



200 Greatest Pop Culture Icons

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.

Objective

- Students will identify the important part ragtime music played in silent films.
- Students will identify the origins of ragtime music in America.
- Students will analyze the musical form typical of ragtime music.

National Standards for Music Education

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)
- Chalkboard, overhead projector, chart, etc.
- Teacher selected recordings of ragtime music and Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag"

Prior Knowledge:

- Students are familiar with the term "pop icon."
- Students have prior experience discussing various musical styles and genres.
- Students understand basic musical terms such as tempo, instrumentation, dynamics, rhythm, syncopation, etc.
- Students have prior experience discussing musical form.

Procedures

1. As students enter the room, have a teacher selected recording of ragtime music playing in the background. When students are settled, ask if anyone can identify the style, or genre, of the music.
2. Lead students in discussing the origins of ragtime music, and have them take notes on their paper or in their notebooks. Use the following as needed:
 - Ragtime is thought to have originated with the cakewalk, which was an elegant, high stepping dance performed by slaves. The most common prize for the best dancing was a cake.
 - Ragtime is generally played on the piano.
 - Ragtime is characterized by a steady, march-like tempo played by the pianist's left hand, and a lively, syncopated rhythm played by the pianist's right hand.
 - In the beginning, many people did not accept ragtime because of its origins. They felt that the music was vulgar and obscene because it had roots in the African-American community, and in bars and bordellos.
3. Explain to students that ragtime music was often used to accompany silent movies, and ask them if they can name one of the biggest silent film stars, Charlie Chaplin.
4. Show VH1's *200 Greatest Pop Culture Icons*: Charlie Chaplin, #126, Episode 2.
5. Guide students in discussing Charlie Chaplin's controversial political views that were mentioned in the segment. Ask them to reflect on whether this could have contributed to his status as a pop icon. For what other reasons is he thought of as an icon? Lead students in making the connection between Charlie Chaplin's controversy, and the controversy over ragtime music in its early years.

6. Tell students they are going to experience how a pianist plays ragtime music. Divide the class into two sections, and have one section begin tapping a steady beat. Once the steady beat is established, lead the other half of the class in clapping a syncopated pattern.
7. After completing this exercise once, switch the groups. After the second time, explain to the class that the group tapping the steady beat was acting as the pianist's left hand, and the group clapping syncopated rhythms was acting as the pianist's right hand.
8. Explain to students that, as is often the case with classical music, ragtime generally follows a specific form or pattern. Write the following on the chalkboard, overhead projector, etc.:

Title: "Maple Leaf Rag" Composer: Scott Joplin
 Form: _____ A _____ _____ A _____ _____ D _____

9. Tell students' that the letters and blanks on the board represent the nine sections making up "Maple Leaf Rag." Each blank on the board represents a new section. As they listen to the piece, have them fill in the blanks with a letter - A, B, C, or D. Some sections are repeated, so when sections sound the same, they should label them with the same letter.
10. Play a teacher selected recording of Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag." It may be necessary to play it two or three times to allow students the opportunity to complete the exercise.
11. Lead students in a discussion of the musical form used in "Maple Leaf Rag." Which section repeats three times?
12. Have students discuss why ragtime music was an appropriate choice to accompany Charlie Chaplin's silent films. What elements of the music suited his character (rapid movement, lively, etc.)? Ask students to share their thoughts about how the music might have affected the popularity of the silent films, as well as that of Charlie Chaplin.

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 Michelle Barnes, General Music and World Drumming, Fall Creek Valley Middle School, Indianapolis, IN.