



LESSON PLAN

Level:	Grades 9 to 12
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The Function of Music

Overview

This lesson examines how music reflects and influences societies and is a metaphor for ideas and experiences. Students begin by brainstorming the functions or purposes of music and by discussing music's power as a mirror and a symbol. A special focus will be made on the use of music to sell - how advertisers use the power of music to create bonds between consumers and products. As a group activity, students will create and present multi-media, musical collages, based on the functions of music that they have brainstormed.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- develop an awareness of the functions of music in the community and beyond
- explore how the context that a musical composition is created in affects the work
- understand how music can transcend its genre and become a symbol of an historical time, an historical event, an aspect of popular culture or a group of people
- understand how music both reflects and affects societies

Preparation and Materials

- *Prior to this lesson, obtain books on music history from your school library*
- *Bring in samples of music that reflect some of the categories of music listed below*
- *Tape some ads that use jingles or accompanying music*

Note: If you have access to a computer, many songs and musical compositions can be listened to online. It's worth conducting an online search prior to class.



Procedure

Class Discussion

Ask students to list as many functions or purposes of music that they can think of and record their suggestions on the board. Some functions would be, for example:

- as personal expression
- as communication
- to uplift human spirit
- for religious purposes
- for group identity
- as a way to pass on traditions
- to sell a product
- to enhance film
- to increase nationalism
- as propaganda
- for dance
- as a form of protest
- as an agent of social change
- to tell a story

Play the musical samples that you have brought to class and discuss how each selection might be used for a specific purpose. (For example, using a National Anthem to instill patriotism, using David Foster's theme for the Olympics to create enthusiasm and identity for the Olympics, or using a song like "Tears Are Not Enough" to raise money for African relief.)

Music as a Mirror

Music suggests much about the society in which it is created. Whether it is a traditional song of an Indigenous people, a Strauss waltz, a gospel song or a rock video, music reflects a culture. It expresses experience and also affects experience, creating feelings and responses in the listener. Like many art forms, music mirrors society, sometimes raises questions about society's norms and values, and sometimes has the power to bring about change.

When this happens, music can serve a purpose that it was not necessarily intended for. For example, popular music has been known to create an identity for groups of people. Songs that were popular during World War II helped unify soldiers and those at home - for example, songs by Vera Lynn, such as "We'll meet again." "The Moldau" by Smetana was used as a resistance song during the Nazi occupation and Verdi's "Aida" was also used as an unofficial protest.



- Discuss how and why groups of people, including the students themselves, sometimes tend to be identified with certain types of music. (Categories might include heavy metal, punk, hip hop, new wave, rap, alternative music, etc.)
- Ask students to evaluate some of the positive and negative results of this type of categorization.
- Does this kind of identification stereotype students? If so, what are the stereotypes associated with specific music genres?

Music and Symbolism

Songs and music may eventually become symbols for a particular group of people, a place or historical event. (A few examples from popular culture might include popular television show and movie scores and signature tunes used by show business personalities.)

- Have students think of melodies that have become symbols. Try to determine how this happens.
- Specifically, can students think of musical symbols that have become associated with modern historical events?
- Some music is considered a symbol for a whole generation. For the parents of students, artists such as Bob Dylan, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones created much of the music that embodied what it was like to be a teen in the 1960s. Ask students to imagine themselves looking back twenty years from now on the handful of artists whose music will represent their generation. Who do they think those artists will be? Which songs will become the anthems that symbolize their generation?

Music and Advertising

One function of music is to sell products. This is most often done through advertising jingles, although popular music may also be co-opted for this purpose.

According to *Ad Age*, the top ten advertising jingles of all time are:

1. You deserve a break today (McDonalds)
2. Be all that you can be (U.S. Army).
3. Pepsi Cola Hits the Spot (Pepsi Cola).
4. M'm, M'm good (Campbell's).
5. See the USA in your Chevrolet (GM).
6. I wish I were an Oscar Meyer Wiener (Oscar Meyer).
7. Double your pleasure, double your fun (Wrigley's Doublemint gum).
8. Winston tastes good like a cigarette should (Winston).
9. It's the Real Thing (Coca Cola).
10. Brylcreem -- A little dab'll do ya

(Ask students if they can sing along with any of them!)



Listen to, or view, the musical ads that have been brought to class and discuss the following with students.

- How does the music in a particular advertisement help to sell the product? (If using a TV commercial, teachers might want to play the ad first without music, and then with music, to gauge their students' impressions.)
- Ask students to determine if there are any similarities between the product being sold and the music; for example, toy racing cars and fast tempo music.
- For ads that use jingles or original music, discuss how the elements of music and principles of composition have been used by the composer to achieve the desired purpose.
- If there isn't anything obviously similar between the product being sold and the music, what are the producers trying to accomplish with the music? (Beer commercials are examples of these sorts of ads.)
- In ads like beer ads, what kind of image are advertisers trying to create?
- How does the accompanying music support this image?
- What are some examples of ads that use hit music?
- How do you feel when advertisers use popular music to sell products? (Especially music that has symbolic meaning to a particular generation, like when Michael Jackson - who owns the rights to the song - sold John Lennon singing "Revolution" to Nike, or when Bob Dylan sold the rights to "The Times They Are A-Changin'" to an accounting firm.)
- What do advertisers hope to achieve when they use music in this manner?

Activity

In groups, students will select a function of music theme from the board. Each group will create a ten-minute musical collage based on this theme, which will be presented to class. Groups will integrate visuals (such as pictures or slides) and other audio effects (such as a poetry reading or accompanying dialogue) into their presentations.

Extension Activity

Pop Music Critiques the Media

This extension activity - which is intended to encourage students to think about the way music is produced and consumed - is well suited to media education classes.

- Ask students to find three songs from different musicians who have critiqued the media.
- Once this is done, ask students to copy out the lyrics.
- Identify and explain the media issues that are raised by each song.
- Compare the songs in terms of how effective the song medium is in addressing these issues.
- Are there any lyrics in pop music which take a positive view of the mass media and popular culture?



Here's a few ideas to get things started:

- Disposable Heroes of Hypocrisy: "Television, Drug of a Nation"
- Bruce Springsteen: "57 Channels (And Nothing On)"
- Public Enemy: "She Watch Channel Zero?"
- Don Henley: "Dirty Laundry"
- The Police: "Too Much Information" (About media overload.)
- The Buggles: "Video Killed the Radio Star" (This was the first video that MTV ever played.)
- Gil Scot-Heron: "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised"
- Public Enemy: "Politics of the Sneaker Pimps" (Addresses sports licensing.)
- Public Enemy: "How to Kill A Radio Consultant"
- The Clash: "This is Radio Clash" (A concept for a pirate radio station featuring alternative media.)
- Public Enemy: "Burn Hollywood Burn" (Explores portrayals of black people in Hollywood movies.)

Evaluation

- Group presentations
- Pop Music Critiques the Media Assignment (optional)

