



music studio

LESSON PLAN

storytellers

VH1 Storytellers: Wyclef Jean

A VH1 Save the Music Special

VH1 Music Studio

Cable in the Classroom

Lessons for High School School Music Classes

Lesson 4 of 4

(Note to teachers: Please view this videotape for appropriateness for your classes. Some of the lyrics have sexual innuendo and others mention a violent end to the life of a drug dealer.)

Objective

Students will identify elements in reggae style, a style that is a main influence on hip-hop music.

Students will identify forms that preceded and influenced reggae (mento, rhythm and blues, ska, and rock steady), perform the "back-beat" rhythm, and describe the Carribean historical and culture context of reggae.

National Standards: Content Standard 9--Understanding music in relation to history and culture: Students identify and explain the stylistic features of a given musical work that serve to define its aesthetic tradition and its historical or cultural context.

Materials

Videotape of VH1 Storytellers Wyclef Jean.

- Television and VCR
- Worksheet printed out from the end of this lesson
- Recording of "Hallelujah Time" or "I Shot the Sheriff," performed by Bob Marley and the Wailers, on Burnin', Tuff Gong/Island 422-846200
- Recordings of Roots of Reggae: Ska, Rhino CD 72438; and Roots of Reggae: Rock Steady, Rhino CD 72439
- Recording of "Mango Time" (mento), on Carribean Island Music, Elektra/Nonesuch 72047

- Selected rhythm and blues recordings of Otis Redding, Sam Cooke, or Brook Benton
- Audio-playback equipment
- Map of the Caribbean and the southeastern United States
- Chalkboard

Prior Knowledge and Experiences

Students have experience playing blues.

Students have studied the influence of African music on the music of the western hemisphere.

Procedures

1. Have students view and listen to the video Wyclef Jean: Storytellers.
2. Tell students that Wyclef Jean was born in the Caribbean island of Haiti, moved to South Florida while a child, and then grew up in Brooklyn. He and his cousin, Pras, formed the group the Fugees with Lauryn Hill, becoming hip-hop stars with their second album, 1996's *The Score*. This album blended reggae with jazz-rap and rhythm and blues. On *The Score*, Wyclef and Pras perform Bob Marley's reggae piece "No Woman No Cry." (The Fugees, short for refugees, is often used to describe Haitian immigrants and can be a term of derision.)
3. Play a reggae recording (see Materials) and help students identify reggae by its distinctive rhythms: the prominent bass "riddim," the "back-beat" emphasis on beats 2 and 4 and the "laid-back" (moderate) temp. Also review the form, harmony, lyrics, and vocal style of reggae.
4. Teach students how to play the back-beat rhythm. On a single chord, have students play down and up strums in 4/4/ meter, first using quarter notes and then eighth notes. Then have students insert a rest on beats 1 and 3, playing down and up eighth notes on beats 2 and 4. To create the silence required by the rest, have students dampen the strings, rotating the right hand clockwise (toward the bridge) so that the little finger and side of the hand touch all strings, thus stopping vibration and sound.
5. Display a map of the Caribbean, having students identify Haiti, Jamaica and other neighbors. Note the area's proximity to Florida. Present key information about Jamaica's history. Explain that Jamaica was colonized by the Spanish in the sixteenth century, and the first African slaves were brought to the island at that time. Note that in a conflict from 1655 to 1660, the British conquered Jamaica. During the war, many slaves took to the mountains and began a long fight for independence, and they came to be known as the Maroons. Have students decide how reggae's lyrics reflect the social conditions of Jamaica.
6. On the chalkboard, draw a diagram showing the styles and elements that influenced reggae. Play an excerpt of each style:
 - 1) mento (rhumba rhythm) + R&B (slick vocal harmonies)
 - 2) ska (early 60s: vibrant, dance music)

3) rock steady (about 1966-68: steadier beat and slower tempo than ska; lyrics reflecting social consciousness)

4) reggae (about 1968: slower tempo than rock steady; lyrics more serious than in ska, reflecting modern Jamaican religious thinking)

7. Summarize with students what they have learned about reggae, its historical and cultural roots, and its musical predecessors. Review the back-beat rhythm.

Indicators of Success

Students identify the elements of reggae style.

Students identify and describe how other forms (mento, rhythm and blues, ska, rock steady) influences reggae.

Students accurately perform the back-beat rhythm.

Students describe Jamaican history and culture in relation to reggae and its creators.

This lesson is adapted from *Strategies for Teaching Middle-Level and High School Guitar*, Compiled and Edited by William E. Purse, James L. Jordan, and Nancy Marsters (MENC, 1998).

VH1, in partnership with Cable in the Classroom, collaborated with MENC: The National Association for Music Education to develop this series of lessons.



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.