Early Influence Portrait

Background

Rock & roll grew from strong roots in older styles such as blues, gospel, country, and rhythm & blues. Through exploring the music and histories of the musicians who influenced early rock & roll, students will learn about the people behind the music and better understand the origins of the genre.

You Will Need

- Recordings of songs by early influence musicians
- Portrait worksheet
- Questions worksheet (optional)

Procedures

1. Select recordings of songs by musicians who influenced or participated in early rock & roll. Several suggestions are included below. You may also find playlists and biographies of Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Inductees in the Early Influences category at https://www.rockhall.com/inductees.
3. Play selected recordings for the class. Have students describe the music they hear and then investigate what style(s) of music the artist(s) performs.
4. Ask students to create a portrait of their performer. They may choose to draw, paint, or create a collage of their chosen artist, and may use the attached worksheet.
5. Have students include instruments important to their artist, such as a guitar, harmonica, microphone, or drum set.
6. Students may choose to contextualize their performer by including a picture of his or her state, region, or city.
7. Older students may learn more about their chosen musician by answering questions about that artist (see attached worksheet).
Suggested Songs
Note: Preview all materials for appropriateness for your students.

- Ma Rainey, “Jelly Bean Blues” (1924)
- Jimmie Rodgers, “Blue Yodel No.1 (T is for Texas)” (1927)
- The Carter Family, “Keep on the Sunny Side of Life” (1928)
- Bessie Smith, “St. Louis Blues” (1929)
- Robert Johnson, “Cross Road Blues” (1937)
- Ink Spots, “If I Didn’t Care,” (1939)
- Big Mama Thornton, “Hound Dog” (1952)
- Bill Haley and His Comets, “Rock Around the Clock” (1954)
Early Influence Portrait Activity

Draw, paint or create a collage of your early influence musician in the frame below.
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Find out more about your favorite early influence musician by answering the following questions.

What is your musician’s name? ______________________________________

When was your musician born? ______________________________________

What instrument did your musician play? ______________________________

What kind of music did your musician play? _____________________________

What are some famous songs by your musician? _________________________

What does this music sound like to you? ________________________________

If you could ask your musician one question, what would you ask?

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