



Jazz In America: The National Jazz Curriculum

www.jazzinamerica.org

Lesson Plan #1 - What is Jazz

- TOPIC:
1. Course Introduction
 2. What is Jazz
 3. Jazz, an Integral Part of American History and Culture

STANDARDS:

National Standards for United States History (Grades 9-12)¹

Historical Thinking

Students should be able to:

1. draw upon visual, literary, and musical sources. (Historical Comprehension Standard 2g)
2. compare and contrast differing sets of ideas, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions (Historical Analysis and Interpretation Standard 3b)
3. consider multiple perspectives (Historical Research Capabilities Standard 3d)
4. hypothesize the influence of the past (Historical Analysis and Interpretation Standard 3j)
5. obtain historical data (Historical Research Capabilities Standard 4b)

Historical Content (Contemporary United States)

Students should be able to:

1. demonstrate understanding of how diverse peoples and their cultures have shaped American life (Major Social and Economic Development in Contemporary America Standard 2a)
2. demonstrate understanding of contemporary American culture (Major Social and Economic Development in Contemporary America Standard 2e)

¹ National Center for History in the Schools, UCLA

National Standards for Arts Education (Music Grades 9-12)²

Content Standard #9 - Understanding Music in Relation to History and Culture

Students:

- a. classify by genre or style and by historical period or culture unfamiliar but representative aural examples of music and explain the reasoning behind their classifications
- b. identify sources of American music genres, trace the evolution of those genres, and cite well-known musicians associated with them
- c. identify various roles that musicians perform, cite representative individuals who have functioned in each role, and describe their activities and achievements
- d. identify and explain the stylistic features of a given musical work that serve to define its aesthetic tradition and its historical or cultural context
- e. identify and describe music genres or styles that show the influence of two or more cultural traditions, identify the cultural source of each influence, and trace the historical conditions that produced the synthesis of influences

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

The student will:

1. gain an understanding of the course requirements
2. gain a basic understanding of why jazz is included in the study of American history/social science
3. listen to portions of several recordings from *The Instrumental History of Jazz* and/or the web site
4. gain a fundamental understanding of what jazz is (and what it is not), how, where, and by whom it originated, musics it has influenced (and been influenced by), and its universal appeal
5. consider the disparity between American ideals and realities with regard to civil rights in American history
6. become acquainted with Duke Ellington and Thelonious Monk

EQUIPMENT:

1. CD player
2. chalkboard (with chalk and eraser)
3. overhead projector (optional)
4. computer logged onto www.jazzinamerica.org (optional)

² MENC: The National Association for Music Education

MATERIALS:

1. *The Instrumental History of Jazz (IHJ)*
 - a. two CDs
 - b. accompanying booklet
2. Student Handouts (one per student)³
 - a. Course Introduction (course description/requirements/syllabus)
 - b. two American History (AH) Student Handouts: *Jazz Musicians as Cultural Intermediaries* and *The Disparity Between American Ideals and Realities*
 - c. Jazz Biographies (JB) handout (Thelonious Monk and Duke Ellington)
3. Overhead projector transparencies⁴

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES:

The instructor will:

1. distribute student handouts
2. introduce the course and its requirements
3. play six diverse jazz recordings (30-90 seconds each), discussing with the students what they heard
4. have students read and discuss the Student Handouts, *Jazz Musicians as Cultural Intermediaries* and *The Disparity Between American Ideals and Realities*
5. examine the biographical sketches of jazz musicians Thelonious Monk and Duke Ellington
6. discuss the basics of jazz and its relationship to American 20th century history and culture, giving the students a point of departure for the remainder of the course

ASSESSMENT: Test Bank⁵

1. Multiple Choice
2. Fill-in-the-Blank
3. True-False
4. Matching
5. Essay

³ Student handouts may be down loaded from the Jazz in America website (www.jazzinamerica.org), printed, and photocopied.

⁴ Any material from the Jazz in America website (www.jazzinamerica.org) may be down loaded, printed, and made into a transparency as the instructor sees fit.

⁵ A test bank including assessments in five forms -- multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, true-false, matching, and essay – is included on the Jazz in America website (www.jazzinamerica.org); the instructor may utilize any or all the forms as he/she sees fit.

OUTLINE

I. Course Introduction

A. Description

1. an introduction to the history of jazz and its contribution to and reflection of American culture in the 20th century
2. a survey of the evolution of jazz styles from its inception to the present, contributions of important performers and composers, and musical techniques involved in the creation and performance of jazz

B. Requirements -- Students are required to:

1. attend class lecture/discussions
2. listen to jazz recordings
3. read assigned material (student handouts and/or the web site)
4. keep an organized notebook of handouts and class notes
5. take several quizzes (multiple choice, short answer, true-false, matching, and/or essay)

C. General Syllabus

1. What is Jazz
2. Elements of Jazz
 - a. improvisation
 - b. rhythm
 - c. sounds and instruments associated with jazz
 - d. harmony
 - e. form
3. Jazz's Roots, New Orleans, Ragtime, and Dixieland (1900-1930)
4. Big Band Swing (1930s)
5. Bebop (1940s)
6. Cool and Hard Bop (1950s)
7. Avant Garde/Free Jazz; Fusion (1960-1990)
8. Jazz Today; Jazz Tomorrow (1990-2000+)

II. Jazz Recordings

A. Play a portion of the following six recordings (30-90 seconds each); announce tune title and artist only; ask student to write down impressions (anything at all) about each recording.

1. *Birdland*, Weather Report (IHJ) or *Chameleon*, Herbie Hancock (Web)⁶
2. *Maple Leaf Rag*, Scott Joplin (IHJ) or *The Entertainer*, Scott Joplin (Web)
3. *Shaw 'Nuff*, Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker (IHJ) or *Blue Monk*, Thelonious Monk (Web)
4. *Full Force*, Art Ensemble of Chicago (IHJ) or *Lonely Woman*, Ornette Coleman (Web)
5. *Mister Magic*, Grover Washington (IHJ) or *Change of Heart*, David Sanborn (Web)
6. *One O'clock Jump*, Count Basie Orchestra (IHJ) or *Main Stem*, Duke Ellington Orchestra (Web)

⁶ IHJ = selection is found on Willie Hill's *The Instrumental History of Jazz*; Web = selection is found on the Jazz in America website (www.jazzinamerica.org)

- B. Discuss with students what they heard (anything goes at this point, e.g., different instruments, rhythms, emotions, etc.); Finally: what do all these such diverse tunes have in common?
It's all jazz; it all reflects America.

III. What is Jazz (and what it is not)

- A. Jazz is musical conversation: a partly planned and partly spontaneous musical dialogue among the musicians who are performing it.
- B. While performing (or practicing), jazz musicians utilize the inspiration of the moment, their knowledge of music theory, life experience, social, political, and economic surroundings, technical savvy on their instruments, and, especially, all the music (particularly jazz and blues) they have ever heard that has influenced them (even the most avant-garde jazz artists reflect, in some way, the music of their musical forefathers). Jazz is a music of the present moment, anchored lovingly and respectfully in the past.
- C. Jazz is a newcomer to music -- unlike symphonic music, folk music, opera, Eastern music, etc., jazz is only a century old.
- D. Jazz was born out of the Black experience in America, basically fusing African and European musical traditions. Evolving from slave work songs, spirituals (religious Black American folk songs), blues, brass band music, and ragtime (a rhythmically sophisticated piano style), jazz first appeared in the culturally diverse city of New Orleans in the early 1900s.
- E. African Americans devised the major elements of jazz in its formative years and were the primary pioneers of stylistic changes in later decades. Today, jazz is performed, innovated, and listened to by people all over the world from virtually every ethnicity, religion, and culture.
- F. Jazz has influenced and been influenced by other musics: rock, rap, country, funk, Latin, classical, blues, gospel, African, Eastern, pop, folk, hip-hop, etc., etc.⁷ Jazz, while extremely diverse and all encompassing is, however, its own unique art form. It is more about the *way* the music is played rather than *what* is played (more on this later).
- G. As far as musics go, jazz is relatively complex; there are many musical, technical, intellectual, and emotional elements happening simultaneously (more on this later). Jazz makes far more demands on the listener than do most popular styles which are fundamentally simpler than jazz, requiring less from the listener. The more one knows about jazz (i.e., how to listen, its history, evolution of its styles, key players, forms, relationship to American history and culture, etc.), the more one can appreciate and enjoy it, even possibly gaining insight into his/her humanity via aesthetic experience -- jazz's ultimate goal.
- H. Although complicated, the core of jazz is about feeling, not intellectual definition.

IV. Jazz - America's Music

- A. Jazz is America's indigenous art form, having its birth and evolution in the United States. In 1987 the Joint Houses of Congress passed a resolution declaring jazz an American National Treasure. Jazz masters have been honored in Washington DC (as well as throughout the country), appeared on postage stamps, etc.

⁷ Jazz and rock are not necessarily mutually exclusive as the fusion movement in the 70s and 80s combined the best elements of both.

- B. Jazz is everywhere; it is an ingrained element of American styles and attitudes.
1. nightclubs and concert halls
 2. sidewalks and subway stations
 3. elementary, middle, and high school classrooms; college classrooms
 4. television and film soundtracks; television commercials
 5. records, CDs, and the radio
 6. in America's slang and jargon (see jazz jargon glossary)
- C. Throughout America's turbulent 20th century, jazz has entertained, interested, affected, and inspired Americans; it has contributed to and been a reflection of American culture.
1. Jazz has inspired more praise and more controversy than any other American music
 2. Jazz musicians have been utilized as cultural intermediaries and American ambassadors (see American History Student Handout 1)⁸
 3. Jazz, more than any other music, has been closely associated with the geographical, social, political, and economic affects of American cities as well as the fluctuating reputation of American culture throughout the world
 4. Jazz, more than any other music, has been intimately linked with legal and social equality for all, particularly African Americans
 5. Jazz emerged out of ragtime at the turn of the century during a tumultuous period of urban and industrial growth
 6. In the 20s, jazz symbolized the cultural struggle between modernists and traditionalists
 - a. this period in American history has been coined the "Jazz Age"
 - b. as the "new" jazz music was, in part, a rejection of what traditionalists thought music was "supposed" to be, it was a metaphor for the rejection of Victorian values which dominated 19th century American life
 7. In the 30s, jazz reached new levels of sophistication in the Swing Era, reflecting America's need for self-esteem following the Great Depression
 8. The World War II era witnessed rapid changes in American tastes as well as logistics of making music (e.g., the decline of large ensembles in favor of the jazz combo was, in part, due to economic and social reasons)
 9. In the late 50s and 60s, avant-garde and free jazz reflected America's social and political changes and the loosening of strict standards of behavior
 10. Today, jazz is universal; it is performed and listened to by people from virtually every ethnicity, religion, and attitude -- a reflection of the world becoming "smaller" (via technology and mass communication) and, perhaps, of the planet's best intentioned striving to bring its peoples together

⁸ Student handouts may be down loaded from the Jazz in America website (www.jazzinamerica.org), printed, and photocopied.