



storytellers

VH1 Storytellers: Pearl Jam

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.

Objectives

- Students will compare and contrast two current songs of different genres and gain an understanding of what makes a genre.
- Students will learn to analyze the distinguishing features of the grunge genre in terms of its place in history, musical style, and aesthetic impact.
- Students will learn that lyric writing is a creative way of expressing a personal truth.
- Students will learn to paraphrase a Pearl Jam song.

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
- VH1's Storytellers: Pearl Jam (Cable in the Classroom edited version)
- Web-based lesson materials
- Student copies of Student Response Sheet for Segment One (provided below)
- Student copies of "Better Man" Lyric Interpretation Worksheet (provided below)
- CD Player/Audio Equipment (optional; see Step 1)
- Chalkboard
- Pens/Pencils (students)

Prior Knowledge:

- Students should have a basic knowledge of the elements of music – melody, harmony, form, rhythm, and color/texture.

Procedures

1. **What Makes a Genre?** Before introducing the meaning of genre, begin by comparing and contrasting two current musical artists from different genres that the students would know (see web link to VH1 current music chart for suggested artists). [Optional: Play various examples of current music.] Elicit responses from the students about the artist's musical style, instrumentation, presentation, and lyrics. Encourage them to be as specific as possible about the elements of music at play – melody, harmony, form, rhythm, and color/texture. Discuss the meaning and message of the lyrics as well as the visual presentation of the artists. Briefly touch on the historical place these artists might hold. Summarize the responses on the board.
2. Give the students a definition of genre (see Teacher's Guide below). Remark that the class just identified two genres (in Step 1), and now they will learn about another one called grunge. List the defining characteristics of grunge music (see Teacher's Guide below).
3. Show the juxtaposition of the grunge movement with 80's pop music (see Teacher's Guide). Relate to the class that grunge developed as a reaction against what came before it. It is important to mention that this is how new genres often form – by a collective desire to express truths in a new way. Tell them that the grunge movement emerged, to some degree, to express the nature of Generation X who up until that point went relatively unnoticed in the shadow of the Baby Boom.
4. Illustrate with photos how drastically different grunge was from 80's pop culture (see web links resources below). Also make a written list on the board of contrasting characteristics (see Teacher's Guide below).
5. Introduce Pearl Jam as one of the most influential grunge bands of the early 90's. They were strongly influenced by punk and rock bands of the 70's, and by artists like U2, Neil Young, Bob Dylan, Pete Townsend, and Bruce Springsteen who focused on a storytelling style and the human condition. Inform the class that Eddie Vedder is the lead singer and primary songwriter known for his unique vocal style, introspective narratives, and rabble-rousing political views. Tell the class they will learn that the inspiration for his music comes

from many sources, but his underlying passion is a quest for truth. Pearl Jam has evolved over the years experimenting in other genres that include reggae, folk, world music, and other forms of rock (see web link resources below).

6. Cue the video to the beginning and tell the students that they are about to be part of a unique Pearl Jam audience! While distributing the Student Response Sheet (see printable page below) and pencils, inform them that in the first video segment, Pearl Jam will perform two musically contrasting songs that were inspired from two different sources. Watch Segment One. They may jot down answers as they watch Segment One of VH1 Storytellers: Pearl Jam. Stop the tape for a minute just before “World Wide Suicide” to let the students quietly finish answering questions 1 – 4. Start the tape again and stop it at the end of Segment One. Give them a moment to finish questions 5 – 8. Have a short class discussion about the answers. Ask them what the different sources of inspiration for Eddie’s songs were: Personal? External? Is there a link between “Better Man” and “World Wide Suicide”? A teacher copy of the lyrics to “World Wide Suicide” is provided below.
7. Distribute the “Better Man” Lyric Interpretation Sheet (see printable lyric sheets below). What is this song about? Instruct the student’s to use the blank space on the right side of the page to paraphrase the lyrics of each song. Their task is to attempt to briefly describe the lyrics in their own way. Tell them to also answer the questions at the bottom of the page. Follow with a short discussion about the meaning of the lyrics and what the experience of paraphrasing a song is like (see Teacher Version below).
8. Ask your students to each think of a favorite song that means something to them and to bring the lyrics to the next class. If they have the means, they may play the song in addition to showing the lyrics. They should be prepared to tell what the song means to them and why they think it’s great!

Supplemental Resources:

- Main VH1 website: www.vh1.com
- Current Music Charts: <http://www.vh1.com/artists/charts/>
- 80s music information and photos:
http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/i_love_the_80s/series.jhtml
- Official Pearl Jam website: <http://www.pearljam.com>
- Sonymusic Pearl Jam website – another excellent source:
<http://www.sonymusic.com/artists/PearlJam/>
- Additional Pearl Jam information: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pearl_Jam
http://www.vh1.com/artists/az/pearl_jam/artist.jhtml
- Grunge information: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grunge#_note-1
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_g1epc/is_tov/ai_2419100545
http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/vh1_news_special/54354/episode.jhtml
http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/i_love_the_90s/series.jhtml

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.

Teacher's Guide for Lesson One

(for procedure 2)

Definition of Genre

genre 1. a class or category of artistic endeavor having a particular form, content, technique, or the like: *the genre of epic poetry; the genre of symphonic music.* (Dictionary.com)

(for procedure 2)

Characteristics of Grunge

- A genre of alternative rock inspired by hardcore punk, heavy metal, and indie rock
- Popular between 1991 and 1994
- Originated in the Pacific Northwest mainly by bands in Seattle
- Closely associated with Generation X
- Distinguished the popular music of the 1990s from that of the 1980s
- Musical characteristics:
 - o weighty “dirty” guitar, which is produced by playing heavily and loud with resonant distortion and feedback.
 - o strong riffs in instruments and vocals
 - o slower tempo and harmonic rhythm than in punk and metal
 - o heavy drumming
 - o often has soft verses followed by loud choruses
- The overall musical effect is a dense texture or wall of sound in which all parts vie for foreground exposure.
- Lyrics are emotionally angst-filled, and deal with anger, depression, frustration, sadness, and fear, typically appealing to teen audiences.

Teacher's Guide for Lesson One, cont.

(for procedure 2)

Examples of 80's Pop culture vs. Grunge

80's

commercial
synthetic
glam
androgynous
synthesizers
obvious melodic layers
clean production
prerecorded
processed
rich
Baby Boomers
mass marketed
material
futuristic garb
prefabricated
self absorbed
polished

90's Grunge

grassroots
organic
unkempt
masculine
basic rock band instruments
dense vocals/ screaming
"dirty"
live
natural
poor
Gen X - baby boom shadow
isolated
introspective
grungy flannel shirts, jeans, Doc Martens
intolerant
satirical
raw

Student Response, Segment One – Teacher Version

1. Circle the one that best describes what you knew, before today, about Pearl Jam.

Never heard of
'em.

The name rings
a bell

I'd heard one or
two songs.

I've got all
their albums

I'm in the band.

2. What is the first thing you notice about the band?
3. Eddie Vedder tells us, "Never let the **truth** get in the way of a good **story**."
4. What seems to be most important to Eddie Vedder as a songwriter?
Finding the truth
5. What additional meaning does Eddie say "Better Man" has taken on over time?
It has taken on a political bent that the country's relationship with the President is the same as any other abusive relationship.
6. When do you think the song "World Wide Suicide" was composed?
It was composed in 2006.
7. Is it grunge? Why or why not?
Yes. (see list of grunge characteristics)
8. What is "World Wide Suicide" about? Can you hear the lyrics?
It is about the senselessness of war.
9. A number of Pearl Jam's songs are similar in that they are narratives. Where is the narrator sitting?
Behind the wheel of a moving vehicle. What else does Eddie say about that? It's not so much where they're headed, but what they're getting away from.
10. Describe Eddie's voice range and quality. **Deep, powerful, resonant, baritone, gritty.**
11. What does Eddie say about grunge? **Nothing. (Most grunge bands have disliked the label.)**

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2. What is the first thing you noticed about the band?

3. Eddie Vedder tells us, "Never let the _____ get in the way of a good _____."

4. What seems to be the most important thing to Eddie Vedder as a songwriter?

5. What additional meaning has "Better Man" taken on over time?

6. When do you think "World Wide Suicide" was written?

7. Is it grunge? Why or why not?

8. What is "World Wide Suicide" about? Can you hear the lyrics?

9. A number of Pearl Jam's songs are similar in that they are narratives. Where is the narrator sitting? What else does Eddie say about that?

10. Describe Eddie's voice range and quality.

11. What does Eddie say about grunge?

“Better Man” Lyric Interpretation -Teacher Version

“Better Man” (lyrics)
Waitin’, watchin’ the clock, it’s four o’clock, it’s got to stop
Tell him, take no more, she practices her speech
As he opens the door, she rolls over...
Pretends to sleep, as he looks her over
She lies and says she’s in love with him, can’t find a better man...
She dreams in color, she dreams in red, can’t find a better man...
Can’t find a better man
Can’t find a better man

Ohh...

Talkin’ to herself, there’s no one else who needs to know...
She tells herself, oh...

Memories back when she was bold and strong
And waiting for the world to come along...
Swears she knew it, now she swears he’s gone
She lies and says she’s in love with him, can’t find a better man...
She dreams in color, she dreams in red, can’t find a better man...
She lies and says she still loves him, can’t find a better man...
She dreams in color, she dreams in red, can’t find a better man...
Can’t find a better man
Can’t find a better man

She loved him, yeah...she don’t want to leave this way
She needs him, yeah...that’s why she’ll be back again
Can’t find a better man (can’t find a better man)
Can’t find a better man (can’t find a better man)
Can’t find a better man (can’t find a better man)
Can’t find a better...man...

A mistreated woman (Eddie’s Mother) loses her nerve to end an abusive relationship.

Instead, she tries to convince herself that she’s better off to stay with him than to leave him and risk being alone.
But her higher standards of life find her in her dreams.

She tries to reconcile the situation. She’s afraid, and maybe ashamed, to tell anyone.

The woman remembers being young and strong and idealistic about her future.

But she quickly goes back to compromising, and defends her reasons for staying with him.

She tells herself that she loved him once, and is afraid to rock the boat. She’s lost her independence.

1. This is a song about denying the truth and not having the courage to follow one’s heart.
2. A political interpretation might be, “It’s better to have the President you know than the President you don’t know.”

“Better Man” Lyric Interpretation Worksheet**“Better Man” (lyrics)**

Waitin', watchin' the clock, it's four o'clock, it's got to stop

Tell him, take no more, she practices her speech

As he opens the door, she rolls over...

Pretends to sleep, as he looks her over

She lies and says she's in love with him, can't find a better man...

She dreams in color, she dreams in red, can't find a better man...

Can't find a better man

Can't find a better man

Ohh...

Talkin' to herself, there's no one else who needs to know...

She tells herself, oh...

Memories back when she was bold and strong

And waiting for the world to come along...

Swears she knew it, now she swears he's gone

She lies and says she's in love with him, can't find a better man...

She dreams in color, she dreams in red, can't find a better man...

She lies and says she still loves him, can't find a better man...

She dreams in color, she dreams in red, can't find a better man...

Can't find a better man

Can't find a better man

She loved him, yeah...she don't want to leave this way

She needs him, yeah...that's why she'll be back again

Can't find a better man (can't find a better man)

Can't find a better man (can't find a better man)

Can't find a better man (can't find a better man)

Can't find a better...man...

1. This is a song about _____
2. A political interpretation might be, _____

"World Wide Suicide" 2006 Pearl Jam

I felt the earth on Monday. It moved beneath my feet
in the form of a morning paper. Laid out for me to see.

Saw his face in a corner picture. I recognized the name.
Could not stop staring at the. Face I'd never see again.

It's a shame to awake in a world of pain
What does it mean when a war has taken over

It's the same everyday in a hell manmade
What can be saved, and who will be left to hold her?

The whole world,... world over.
It's a worldwide suicide.

The whole world,... world over.
It's a worldwide suicide.

Medals on a wooden mantle. Next to a handsome face.
That the president took for granted.
Writing checks that others pay.

And in all the madness. Thought becomes numb and naive.
So much to talk about there's. Nothing for to say.

It's the same everyday and the wave won't break
Tell you to pray, while the devil's on their shoulder

Laying claim to the take our soldiers save
Does not equate, and the truth's already out there

The whole world,... world over.
It's a worldwide suicide.

The whole world,... world over.
It's a worldwide suicide.

Looking in the eyes of the fallen
You got to know there's another, another, another, another
Another way

It's a shame to awake in a world of pain
What does it mean when a war has taken over

It's the same everyday and the wave won't break
Tell you to pray, while the devil's on their shoulder

The whole world,... world over.
It's a worldwide suicide.

The whole world,... world over.
It's a worldwide suicide.



These standards-based materials are provided through a partnership with MENC: The National Association for Music Education. This lesson plan was created by MENC, Jennifer Wilson, Composer, Author, Music Educator, Los Angeles, CA