



THE ROOTS OF ROCK AND ROLL: AN AMERICAN JOURNEY (5-8)

GET READY TO ROCK! A PRE-VISIT GUIDE FOR THE CLASSROOM TEACHER

TARGET GRADE LEVEL:

Grades 5-8

CLASS DESCRIPTION:

In the 1950s, a new and electrifying musical style called rock and roll swept the airwaves and grabbed the hearts of teenagers across the United States. This revolutionary music actually grew from strong roots in older styles such as blues, gospel, country, and rhythm and blues. Students examine classic video performances and recordings to see how musicians brought these earlier musical styles together, and in the process, connected diverse aspects of American culture. Students explore the various geographical regions of the United States, focusing on several key cities where the roots of rock and roll flourished. Students will dig deeper into the cultural meanings behind this music and analyze musical characteristics of each style.

OBJECTIVES:

As a result of this class, students will be able to

1. Identify Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Inductees who represent diverse communities and varied regions that contribute to music heritage in the United States.
2. Perform varied styles and forms of popular music representing the roots of rock and roll.
3. Give examples of people, products, and ideas that move from place to place and impact American culture.

RELATED OHIO ACADEMIC CONTENT STANDARDS:

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Acquisition of Vocabulary

5-7 Benchmark A

8 Benchmark A

Reading Process: Concepts of Print, Comprehension

Strategies and Self-Monitoring Strategies

5-7 Benchmark B, C

8 Benchmark A, B

Reading Applications: Literary Text

5-7 Benchmark E

8 Benchmark F

Communication: Oral and Visual

5-7 Benchmark A

8 Benchmark A

SOCIAL STUDIES

People in Societies

5 Benchmark A

6-8 Benchmark C

9-10 Benchmark A

Geography

5 Benchmark A, B, D

6-8 Benchmark B, D

FINE ARTS—MUSIC

Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts

5-8 Benchmark A, B, C

Analyzing and Responding

5-8 Benchmark A, C

Valuing Music/Aesthetic Reflection

5-8 Benchmark A

Connections, Relationships and Applications

5-8 Benchmark B



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SUGGESTED PREPARATION ACTIVITY:

WHAT IS AMERICAN POPULAR MUSIC?

Have your students explore this question by investigating the musical styles or groups of varied time periods that have been associated with different regions and/or ethnic communities of the United States. Possibilities include Delta blues, Appalachian ballads, zydeco, polka, Western swing, conjunto, bluegrass, salsa, or others. Consider the music's key artists, featured instruments, and any related dance styles. Examine how each musical style grew in the U.S. in association with communities in particular places, and collectively make a timeline to show when each style was developed. (For example, students choosing zydeco would research its origins in Louisiana; founding artists, including Amédé Ardoin; instruments used, such as accordions and washboards, etc.) Conclude by having students plan a trip across the U.S., indicating what music they would learn about in each city or town based on class projects.

EXAMPLES TO BE DISCUSSED IN CLASS:

NOTE: Preview all materials for appropriateness for your students.

Robert Johnson. "Cross Road Blues." 1937.

Muddy Waters. "Got My Mojo Workin'." 1957.

Rolling Stones. "Now Look What You've Done." *December's Children (And Everybody's)*, 1965.

Johnny Cash. "I Walk the Line." 1956.

Janis Joplin. "Me and Bobby McGee." *Pearl*, 1971.

Fisk Jubilee Singers. "When I Was Sinkin' Down."

Mahalia Jackson. "Come On Children, Let's Sing." 1967.

Alicia Keys. "Fallin'." *Songs in A Minor*, 2001.

Free, streaming videos of most performances can be found on www.youtube.com or blip.fm

Free, streaming audio tracks of most songs can be found on www.grooveshark.com or blip.fm



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GLOSSARY

Blues: A kind of song often with verses of three-lines each and special musical patterns from African American musical traditions

Chorus: The line or lines that are repeated in music often with the same musical accompaniment

Country: Songs with special musical patterns from traditions in rural and mountain communities in the southern and western United States, often featuring stringed instruments

Culture: The customary beliefs, social patterns, and creative products shared by a group of people

Gospel: Religious music of African-American Christians that emerged in urban centers during the early decades of the twentieth century; gospel music informed a style often called “southern gospel” rooted in musical traditions of predominantly white Protestants in the southeastern U.S.

Great Migration: Historical term for mass migrations of African Americans from rural areas to cities from around 1915 to 1970

Musical style: Musical patterns or trends in songs and performances of a number of artists, often used to classify musical genres

Racial segregation: The discriminatory separation of people based on racial categories and enforced by laws, institutional policies, and customs

Region: An area that includes smaller places, usually sharing similar features of land, weather, and/or customs

Rock and roll: African American slang dating back to the early 20th Century. In the early 1950s, the term came to be used to describe a new form of music, steeped in the blues, rhythm & blues, country and gospel. Today, it refers to a wide variety of popular music.

Verse: A section of lyrics that tells part of the song’s story and is similar to a verse in a poem