



VH1 News Presents:

Soundtrack to War
VH1 Music Studio
Cable in the Classroom

Lesson for Music Classes, Grades 6-8, Two Days

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 discuss the important role of music in lives of soldiers stationed in Iraq.
- Students will identify and demonstrate skills in creating compositions with limited resources, similar in concept to the soldiers viewed in the documentary.
- Students will work in teams.
- Students will be able to practice and perform an original composition in a controlled environment.

National Standards:

2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

Materials

- VHS VCR Player
- Television
- VH1's *VH1 News Presents: Soundtrack to War*
- Web-based lesson materials
- Pencils/pens and paper (students)
- “Base Camp” – Teacher led area with a focal point brainstorming board of some sort, whiteboard, blackboard, overhead projector, power point hookup, large paper easel, and writing utensil.
- “Barracks” – Three or four individualized areas created by teacher (practice room, corner room, stage area) with a pad of paper, a pencil, a music stand, and manuscript paper.

Prior Knowledge:

- Students are performing regularly in a full ensemble.
- Students are able to discuss, identify and define roles of instruments using appropriate vocabulary.
- Students are able to read and transcribe notation in their given clefs.

Procedures

Day One:

1. Begin class by directing the students to pay particular attention in the video to genres of music, what the songs were about, and how music and soldiers' emotions are tied together.
2. Review the video “Soundtrack to War.”
3. Discussion begins with teacher asking students to share their thoughts:
 - a. What types of music did the soldiers listen to? *Rap, R&B, Country, Heavy Metal, Gospel*
 - b. What were the soldiers who were writing music writing about? *Patriotism, loss of friends, fighting for their country, pride, doing what is right, religion*
 - c. Is there a connection between emotion and music?
 - d. Do you feel that the music in the video reflects the emotions of the soldiers? *Soldiers express their emotions through their music. They also use music to inspire and energize each other. For instance, some songs talked about fallen colleagues, other songs were used to energize the soldiers as they went into battle or crossed into Iraq. Others reinforced the importance of protecting the United States, etc*

Teachers should write the answers to the questions on the board to compare answers. From these answers, students extract main themes and then choose one theme as the “best” which will be the theme for Day Two. Themes could include things like “Music is inspirational,” “Music helps soldiers cope,” “Music is universal,” etc.

4. The teacher then directs the students into the next portion of the lesson where the class is divided into groups. It is suggested that the teacher evenly place students into three or four groups.

NOTE: A suggested grouping for a middle school band is as follows:

Flute 1	Flute 1	Flute 1
Flute 2	Flute 2	Oboe
Clarinet	Clarinet	Clarinet
Clarinet	Clarinet	Clarinet
Bass Clarinet	Bassoon	Bass Clarinet
Alto Sax	Alto Sax	Alto Sax
Tenor Sax	Tenor Sax	French Horn
Trumpet	Trumpet	Trumpet
Trumpet	Trumpet	Trumpet
Euphonium	Trombone	Tuba
Percussion	Percussion	Percussion

5. Allow each group to meet very briefly in their groups before the class ends. At this time, the teacher should reveal that in the next class each group will compose a melody expressing the theme decided upon by the class. Assign each group to a certain area where they will rehearse. They will perform the melody for each other at the end of the next class period.

Day Two:

1. Teacher meets with all students in a large group and reviews previous class discussion on the film.
2. Teacher introduces day's activity – students will compose an eight-measure melody as a group reflective of the chosen theme from VH1's "Soundtrack to War." Students decide tempo, meter, style, dynamics, etc. Each group can choose only three instruments to use in their melody. They can use any other musical techniques: their voices, hand clapping, anything in their areas to help them in composing their tunes. They have one music stand, a pad of paper, one pencil, and manuscript paper. Everyone must participate in the performance.
3. Allow students to disperse into their groups. The teacher should move from place to place to help the students when necessary. Remind students of time allotment, and help them organize concepts.
4. Organize students back into the larger group and ask each group to perform their original compositions for each other.
5. To conclude, ask students the following questions:
 - a. What have they learned from this process of creating music?
 - b. What difficulties did they experience in their groups? Example: Students may have had different interpretations of what the theme sounded like in musical form; restrictions on materials may have inhibited creativity, etc.
 - c. How did the use of dynamics, tempo, and instrumentation help to create the mood of the song?
 - d. How is that there was only one theme, yet there was a different melody from each group?

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 Natalie A. Walters, Director of Bands, Mexico Academy and Central Schools, Mexico, New York