



***Jazz In America: The National Jazz Curriculum***  
**www.jazzinamerica.org**

**Lesson Plan #3 – Jazz’s Beginning**

TOPIC: Jazz’s Beginnings

1. Roots
2. Ragtime
3. Early Jazz (Dixieland)

STANDARDS:

**National Standards for United States History (Grades 9-12)<sup>1</sup>**

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Historical Content

Students should be able to:

1. demonstrate understanding of African life under slavery (Colonization and Settlement Standard 3c)
2. demonstrate understandings of Social Darwinism, race relations, and the struggle for equal rights and opportunities (The Development of the Industrial United States, 1870-1900 Standard 2b)
3. demonstrate understanding of how diverse peoples and their cultures have shaped American life (Major Social and Economic Development in Contemporary America Standard 2a)
4. demonstrate understanding of contemporary American culture (Major Social and Economic Development in Contemporary America Standard 2e)

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<sup>1</sup> National Center for History in the Schools, UCLA

### **National Standards for Arts Education (Music Grades 9-12)<sup>2</sup>**

#### Content Standard #6 - Listening to, Analyzing, and Describing Music

Students:

- a. analyze aural examples of a varied repertoire of music, representing diverse genres and cultures, by describing the uses of elements of music and expressive devices
- b. demonstrate extensive knowledge of the technical vocabulary of music
- c. identify and explain compositional devices and techniques used to provide unity and variety and tension and release in a musical work and give examples of other works that make similar uses of these devices and techniques
- d. demonstrate the ability to perceive and remember music events by describing in detail significant events occurring in a given aural example
- e. compare ways in which musical materials are used in a given example relative to ways in which they are used in other works of the same genre or style
- f. analyze and describe uses of the elements of music in a given work that make it unique, interesting, and expressive

#### 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 a fundamental understanding of jazz’s roots and their hybridization in New Orleans in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century
  - a. African Roots
  - b. European Influences
  - c. blues, dance music and parade bands, and ragtime
2. gain a fundamental understanding of Early Jazz (Dixieland) - 1900-mid 1920s

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<sup>2</sup> MENC: The National Association for Music Education

3. learn the basic definition of several terms associated with jazz
  - a. blues
  - b. break (AKA stop time)
  - c. collective improvisation
  - d. combo
  - e. ensemble
  - f. mute
  - g. polyrhythm
  - h. ragtime
  - i. solo/soloist
4. listen to ragtime and early jazz recordings
5. become acquainted with Louis Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke
6. participate in a class discussion regarding jazz’s contribution to and reflection of American culture in the first quarter of the 20th century

EQUIPMENT:

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

MATERIALS:

1. *The Instrumental History of Jazz*
  - a. two CDs
  - b. accompanying booklet
2. Student handouts (one per student)<sup>3</sup>
  - a. chapter glossary
  - b. two American History (AH) handouts: *Slavery in America* and *Jim Crow America*
  - c. *Primarily African/Primarily European Influences on Jazz* chart
  - d. Ragtime Characteristics
  - e. Early Jazz Characteristics
  - f. time line (first quarter of the 20th century)
  - g. *Important Jazz “Firsts”*
  - h. Jazz Biographies (JB) handout (Louis Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke)
3. Overhead projector transparencies<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Student handouts may be down loaded from the Jazz in America website ([www.jazzinamerica.org](http://www.jazzinamerica.org)), printed, and photocopied.

<sup>4</sup> Any material from the Jazz in America website ([www.jazzinamerica.org](http://www.jazzinamerica.org)) may be down loaded, printed, and made into a transparency as the instructor sees fit.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES:

The instructor will:

1. distribute student handouts
2. discuss how the Black experience in America led to the development of a distinct African American culture
3. discuss jazz’s roots and their hybridization in New Orleans in the early 20th century, defining terms associated with jazz as needed
  - a. African influences
  - b. European influences
  - c. blues
  - d. dance music and parade bands
  - e. ragtime
4. discuss Early Jazz (Dixieland)
5. have students read and discuss the student handouts, *Slavery in America* and *Jim Crow America*
6. discuss how new interpretations of the Fourteenth Amendment legalized segregation
7. examine the biographical sketches of Louis Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke
8. play significant recordings of ragtime and early jazz
  - a. *Maple Leaf Rag*, Scott Joplin (IHJ) or *The Entertainer*, Scott Joplin (Web)<sup>5</sup>
  - b. *Dippermouth Blues*, King Oliver/Louis Armstrong (IHJ) or *Working Man Blues*, King Oliver/Louis Armstrong (Web)
  - c. *Dixie Jazz Band One Step*, Original Dixieland Jazz Band (IHJ) or *Livery Stable Blues*, Original Dixieland Jazz Band (Web)
9. lead a class discussion regarding jazz’s contribution to and reflection of American culture in the first quarter of the 20th century

ASSESSMENT: Test Bank<sup>6</sup>

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

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<sup>5</sup> ”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](http://www.jazzinamerica.org))

<sup>6</sup> 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](http://www.jazzinamerica.org)); the instructor may utilize any or all the forms as he/she sees fit.

## OUTLINE

### I. Jazz’s African roots

- A. from 1619 to well into the 1800s, slaves were brought to America from Africa’s Gold and Ivory Coasts where music played a *functional* (not artistic) role: work songs, spiritual songs, healing songs, fertility songs, etc.
- B. while those involved in the slave trade strived to strip everything away from their victims (freedom, names, possessions, family members, etc.), they, for the most part,<sup>7</sup> allowed them to keep their music as "a singing slave, was a happy slave" and, therefore, would be less likely to cause an uprising
- C. traits found in jazz that are of primarily African origin include:
  1. rhythm, especially polyrhythms (i.e., one rhythmic pattern superimposed upon another)
  2. expressive (i.e., "vocal") quality when playing or singing
- D. Blues
  1. evolved from slave field hollers and African American folk songs
  2. usually characterized by plaintiveness and melancholy, a slow tempo, lyrics in the form of paired couplets in iambic pentameter, and intensity and passion
  3. utilizes extremely expressive and emotional "vocal" quality even when played instrumentally, e.g., pitch bending, portamento (a musical term that represents a vocalist or instrumentalist "gliding" from note to note rather than articulating each note separately), whining, etc.

### II. Jazz’s European roots

- A. contrary to the basic concept of African music as functional music, the basic concept of European music was art (and entertainment) music
  1. both concepts are essential to jazz
  2. jazz is unquestionably art music; however, it has been and continues to be utilized as functional music as well (e.g., for dancing, atmosphere background music, even funeral music in the 1920s); it has been performed everywhere from the most prestigious concert halls (e.g., Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Los Angeles Music Center, The John. F. Kennedy Center, etc.) to the lowliest night clubs and bars
- B. traits found in jazz that are of primarily European origin include:
  1. instruments (saxophone, trumpet, trombone, piano, bass, etc.)
  2. harmony (most chord progressions utilized in jazz compositions are essentially European in origin)
- C. Dance Music and Parade Bands
  1. pre-jazz dance bands of the late 19th and early 20th century primary function was playing for dances, parties, picnics, and funerals
  2. typical instrumentation consisted of cornet, clarinet, trombone, bass, guitar, drums, and violin

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<sup>7</sup> Certain slave owners feared that the slaves’ music could be used to cause a rebellion. For instance, the Slave code of South Carolina in the 1700s banned African drumming fearing it might be used to communicate the particulars about a slave revolt.

3. late 19th and early 20th century dance bands played the popular dances of the day including waltzes, polkas, and quadrilles (high society dance), that is, music with a steady beat
4. parade band music provided exhilaration and a sense of non-discipline to the music that was eventually to be called jazz

### III. Ragtime (1896-1917)

- A. Ragtime was the direct precursor to jazz
- B. Primarily a solo piano style<sup>8</sup> that incorporated military march like steady time in the left hand and syncopated (i.e., "ragged") melodies in the right
- C. Ragtime reflected both African and European musical traditions
  1. African
    - a. complex right-hand syncopation derived from polyrhythms (several different rhythms played simultaneously)
    - b. ragtime was developed and first played primarily by African Americans and was a source of pride to African American composers, musicians, and listeners
    - c. the most prominent ragtime composer in history was Scott Joplin
  2. European
    - a. the piano itself was of European origin
    - b. written musical notation
    - c. left-hand march beat
    - d. standard European chord progressions
- D. Ragtime’s Cultural Implications
  1. ragtime was developed in response to and reflected the "balance" of American attitude in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20th century
    - a. the recognized and cherished American traditions (e.g., conservatism, motherhood, rural life) was symbolized by the piano itself (a "classical" instrument) and ragtime’s simple left-hand march rhythms
    - b. new fast pace living (e.g., expansion of lively public leisure, excitement of diverse urban populations and pleasures, etc.) was symbolized by ragtime’s ragged complex right-hand syncopation
  2. ragtime was enjoyed by both European and African-Americans as it reflected the full gamut from conservative to liberal attitudes (note: music is in the ear of the beholder)
    - a. conservative example: ragtime was performed on the piano, a white middle class symbol of nostalgia and status
    - b. liberal example: ragtime’s syncopations, derived from Black musical traditions, reflected the exciting pace of modern industrial life
- E. Play *Maple Leaf Rag*, Scott Joplin (IHJ) or *The Entertainer*, Scott Joplin (Web)

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<sup>8</sup> While ragtime was primarily a solo piano style, ragtime bands later emerged which performed ragtime music in a combo setting.

IV. Early Jazz (Dixieland); 1900-1928<sup>9</sup>

A. New Orleans - considered the birthplace of jazz; Why (social, economic, political, and geographical reasons):

1. New Orleans was a seaport city
  - a. meeting place for many different ethnic groups and cultures
  - b. market for music and entertainment
  - c. much work available in a port city
2. New Orleans had a liberal atmosphere
  - a. strong influence of French, Spanish, West Indian traditions and Catholic religious attitudes
  - b. no prohibitions against drums, known in certain circles as "devil" instruments
  - c. different attitude towards African Americans; pride in being a cosmopolitan, sophisticated city
  - d. African Americans had more mobility
3. long-standing tradition of music and entertainment
  - a. from Congo Square in the 19th century to present day Mardi Gras
  - b. Congo Square provided performance opportunities for African music
4. Storyville (a district of New Orleans) provided places for pre-jazz and early jazz groups to perform: houses of prostitution, cabarets, saloons, dance halls, etc. (1897-1917)
5. reinterpretation of the 14th Amendment to justify segregation
  - a. forced downtown and uptown (Creoles) African Americans together, depriving the Creoles of their privileged status
  - b. the Creoles had conservatory training, good instruments, and the pop market (balls and other social events); the downtown African Americans had a long-standing vocal tradition with no preconceived notion about what was or was not possible on instruments

B. The music

1. typical instrumentation: trumpet or cornet, clarinet, trombone, piano, tuba or string bass, banjo, drums
2. each instrument has an assigned role (carry-over from the brass bands)
  - a. trumpet/cornet: melody
  - b. clarinet: embellishes the melody
  - c. tuba/string bass: bass lines
  - d. embellishes bass line, sometimes plays melody or afterbeats (adding to the rhythm, adds sound effects such as smears and slides
  - e. piano and banjo have the dual function of providing chordal (harmony) and rhythmic accompaniment
  - f. drums (via military style drumming): keep a steady tempo, provide rhythmic accompaniment, and set up breaks<sup>10</sup> via fills

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<sup>9</sup> All styles of jazz from Dixieland to contemporary are still being performed and recorded today; all style dates given are approximations of when each respective style came to the forefront of jazz and experienced its most concentrated development; of course, styles and dates overlap.

<sup>10</sup> *break* (AKA *stop-time*): the part of a tune in which everyone stops playing except for a soloist who improvises a short solo

3. tune sources
    - a. ragtime tunes
    - b. military music
    - c. religious music
    - d. classical music (overtures, operas, etc.)
    - e. popular tunes of the day
    - f. blues tunes
    - g. original tunes (music written specifically to be played in the jazz style)
  4. characteristics and performances practices
    - a. everybody plays all the time except for the solos which occur in during the breaks (besides adding musical interest and allowing each soloist the opportunity to show off his musical prowess, the breaks also serve a functional purpose in that they give the other players a chance to rest)
    - b. collective improvisation, i.e., everyone is improvising at the same time (very little, if any, written music)
    - c. simple harmonies (simple chords)
    - d. improvisation based on embellishing the melody
    - e. usually learned by ear (not by reading music)
    - f. dramatic effects proliferate: slides, trills, vibrato, mutes<sup>11</sup> (e.g., bathroom plunger mute for wah-wah effect); influenced by vocal tradition
  5. reasons for style losing its popularity
    - a. stylistically static; once the style was established, there was very little room for growth and exploration
    - b. as great soloists emerged (such as Louis Armstrong), more emphasis was placed on the solo and less on collective improvisation
  6. most important musicians of this style:
    - a. King Oliver (trumpet)
    - b. Louis Armstrong (trumpet)
    - c. Jelly Roll Morton (piano)
    - d. Bix Beiderbecke (trumpet)
  7. first jazz recording: *Livery Stable Blues*, Original Dixieland Jazz Band (an all-white group), 1917
- C. Play examples of Early Jazz
1. *Dippermouth Blues*, King Oliver/Louis Armstrong (IHJ) or *Working Man Blues*, King Oliver/Louis Armstrong (Web)
  2. *Dixie Jazz Band One Step*, Original Dixieland Jazz Band (IHJ) or *Livery Stable Blues*, Original Dixieland Jazz Band (Web)
  3. *Jelly Roll Blues*, Jelly Roll Morton (Web)
  4. *Singin' the Blues*, Bix Beiderbecke (Web)

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<sup>11</sup> A mute is an attachments inserted into the bell of a horn (particularly trumpets and trombones) which reduces an instrument’s volume and changes its tone color (different kinds of mutes offer different alterations of an instrument’s general sound); bathroom plungers have been used as mutes providing the "wah-wah" effect heard most commonly in Dixieland and Swing music.