of prominent figures, past or present, that they consider to be good role models (Martin Luther King, Jr., Neil Armstrong, Presidents and/or First Ladies of the United States, etc.). To encourage discussion, tell students the Merriam-Webster Dictionary definition of “role model” is “noun: a person whose behavior in a particular role is imitated by others.”
2. Review the term “pop culture” with students (as previously discussed in lesson one of the first series). Have students name several people who could be associated with contemporary pop culture, musicians or non-musicians, and provide at least one reason why they could be considered role models. What particular behavior of theirs have others imitated or emulated?
3. Have students list the characteristics that could be attributed to a “role model”, based on the people they have named (has made great strides in a particular field, has helped others, works to improve themselves, etc.). Are there any traits that stand out among the women who were named? Are the characteristics that make women stand out as icons different from those that identify men as icons?
4. Show VH1's *200 Greatest Pop Culture Icons*: Halle Berry (Hour 1, #186), Rosie O'Donnell (Hour 1, #185), Whoopi Goldberg (Hour 2, #135), Tina Turner (Hour 2, #127), Grace Kelly (Hour 3, #87), Barbra Streisand (Hour 4, #66), Jennifer Lopez (Hour 5, #15), Princess Diana (Hour 5, #9), Madonna (Hour 5, #7), Oprah Winfrey (Hour 5, #1).
5. Lead students in a discussion of the women listed in step 4 and why they have been placed in the role of “pop icon.” (Biographies of Turner, Lopez, and Madonna are available at www.vh1.com.) The following summaries may be helpful.

Individuals:

Halle Berry: Began as a model; proved versatility and talent; first African-American actress to receive an Oscar.

Rosie O'Donnell: Works extensively for children.

Whoopi Goldberg: One of the first African American comediennes; crossed over successfully into acting.

Tina Turner: One of the first and strongest female rock and roll musicians; open about spousal-abuse; "come-back" performer; longevity.

Grace Kelly: Successful actress who left her profession to take a position among royalty; epitomizes "role model" by her beauty and grace.

Barbra Streisand: Comfortable in mediums of acting and singing on Broadway and in films; Jewish American; the "ultimate diva".

Jennifer Lopez: Dancer; entrepreneur; one of the first well-known Hispanic artists in recent years.

Princess Diana: Dignified; extensive charity work when other members of the royal family were not involved.

Madonna: Broke stereotypes of women in the business world; continuously evolves her image to maintain longevity; repeatedly a trendsetter.

Oprah Winfrey: One of the strongest businesswomen in history; multi-talented; a strong African -American role model.

Groups:

Halle Berry, Whoopi Goldberg, Tina Turner, Oprah Winfrey

Successful African-American women, in different veins of entertainment, creating breakthroughs and paving the way for future generations of African-American women.

Grace Kelly, Princess Diana, Rosie O'Donnell

"Real royalty" (Grace Kelly and Princess Diana) and a true sense of compassion exhibited through charity work and work with children (all three).

Barbra Streisand, Madonna, Jennifer Lopez

Successful business women who have stripped away all preconceived notions that women cannot work well in a "man's world."

6. Ask students to focus on the musicians listed among these icons (Turner, Streisand, Madonna, and Lopez). How have all four made great strides for women in music? (*The 100 Greatest Women in Rock and Roll* lesson series may provide helpful ideas and information.)
7. As a class, have students create a list of questions they would use to interview a woman about their own role model (Who is your role model? Why? What were/are their contributions that make you consider them a role model? etc.) The closing questions should focus on how they have attempted to emulate their role model, and how specifically the role model has or has not influenced their life. Students should then, as an outside activity, interview their mother, female teacher, or other adult female friend/family member using the questions developed by the class.
8. Have students share their interviews at a later date with the class and discuss them. Are the role models people with whom the students are familiar? Are the qualities exhibited by these role models, as described by the women who were interviewed, similar to those discussed during the original lesson? Could the role models also be called pop icons for their era? Ask students to consider how the attributes of female role models/pop icons have, or have not, changed over the years.

Supplemental Resources:

Definitions, biographical information, 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.vh1.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.



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.