

# The Influence of Music Television on Behaviors and Social Identities

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## Overview:

This unit asks students to think critically about music videos. Students will examine and analyze the different genres of music videos to determine what type of messages are being conveyed and to what extent they may have an influence on real life behaviors, situations and social identities. This unit has been designed to enhance the acquisition of basic academic skills, problem solving and critical thinking for students in grades 9 through 12, while linking visual arts with core curriculum topics such as English. The aim will be for students to observe the many images they encounter every day with a more critical and discerning eye.

## Rationale:

“A wise man once said that a picture is worth a thousand words. But, when visual symbols are used in place of words to express an idea--or to evoke a feeling or a mood within us-- it is necessary for the viewer to be able to understand the message” (Oring 1).

We live in a media-saturated, high tech society that is relying more and more on the use of visual images as a means of communication. Today the term literacy must also include visual, computer and media as well as print literacy. As children grow they begin to encounter a wider assortment of visual images in their daily activities and also from magazines, billboards, television and movies. It is important for children to understand that images are sometimes used to manipulate people and that these images can easily be altered with the use of digital technology. They must learn that these images are powerful enough to persuade us to buy certain products or encourage us to behave in a particular

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way. Children need to be able to differentiate between information and misinformation, truth and fabrication.

I teach at West Philadelphia High School, which is a predominantly minority and low-income inner city school. The student population is 97.9% African American, 0.5% White, 0.5% Asian, 1% Latino and 0.2% other. 15.7% are receiving Special Education Services and 2.4% receive ESOL Services. According to the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA 2005) 74.9% are Below Basic in Math and 76.5% are Below Basic in Reading. West Philadelphia High School has been designated as a Title-I school, which identifies students as being at-risk for educational failure. This Title-I legislation dictates that all students should receive an education that develops their skills in problem solving and advanced thinking and goes beyond the acquisition of basic proficiencies. Yet, the prescribed approach doesn't seem to promote reasoning, independent thinking or problem solving and it also leaves very little room for the use of an interdisciplinary method to learning.

Traditional teaching of students who have been characterized as at-risk has often focused on discrete skills (such as spelling or punctuation), used rigid instructional strategies and narrow curricula. Special pull out programs are used to teach such basic skills. Recent findings indicate that by not encouraging at-risk students to use complex thinking skills, schools underestimate the students' capabilities, postpone interesting and meaningful work they could be doing, and deprive them of a meaningful context for learning and using the skills that are taught. (Barbara Means 1). Rather than treating basic skills as an obstacle to be overcome, research suggests that the use of technology would enhance engaged learning and give the students the opportunity to learn and practice basic skills in the context of working on authentic tasks (Barbara Means 1).

Many of my students present unique challenges when it comes to learning the required high school curriculum. They have been labeled as needing learning support, they tend to be indifferent to the subject matter and they have not been able to see the relevancy of school in their daily lives. Often their basic academic skills are low, they question their capability to learn anything meaningful and for the most part they are just bored with school. However, I find that when my students are presented with what they consider to be more relevant material, they tend to take a more active role in their learning. Through the years I have discovered that if I use what is familiar and of interest to my students as a hook, I am able to improve their fundamental skills, raise their level of confidence and increase their motivation to learn new material that is part of the required curriculum.

Visual Art has always been a part of the framework and foundation of a culture and the link to civilizations-past and present. "For much of human history, people have used art to represent their systems of belief, and to record important events in the lives of individuals and their communities" (Jaja 1). The arts are a basic medium of human understanding and communication. The need to learn to read visual images is an urgent

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one that exists at all levels of our society and the place to begin teaching the understanding of visual images is in our schools (Oring 1). The advent of computer technology has hastened the development of new images. “New technology controlled by computers combines words, pictures and sounds to convey information at a breathtaking pace. Computers, with their power to manufacture and animate images are creating entirely new art forms” (Harold Williams 1).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to be educated will mean to be visually literate. Using visual arts along with technology will help students practice core curriculum subjects such as language arts, science and math in the context of broader learning goals. Ernest Boyer of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching said it best, “The arts are essential parts of the human experience, they are not a thrill. We recommend that all students study the arts to discover how human beings communicate not only with words, but through music, dance and the visual arts” (Harold Williams 2)

Music has also played an important role in learning and the communication of culture. We often use music to define our beliefs and convictions and are attracted to music which affirms and supports these beliefs and convictions (Michael Rich 3). Children’s television has used the combination of words, music and animation to promote learning for many years. Most parents seem to be concerned about what their young children hear and see, but tend to pay less attention to the unending media exposure that their children are confronted with daily as they grow older, especially music videos.

According to the National Institute on Media and the Family, music videos are the media of choice for many adolescents and they spend between three and four hours per day listening to music which includes radio, CD’s, and music videos. Music helps adolescents define important social and interpersonal behaviors and can have an impact on a teenager’s attitudes, beliefs and judgments. It affirms and confirms a teenager’s struggles, joys, sorrows, fears, and fantasies (Michael Rich 3). Music is often a major part of a teenager’s separate world and it is common for them to get pleasure in keeping adults out or causing adults some distress with their choices. However, they don’t seem to be aware that music videos can have an influence on what they wear, how they act and what they think. Teenagers, in particular, look to media images for standards of dress, hairstyle, behavior and cultural practices (Burns & Martinez 1).

There are many who believe that some of the themes of music videos are too destructive and negative, especially when they reach a vulnerable and impressionable audience such as teenagers. The Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry states that the troublesome lyrics of some teen music advocate and glamorize the abuse of drugs or alcohol, display graphic violence and devalue women. The latest single release by Bubba Sparxx is such an example. Paul Porter of industryyears.com has been especially vocal against the video and felt that the marketing campaign was helping Bubba’s single get more airtime around the country. The marketing campaign had young women submitting

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crude pictures of their bodies to the website for a chance to appear in his future video. In spite of the negative feedback he has received, Bubba feels that his video is not degrading women in any way and that there's nothing negative about it.

**Comment [EE1]:** Something like this fairly describes what he did without being too focused on salacious details.

Michael Rich of the American Academy of Pediatrics testified before the United States House of Representatives about the effects of various media entertainment on the physical and mental health of children and adolescents. While he believes that there are many opportunities to learn and be entertained from media, how people interpret media images and messages can also be a contributing factor to a variety of public health concerns. Research shows that the key areas of concern for children and adolescents are:

- Aggressive behavior and violence; desensitization to violence (public and personal)
- Substance abuse and use
- Nutrition, obesity and dieting
- Sexuality, body image and self concept
- Advertising, marketing and consumerism

The American Academy of Pediatrics strongly opposes censorship. It believes that artists should have the right to address and express any issue any way that they choose. Although music videos are considered a form of artistic expression, artists have been censored if their content is deemed too offensive. Duran Duran, Madonna and 2 Live Crew are examples of artists that have been censored on a number of occasions. What may be thought to be offensive differs from country to country depending on the censorship laws, local customs and ethics. The American Academy of Pediatrics advocates for more child-positive media and feels that as a society, we all have a responsibility to pay attention to the associations that have been observed between music content and health concerns. They recommend awareness and sensitivity to the potential impact of music lyrics and videos as one way to address this issue.

Music television is regarded as a significant force in popular culture; however, critics disagree about the destructive potential of music videos. Eric Boehlert believes that Eminem may be the most violent, woman hating, homophobic rapper ever. Yet most music critics are wildly enthusiastic about the rapper's work and eagerly explain away his psychopathic subject matter and foul lyrics as shocking youthful rebellion and simply exercising his creative impulses (Eric Boehlert 5). Jimmy Iovine from Interscope Records thinks Eminem may push the envelope a little bit, but he is a great lyricist and a serious artist (Jimmy Iovine 1). As a way of developing thinking skills, it is important for students to read opposing viewpoints and come to their own conclusions about the value (or the lack thereof) of a music video.

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Research about the cause and effect relationship between violent or sexually explicit lyrics and adverse behavioral effects is still quite limited, although some research studies do suggest that music videos may have a significant behavioral impact. The hit song by D.J. Jazzy Jeff and Fresh Prince is an illustration of how the messages contained in popular music are vividly portrayed in music videos, and how these messages reflect the consumption concerns of teenage viewers. The song and video entitled “Parents Just Don’t Understand” relates the experiences of a teenager shopping with his parents for back-to-school clothes. The inappropriateness of the parents’ selections is juxtaposed with cool alternatives. All of the elements needed for modeling to occur are present: an attractive character that is similar to the viewer, clearly defined behaviors, and meaningful consequences. (Englis, Solomon, Olfsson 2)

Today anyone who is involved with urban teenagers or “ghetto culture” (Krohn, Suazo 1) has been exposed in some capacity to contemporary popular urban music and is aware that the lyrics and imagery have elicited a variety of critical responses and controversy. Parents, educators, politicians, clergy and other citizen groups are concerned about the effect it has on U.S. Black Culture. Many have condemned rap music because they relate it directly to violence and drug use and other anti-social behaviors. Supporters of this genre say that it is attacked because society does not consider it a real art form and because it is dominated by Blacks (Krohn, Suazo 4).

Rap music has been phenomenally successful during the past decade and “There are a lot of people who have made a very large living off of exploiting African American culture and selling some of the most cartoon-like fashions of it, from stand-up comics to filmmakers and rappers.” (Joyce Jones 1) From one perspective Rap has contributed to our society, giving minorities a means of release and expression. Rappers are not simply making up stories with a rhythmic pattern; they are narrating what they see or have personally experienced (Krohn, Suazo 4). Many hip-hop artists profess in their lyrics and videos to be simply speaking the truth about their realities. Songs by rappers such as Jay-Z, Eminem, and Ludacris consistently grace the music charts with their hypnotizing beats and saucy lyrics. The theme of such songs as often mentioned by rappers is “Keeping it real.” But “keeping it real” comes with a hefty price including defying history and degrading women at the expense of being a successful rapper (Heaggans 1).

According to Tricia Rose, rap music is the central cultural vehicle for open social reflection on poverty, fear of adulthood, the desire for absent fathers, frustrations about black male sexism, female sexual desires, daily rituals of life as an unemployed teen hustler, safe sex, raw anger, violence, and childhood memories (Rose 18). In his essay, “Understanding Rap as Rhetorical Folk-Poetry” Brent Wood discusses Rap’s ties to earlier forms of African-American folk-poetry and analyzes the conventional structures of rhetoric, rhythm, and rhyme within which Rap artists operate. He states that a number of critics have begun to explore rap from a variety of perspectives. Richard Shusterman presents a case for Rap as a postmodern art form by focusing on the music’s

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technological aesthetic and rampant intertextuality. Houston Baker's *Rap, Black Studies and the Academy* treats the roles of race and class in determining attitudes toward Rap. Russell Potter's *Spectacular Vernaculars* pulls back the various facades of Rap to reveal an inspiring subversive politics (Wood 1).

Rap and Hip-Hop are sometimes used interchangeably. Some people have suggested that Rap music was a conduit to educate people about the issues of race, poverty and social injustice with which Blacks and Latinos were faced. On the other hand, Hip-Hop serves as an exploitation of sexist, patriarchal, and misogynistic ways of behaving and thinking (Heaggans 1). According to Henry A. Rhodes, "Rap music is an American minority artist creation of which students need to be proud. Unfortunately, Rap music is not perceived by many Americans as an art form, but as a fad which they hope will soon fade away." (Henry A. Rhodes 1).

MTV (Music Television) has undergone several phases since its inception in 1981. During its most recent phase it began to diversify its musical offerings, most notably into rap, dance music and heavy metal. To some extent these genres have been segregated into their own program slots. (Museum of Broadcast Communications 1) With 70% of American households receiving cable television, most teenagers have access to MTV and VH-1, the most important outlets for music video programming in the United States. Teenagers watch an average of a half hour to two hours of music videos daily. Research has shown that when music lyrics are illustrated in music videos, their potential impact is magnified.

The intent of this unit is not to guide students towards a particular position or influence a specific opinion or to moralize from the adult perspective with regards to music videos. The purpose is to have students look critically at the many visual images they are confronted with on a daily basis, particularly music videos. It is important that teenagers understand that music videos, commercials, magazines, advertising and other visual images are created to speak to an audience, whether that audience is conscious of the values embedded therein. The ability to analyze these images will give young people the power to choose their own values over those that may be promoted by popular culture.

## Objectives

As a Special Education teacher I am always looking for something that will help my students practice and improve basic academic skills, stimulate critical thinking, and introduce or reinforce a variety of other skills such as collaboration, storytelling and public speaking. I search for topics that will allow me to use an interdisciplinary approach and connect ideas and concepts. State of Pennsylvania Academic Standards are noted in parentheses.

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At the conclusion of this unit I would like my students to be able to:

1. Understand of how a motion picture is made.

Becoming familiar with how a motion picture is made will provide the foundation for understanding about multimedia productions. It will support learning about the development and chronology of music videos.

2. Analyze the content of visual images for the validity and bias of their messages and information.

By viewing a variety of music videos to identify specific components such as the target audience, any stereotypes, and messages being conveyed students will be using the Arts and Humanities Academic Standard for Critical Response (9.3).

3. Discern the emotional appeals made through pictures, music and videos.

Critically dissecting a music video will allow students to see the integration of human experience and creativity. They will learn that productions have an aesthetic component, which communicates philosophies, values, individual stories and emotions. This objective uses Academic Standard for Aesthetic Response (9.4).

4. Understand how images can be manipulated to distort the truth or fabricate untruths.

As students begin to take a closer look at music videos they will learn that the creative process can be controlled and altered to influence specific outcomes and audiences. Understanding the elements, principles and technologies used to produce music videos incorporates Academic Standard 9.1 for Production, Performance and Exhibition of Dance, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts.

5. Distinguish between reality and acting, and how subconscious elements such as music or setting can alter the emotional reactions to a scene.

The creating of stories and scripts will give students the opportunity to understand how the application of different elements can change the reaction to a scene. Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening will be enhanced through this objective.

6. Explain why they enjoy certain music videos.

Students will be asked to look at their favorite videos to determine what things appeal to them. They will use analytical skills to evaluate and reflect on the reasons why

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they like one thing as opposed to another. Academic Standard for Historical and Cultural Contexts (9.2) will help to enlighten their understanding.

7. Appreciate the importance of all art forms.

After being exposed to different genres of music videos and understanding the creative, economic, technical and cultural components that are involved with the production, students will understand that art in all of its expressions represent life experiences.

### **Strategies**

This unit will use instructional strategies that are mainly student centered and activity oriented for West Philadelphia High School students who have a current Instructional Educational Plan (IEP) and are considered part-time learning support which means that they spend up to 51% of their instructional day for core curriculum subjects (English, Math, Science or Social Studies) with a certified Special Education teacher. This type of instruction seeks to have a high level of student involvement and uses the student's interest and curiosity to support learning. The unit will be used one or two class periods per week as part of a special topics series during the second marking period which is approximately eight to ten weeks in length.

#### ***Compare and Contrast***

Compare and contrast will be used to highlight the similarities and differences among the genres of music television. It will help the students to recognize that there are key components in all music videos and that there can also be differences in ideas and focus. There are more than twenty genres of music videos. There are some that are concept music videos, which tell a story and others that are concert performances. Viewing different kinds of music videos and charting this information will encourage students to make some generalizations and draw other conclusions based on the information gathered.

#### ***Debating***

Debating will be used as an instructional strategy because there are some opposing points of view in regards to music videos. For example, in the article by Joyce Jones, *Ghettopoly*, the creator of this board game sites Hip Hop Videos as the basis for his creation. After reading this article the students will be expected to critically look at the opinions and/or facts surrounding this issue and to consider the implications of music videos in this situation. Debating requires that the students do some research, develop listening and oratory skills and think about their own and their opponent's position. It is

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not essential to teach the process of debating in order to use this strategy with students. They can be given enough background information in order to use this technique.

### ***Reflective Discussions***

Reflective discussions encourage students to think and talk about what they have observed, heard or read. Since this unit involves screening music videos, it is a good strategy to help students clarify their thoughts and feelings about what they have viewed. It will give them the opportunity to relate the story content to life experiences or other stories. Reflective discussions will allow the students to interpret, summarize, evaluate, and form conclusions.

### ***Brainstorming***

Brainstorming allows all students to contribute to a free flow of ideas and focus on an assigned topic in small and large groups. It's an immediate way to get students actively involved with something new. For instance, I would use this technique when accessing what my students know about producing a movie video. It will provide some insight as to their knowledge and beliefs about a topic. This strategy will also help teach acceptance and respect for individual differences and that all opinions are valued.

### ***Think, Pair, Share***

This strategy is designed to give students "food for thought" on a given subject or topic and help them formulate individual ideas. There is a common belief that music videos contain more sex and violence than conventional television. Given that information students can scan the visual images for those particular messages. This strategy will help students develop the ability to filter information, draw conclusions and consider other points of view.

### ***Narratives***

Narrative essays are generally told from a defined point of view, usually the author's, and are filled with details to get the reader involved. Using this technique will demonstrate that content music videos include all the conventions of storytelling: plot, character, setting, climax and ending, and that all of these details relate to the point the writer is trying to make. Requiring that students write their own scripts or an opinion about a music video are examples of using narratives.

### ***Researching***

The goal of this unit is for students to raise their awareness about the use and effect of visual images, specifically music videos. Researching will increase a student's ability to

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access information, organize ideas and share information with others. Some research states that there is a correlation between music video viewing and alcohol consumption among teens (Robinson 1998). Students will need to use a variety of reference materials to determine the validity of this information.

### ***Cooperative Learning***

Cooperative Learning is a strategy that simultaneously addresses academic and social skills. It will provide students with the tools to effectively work together to accomplish an assigned task. Writing and conducting a survey on the music video viewing habits of teenagers is an example of this strategy. Students will learn the importance of group harmony and respecting individual views.

This unit will primarily address the Pennsylvania Academics Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening and the Arts and Humanities by using such components as verbal and nonverbal communication, reading excerpts from film critics, and analyzing the contents of music videos for underlying messages. However, since this unit is interdisciplinary in nature it may also include elements from other curriculums such as Social Studies, Math or Science.

### **Lesson Plans**

The following lessons have been designed for urban African American students in grades 9-12; however, the lessons can be amended according to the audience. There are more than twenty genres of music videos and it will not be necessary to use all of them, but you should consider using some of what appeals to your particular students.

#### **Lesson 1: Behind the Scenes**

Understanding the basics of how a motion picture is made will provide the background or foundation for music videos. Music videos are actually considered to be short films that are used as a marketing device to promote the sale of a song. Music videos can incorporate all styles of filmmaking, including animation, live action films, documentaries, and non-narrative, abstract film. Exploring the process of movie production which includes television programs will help students understand that visual art relies on many different technologies and skills

**Length of Lesson:** 45 to 90 minutes

**Targeted Standards:** **1:1** Learning to Read Independently **1:4** Types of Writing **1:5** Quality of Writing **1:6** Speaking and Listening **9:1** Production, Performance and Exhibition of Dance, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts

**Learning Outcomes:**

Students will

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- compare and contrast movies and music videos.
- understand that filmmaking is using visuals to tell a story.
- create a storyboard.
- make their own movie using digitalfilms.com

**Preparation and Materials:** computer with internet access; starting plot of a story; LCD Projector; White board or screen

### **Activity A1:** Wild About Movies

This activity will provide some basic knowledge about how filmmaking is visually telling a story.

- Access prior knowledge about movies by brainstorming with the whole class. Prompt responses by asking questions such as what is a movie, what's the purpose, etc. Record information on the board or chart paper for later use.
- Repeat the brainstorming process using music videos.
- Discuss the similarities and differences between movies and music videos using the brainstorming lists.
- Provide definitions (i.e American Heritage Dictionary) for motion picture (movie) and music videos.

### **Activity B1:** The Language of Film

Students will go through a simple step-by-step process to movie making and some of the terms such as frame, shots, scenes, camera angles, etc.

- Discuss the following steps in making movies: storytelling, scriptwriting, directing, production cast & crew, editing and making the movie.
- Give students (partners) the starting plot of a story and have them continue writing a short movie script that includes a short description of each scene, where the action takes place and what happens to make the story interesting.
- The students will share their scripts with the whole class.
- Discuss why the same beginning of a story can end up with a different ending.

### **Activity C1:** Make Your Own Movie

This is a very simplistic activity using digitalfilms.com that will allow students to make their own movie. The process is totally uninvolved but it will expose students to an amended process of movie making. In a nutshell: It's silly but cute.

- Have students create a six scene storyboard using specific criteria (based on using digitalfilms.com)
- Students will make a movie of their script using digitalfilms.com
- Share individual movies with the class.

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## Lesson 2: A Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words

The purpose of this lesson will be for students to understand that visual images can have messages, an audience and are tools of communication. They will see how we experience non-verbal communication in our daily lives all the time.

**Length of Lesson:** 45 to 90 minutes

**Targeted Standards:** 1.6 Speaking and Listening 9:1 Production, Performance and Exhibition of Dance, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts

### Learning Outcomes:

Students will

- analyze visual images (still and moving) to identify and interpret the messages and emotions contained within.
- demonstrate non-verbal communication through the use of body language, gestures, and facial expressions.
- understand the effect of non-verbal communication.

**Preparation and Materials:** slips of paper with emotions on them; pictures from magazines or another source; computer with internet access; short movie clips; LCD Projector; White board or screen

### Activity A2:

This activity will introduce students to non-verbal communication. They will discover that some emotions are harder to act out than others.

- Write different emotions such as anger, sadness, happiness, fear, shyness, etc on slips of paper, fold up the individual slips of paper and put in a bag or bowl.
- Have students take turns picking a slip of paper and acting out that emotion while the rest of the class guesses the emotion. Explain that they may not use any words only gestures.
- After the activity have the students record and discuss their thoughts. For example: It was easy/hard for me to act \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_. It was easy/hard for me to guess that he/she was acting \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

### Activity B2:

This activity demonstrates that visual images have emotional components and their interpretations can take into account the viewers perceptions and feelings.

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- Show students a variety of pictures from magazines or some other source. For example: A picture of a mother and her child.
- Have them guess what they think is going on in the picture.
- Students will be instructed to look at the people for visual clues (body language, facial expressions and gestures) to determine what the possible scenario could be.
- Several pictures can be examined by the whole class for modeling the task and to generate debate/discussion.
- Have the students individually write possible scenarios for several numbered pictures to demonstrate that people can look at the same thing and interpret it differently. Discuss with the whole class.

### Activity C2:

Showing films that rely strictly on visuals for storylines will reinforce the impact of non-verbal communication and the significance of visual images in this activity.

- Show students short clips from silent movies if available, foreign films or Hollywood movies (with the sound turned off).
- Have them write a storyline from what they have seen.
- Discuss their answers as a whole group.
- Compare their storylines to the actual storyline or scene.

### Closing Activity:

As a wrap-up students should be able to list, demonstrate and discuss ways to communicate non-verbally. Students should come to understand that messages derived from and communicated with visual images are just as powerful as words.

### Lesson 3: The Screening Room

This is where students will begin to critically look at music videos; the different genres (R & B, Rock, Rap, Country, etc) their contents (lyrics, messages, stereotypes, emotions) and the type (concept or performance).

**Length of Lesson:** 45 to 90 minutes

**Targeted Standards:** **1:1** Learning to Read Independently **1:4** Types of Writing **1:5** Quality of Writing **1:6** Speaking and Listening **1:8** Research **9:1** Production, Performance and Exhibition of Dance, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts **9:3** Critical Response

**Learning Outcomes:**

Students will

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- demonstrate understanding the difference between concept and performance music videos
- independently write a music review
- create a visual to illustrate lyrics of a song

**Preparation and Materials:** computer with internet access; starting plot of a story; LCD Projector; White board or screen; DVD of selected music videos; copy of reviews; copies of lyrics; criteria for writing a review

### Activity A3: Concept and Performance Videos

The most common types of music videos are those that are considered performance videos, which are taped in a studio or are an actual concert, and concept videos, which uses a script that tells a story. The purpose of this activity is for students to be able to identify the difference between the two types and to become aware that the technical aspects of concept videos can be manipulated to produce specific outcomes.

- Students will view a concept video such as Michael Jackson's Thriller and a performance video such as Kelly Clarkson's Since You Been Gone.
- After viewing they will discuss in a large group the similarities and differences between the two which will lead to definitions and understanding of the main categories (concept and performance).
- View several more videos to check for clarity.

### Activity B3: What Does this Song Really Say?

In this activity students will analyze song lyrics and design a visual that illustrates the central theme expressed in the song.

- Give students a copy of the lyrics to a song. Preferably a song that is not familiar to them.
- After reading the lyrics students will visually illustrate themes, ideas or issues that represent the lyrics.
- Students will share their ideas with the class.
- View the video that belongs to the song.
- Discuss as a group if the students' illustrations represented the artist's point of view.

### Activity C3: Music Reviews

This activity introduces students to reading reviews professionally written and those written by consumers.

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- Students will view a music video such as Bubba Sparxx Ms. New Booty, discuss what they like and/or dislike about it, and then read the reviews. Students will critique the review after reading.
- Students will be given an assigned music video to view and will write a review following specific criteria. They will then present their findings to the class.
- Students will select a music video of their choice and write an online review.
- As a wrap-up students will write a narrative answering questions such as: if and how they were influenced by reading reviews; what impact do they think professional reviews have on consumers and entertainers; would they be more influenced by the opinion of their friends about a song/music video or a paid reviewer; how much does one's personal opinion or feelings enter into writing a review.

#### **Lesson 4: The Producers**

This lesson is where students will use information from the previous lessons to write and produce their own music video. Students will also be introduced to the many opinions and controversy surrounding music videos by reading published articles and examining the history of ratings.

**Length of Lesson:** 45 to 120 minutes

**Targeted Standards:** **1:1** Learning to Read Independently **1:4** Types of Writing **1:5** Quality of Writing **1.6** Speaking and Listening **1:8** Research **9:1** Production, Performance and Exhibition of Dance, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts **9:3** Critical Response

#### **Learning Outcomes:**

Students will

- create their own music video using a free online service
- research issues surrounding music videos
- use the research to support their position in a class debate
- explore how what they see, hear or read may contain bias, only show one aspect of an issue or contain arbitrary decisions
- examine the evolution of ratings systems from the early 1900s to now

**Preparation and Materials:** computer with internet access; 5-10 personal photographs; published articles (magazine, journal...), PSVratings Chart, The Motion Picture Production Code of 1930 (Hays Code), digitally altered photographs ([www.media-awareness.com](http://www.media-awareness.com)) Photographic Truth in the Digital Era)

#### **Activity A4** Create Your Own Music Show

In this activity students will create their own music video using a free online service from music.com. This web site allows students to upload their own photos, add captions and

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select music in four simple steps. This will not be an elaborate production, but it will give students the opportunity to create a finished product.

- Bring in 5-10 personal photos
- Arrange your photos so that they tell a story
- Write captions
- Select background and music
- Share with class

#### **Activity B4** Nothing but the Truth

This activity uses an Agree/Disagree format for researching some of the issues surrounding the impact of music videos. Students will be given a position (agree or disagree) and a statement such as Rap music has a negative impact on teenagers because it promotes violence, drug use, foul lyrics and degrading images of women. The assignment will be for the students to find documentation to support the given position regardless to their personal opinion. The final outcome will be a debate.

- The class should be divided into an even number of small groups (2-5 students). The size of the class will determine the number of groups.
- Each group will be paired and given a topic and a position.
- Provide students with at least one article that addresses their topic. For example: Decoding Hip-Hop's Cultural Impact by Ronald Roach or The Influence of Music and Music Videos by American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. This will jump start their research. Explain the guidelines they will follow when presenting their positions. For example: Students will be expected to site at least two sources to support their position.
- After the debate(s) have students individually write: how they felt about the position they had to support; was the position the same or different from theirs; name something new that they learned from this exercise.
- Share and discuss with class

#### **C4** "Is it live or is it Memorex?"

The purpose of this activity is to show that you cannot always believe what you see, read or hear. They will explore how your beliefs, values and experiences are used to decode what is seen, heard and read. They will come to understand how the media, special interest groups and individuals use hype to manipulate our awareness and response to issues and other things.

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- The class will discuss what hype (deception) is and how it is used in everyday life. Advertising, concert promoters and broadcast news are a few areas that use hype.
- Students will look at some digitally altered photographs as examples of truth or fabrication. For example: Time magazine altered the cover photo of O.J. Simpson's mug shot so it would look more menacing.
- Students will read and discuss several journal articles that present the controversy surrounding music videos or media in general such as Media Violence Debates or When the Oppressed becomes the Oppressor: Willie Lynch and the Politics of Race and Racism in Hip-Hop Music.
- Students will create a survey (5-10 questions) for teenagers incorporating some of the issues and viewpoints they have read about. For example: Do music videos degrade women? Is there too much violence in music videos?

#### D4 The Final Analysis

This is the final activity in this unit and it is the one that will stress that there will always be two sides to every coin and even when you are trying to be objective there can still be bias. Students will role-play a screening panel whose responsibility is to rate music videos according to specified criteria.

- Students will be provided with a brief description of the role they are to assume. For example: parent, music producer, and pediatrician. Explain to the students that the job of this panel is to objectively rate this video using the standards based upon scientific research relating to the effects of media on children and society. (PSVratings™) Make certain that they understand their opinions are not relevant at this time.
- Distribute, review and discuss the music video ratings chart. This chart will be based on the PSVratings Chart, which gives an objective description of the levels of Profanity, Sex and Violence found in many forms of entertainment. PSVratings are primarily used for movies but can be applied to television, video games and music.
- Have students view a highly controversial video such as Eminem's The Marshall Mathers CD and use the rating system to determine what labeling it will receive. Students will discuss their opinions about the rating and what ramifications the labeling will have.
- Give students a handout with statements from the Motion Picture Production Code of 1930 listed. Have students indicate whether they believe the statements are true or false. This will begin the discussion about the history of ratings and how the music of the younger generation has often been a sticking point for decades (Elvis Presley and his gyrations, Jazz in the 20s, Hip-Hop today).

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- Allow students to peruse the Family Media Guide website to become acquainted with their function and select one article to read from the archives. Have students share their findings.
- Students will write a narrative evaluation for this unit. It should at least include things they now know that they did not know, what they liked and/or disliked, if they were influenced by something they saw, read or heard, etc.

## Resources

### Annotated Bibliography

Boehlert, Eric, Senior Business Writer. "Invisible Man." Salon. 8 May 2006. 9 June 2006 <<http://www.salon.com>>. This article discusses why critics seem to love Eminem and make excuses for his violent, women-hating, homophobic lyrics.

Burns, Mary, Author, and Danny Martinez, Author. "Visual Imagery and the Art of Persuasion: A Political Campaign Project Teaches Students How to Read and Analyze Persuasive Imagery." Learning and Leading with Technology Mar. 2002: 32+. This article discusses visual indicators and their meanings, and the importance of visual literacy in the 21st Century.

"Demographic and Climate Information." School District of Philadelphia. 13 June 2006 <<http://sdp-webprod.phila.k12.pa.us>>. This site provides school profiles.

Englis, Basil G, Author, Anna Olofsson, Author, and Michael R Solomon, Author. "Consumption Imagery in Music Television: A Bi-Cultural Persepective." Journal of Advertising 22.4 (1993): 21+. This article focuses on the consumption messages conveyed by music television and how it is a significant force in popular culture.

Heaggans, Raphael C, Author. "When the Oppressed Becomes the Oppressor: Willie Lynch and the Politics of Race and Racism in Hip-Hop Music." West Virginia University Philological Papers 50 (2003): 77+. This article addresses how Willie Lynch's infamous 1712 letter is authenticated through negative images and messages presented in hip-hop music and its effect on youth culture.

Iovine, Jimmy. "Merchants of Cool." Interview with Douglas Rushkoff. Frontline. PBS. 27 Feb. 2001. Transcript. 9 June 2006 <<http://www.pbs.org>>. This is an interview of Jimmy Iovine the

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co-chairman of Interscope Records from the Merchants of Cool a PBS Frontline program.

Jaja, Cheedy Author. "Art and Life in Africa." Teaching History: A Journal of Methods 26.1 (2001): 36. This article discusses the merits of The Art and Life in Africa CD-Rom.

Jones, Joyce, Author. "Ghettopoly:No!Pimp Juice:Yes? Board Game's Asian Creator Says He Followed Lead of African Americans Who Profit from the Denigration of Black Culture." Black Enterprise Mar. 2004: 32. This article discusses Ghettopoly, a game based on the board game Monopoly.

Krohn, Franklin B, Author, and Frances L Suazo, Author. "Contemporary Urban Music: Controversial Messages in Hip-hop and Rap Lyrics." ETC.: A Review of General Semantics 52.2 (1995): 139+. The purpose of this paper is to help familiarize the uninitiated with some of the newer forms of music, which have become so controversial.

Means, Barbara. "Critical Issue: Using Technology to Enhance Engaged Learning for At-Risk Students." North Carolina Regional Educational Laboratory. 27 Feb. 2006. 9 June 2006 <<http://www.ncrel.org>>. This article discusses using technology to challenge at-risk students.

"Music Television." Museum of Broadcast Communications. 27 Feb. 2006. 9 June 2006 <<http://www.museum.tv>>. This article is about the three phases in the history of MTV (Music Television) and how it is one of the earliest and greatest cable success stories.

Oring, Stuart A, Author. "A Call for Visual Literacy." School Arts Apr. 2000: 58. This article discusses how art needs to be taught as a visual language to children at an early age.

Rich, Michael, MD, MPH, FAAP. "Testimony: Recording Industry's Marketing Practices: A Check Up." American Academy of Pediatrics. 3 May 2006. 9 June 2006 <<http://www.aap.org>>. Testimony before the United States House of Representatives Energy and Commerce Committee about the impact of media on health and behavior of children.

Rhodes, Henry A, Author. "The Evolution of Rap Music in the United States." Hip Hop City. 25 May 2006 <<http://www.hiphopcity.com>>. This paper shows that rap music is not a fad, but a musical art form that has been around for over 20 years in the United States.

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Rose, Tricia, Author. Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America. New Hampshire: UP of New England, 1994. A comprehensive look at the lyrics, music, cultures, themes and styles of Rap music

Sims, Calvin. "Gangster Rappers: The Lives, The Lyrics." New York Times 28 Nov. 1993: E3. This article is about the recent arrest of three major hip-hop artists and the concern that the stars of gangster rap have become dangerous emblems.

"The Influence of Music and Music Videos." American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. July 2004. 25 May 2006 <<http://www.aacap.org>>. Lists the concerns about the negative and destructive themes of some kinds of music.

Williams, Harold M, Author. "Don't Ignore the Arts." USA Today Sept. 1995: 66+. This article discusses how schools are brushing aside the world's rich cultural heritage to the detriment of students by only focusing on basic skills.

Wood, Brent, Author. "Understanding Rap as Rhetorical Folk-Poetry." Mosaic 32.4 (1999): 129. This essay focuses on Rap as poetry and discusses it strictly as vocal performance.

### **Reading List for Students**

Heaggans, Raphael C, Author. "When the Oppressed Becomes the Oppressor: Willie Lynch and the Politics of Race and Racism in Hip-Hop Music." West Virginia University Philological Papers 50 (2003): 77+. This article addresses how Willie Lynch's infamous 1712 letter is authenticated through negative images and messages presented in hip-hop music and its effect on youth culture.

Jones, Joyce, Author. "Ghettopoly:No!Pimp Juice:Yes? Board Game's Asian Creator Says He Followed Lead of African Americans Who Profit from the Denigration of Black Culture." Black Enterprise Mar. 2004: 32. This article discusses Ghettopoly, a game based on the board game Monopoly.

Richburg, Chris. "Las Vegas Sheriff Wants Casino Ban on Gangster Rap Shows." All Hip Hop. 15 Feb. 2006. 9 June 2006 <<http://www.allhiphop.com>>. This article discusses a Las Vegas Sherriff's call for a ban on booking rap artists in the casinos.

Roach, Ronald. "Decoding Hip-Hop's Cultural Impact." Diverse Online.

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<<http://www.diverseeducation.com>>. This article discusses the influence of hip-hop on the social identity and values of today's youth.

Smith, Eric L, Author. "Hip-Hoppreneurs." Black Enterprise Dec. 1997: 66+. This article discusses how artists are leveraging their celebrity in the music industry to spin into different business.

"The Motion Picture Production Code of 1930 (Hays Code)." Reformation of the Arts and Music. 5 May 2006. 9 June 2006 <<http://artsreformation.com>>. This is the code, which was written in 1930 to govern the production of motion pictures.

### **Internet Resources**

Digital Films. <<http://www.digitalfilms.com>>. Site for making your own movie online for free.

Family Media Guide. <<http://familymediaguide.co>>. Provides resources consumers need to make informed media choices including access to experts and PSVratings.

Media Awareness Network. <<http://www.media-awareness.ca>>. Resources and support for everyone interested in media and information literacy for young people.

"Merchants of Cool." PBS. WHY? <<http://www.pbs.org>>. A theme in this FRONTLINE show focuses on how marketers of teen culture are promoting certain artists whose music and imagery are very disturbing in their anti-social behavior and attitudes.

Metacritic. <<http://www.metacritic.com>>. Resource for critical information about films, video/DVD, books, music, television and games.

music.com. <<http://www.music.com>>. Resource for everything you want to know about every song, genre and artist.

PSVratings. <<http://www.psvratings.com>>. A source for objective information about profanity, sex and violence in media.

Vibe Online. <<http://www.vibe.com>>. Vibe chronicles the celebrities, sounds, fashion, lifestyle, new media and business born of urban music.

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## **Appendix (Pennsylvania Department of Education Standards)**

### **Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening**

This unit provides many opportunities for my students to use and improve the standards for the language arts. The purposed activities will have students involved with planning, doing, revising and assessing. They will be required to use the three forms of writing (narrative, persuasive & informational) for such things as writing stories, adding captions to photographs or creating surveys. They will independently read reviews of music videos, journal articles, and other relevant materials. As the students analyze music videos they will be involved with numerous discussions and will have an opportunity to orally share their opinions, views and thoughts and in turn listen to those of their classmates. Looking at current trends will require that they use research techniques.

### **Arts and Humanities**

When my students become familiar with the background of music television they will see the development and chronology associated with music television since its original inception. As they begin to take a closer look at music videos they will understand that there is a creative process that goes into productions. They will notice that regardless to the genre there are certain components such as script writing, messages, and the use of soundtracks that are common. The more they critically dissect the video the more they will be able to see the integration of human experience and creativity, and that the line between what is real and what is staged is often blurred. They will come to understand that these things can be manipulated to influence specific outcomes and audiences, and may contain stereotypes. They will learn that productions communicate experiences, stories and emotions.

### **Technology**

The use of technology will be a large component of this unit since there is a mini computer lab in my classroom and we do have access to other resources. Students will be required to use a word processing program for their writing assignments. They may be asked to produce Power Point presentations according to specific criteria. The use of image editing programs such as Meta-Morpher will demonstrate how easily images can be changed. After going through the steps of production and creating a script they will be able to create their own video with the use of an online service such as Make Your Own Music Show.

### **Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities**

#### **9.1 Production, Performance and Exhibition of Dance, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts**

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- A. Elements and Principles in each Art Form
  - B. Demonstration of Dance, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts
  - C. Vocabulary within each Art Form
  - D. Styles in Production, Performance and Exhibition
  - E. Themes in Art Forms
  - F. Historical and Cultural Production, Performance and Exhibition
  - G. Function and Analysis of Rehearsals and Practice Sessions
  - H. Safety Issues in the Arts
  - I. Community Performances and Exhibitions
  - J. Technologies in the Arts
  - K. Technologies in the Humanities
- 9.2 Historical and Cultural Contexts**
- A. Context of Works in the Arts
  - B. Chronology of Works in the Arts
  - C. Styles and Genre in the Arts
  - D. Historical and Cultural Perspectives
  - E. Historical and Cultural Impact on Works in the Arts
  - F. Vocabulary for Historical and Cultural Context
  - G. Geographic regions in the Arts
  - H. Pennsylvania Artists
  - I. Philosophical context of works in the Arts
  - J. Historical Differences of works in the Arts
  - K. Traditions within works in the Arts
  - L. Common themes in works in the Arts
- 9.3 Critical Response**
- A. Critical Processes
  - B. Criteria
  - C. Classifications
  - D. Vocabulary for Criticism
  - E. Types of Analysis
  - F. Comparisons
  - G. Critics in the Arts
- 9.4 Aesthetic Response**
- A. Philosophical Studies
  - B. Aesthetic Interpretation
  - C. Environmental Influences
  - D. Artistic Choices

**Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening**

- 1.1 Learning to Read Independently**
- A. Purposes for Reading
  - B. Word Recognition Skills

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- C. Vocabulary Development
- D. Comprehension and Interpretation
- E. Fluency
- 1.2** Reading Critically in All Content Areas
  - A. Detail
  - B. Inferences
  - C. Fact from Opinion
  - D. Comparison
  - E. Analysis and Evaluation
- 1.3** Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature
  - A. Literary Elements
  - B. Literary Devices
  - C. Poetry
  - D. Drama
- 1.4** Types of Writing
  - A. Narrative
  - B. Informational
  - C. Persuasive
- 1.5** Quality of Writing
  - A. Focus
  - B. Content
  - C. Organization
  - D. Style
  - E. Conventions
- 1.6** Speaking and Listening
  - A. Listening Skills
  - B. Speaking Skills
  - C. Discussion
  - D. Presentation
- 1.7** Characteristics and Function of the English Language
  - A. Word Origins
  - B. Variations
  - C. Application
- 1.8** Research
  - A. Selection
  - B. Location of Information
  - c. Organization

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