



storytellers

VH1 Storytellers: Mary J. Blige

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.

Objectives

- Students will listen to various popular songs and determine the meanings behind the lyrics.
- Students will determine a theme common to all songs from a particular artist.
- Students will associate musical choice with lyrical choices.

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

- Television
- VCR/DVR/TiVO/DVD player
- VH1 *Storytellers: Mary J. Blige*

Prior Knowledge:

- Students should have researched background information on Mary J. Blige's music and career.

Procedures

1. Write the following question on the board before class starts: "What is the common theme among the songs of Mary J. Blige?"
2. Prepare students for listening. For each song, they should write the following:
 - The title of the song
 - The "story" and meaning behind it according to Mary J. Blige herself
 - Their own thoughts about the meaning of the lyrics, as well as favorite lyrics of their own
 - Ways that the meaning of the lyrics is reflected in the music
3. Start the VH1 *Storytellers: Mary J. Blige* program from the beginning. Students should take notes for each of the songs as they watch the video.
4. Stop the video approximately 10 minutes before the end of class.
5. Discuss the students' thoughts about the songs. Try to identify a common theme. For example, "They are all positive songs but reflect negative scenarios." Or "They are all about rising above negativity." How is Blige's life and career reflected in her songs?
words next to the six categories as they apply to the song. Ask if anyone recognizes this accompaniment and if they can identify what it is.
9. Play them "What You Won't do for Love." Note differences and similarities.
10. For homework, students should list other examples of sampling from classical and popular music. They should research and identify the original song that was sampled.

Supplemental Resources:

- Official Mary J. Blige website: <http://www.mjblige.com/>
- Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_J._Blige

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 Carl J. Ferrara, Edmund W. Miles Middle School, Amityville, NY.