

Strange Fruit – Metaphors, Music and Place – Jazz and Hip Hop as Reflective of the Times

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Overview

It is called “Strange Fruit”, and it will even after the tenth hearing, make you blink and hold on to your chair. Even now, as I think of it, the short hair on my back my neck tightens and I want to hit somebody.
– Columnist Samuel Grafton, New York Post, 1939.

This unit will use the lyrics from the song “Strange Fruit” to anchor the exploration of how music reflects what happens in society. The unit will compare and contrast the music of Billie Holliday and her contemporaries to hip hop music of the current generation. It will draw upon film footage, lyrics, popular culture, and historical text to show the interaction between music and the social context which created art from Greenwich Village and beyond. The unit will use music videos, lyrics, documentary films and dramatic films from the Free Library of Philadelphia and the University of Pennsylvania’s library collections. *Strange Fruit*, the documentary film produced by the Independent Television Network, provides the history of the song made famous by Billie Holliday. It is interesting to note that Abel Meeropol, a Jewish school teacher from New York originally composed the lyrics of the song. The lyrics from the song “Strange Fruit” will be used to demonstrate the power of metaphors and figurative language. The unit will concurrently, analyze and interpret lyrics, poetry and film to appreciate a social context which helped create popular music and other works of arts.

The unit is designed for middle school students (grades 6th -8th). It will cut across the curriculum by incorporating music, art, social studies, reading and writing. This unit will provide students with an opportunity to read, write, and think about music; to research, speak, and write persuasively about the positive and negative effects music; and to understand the role that music and popular culture has on society. The unit will culminate in a performance that will allow students to show case their own lyrics set to jazz and hip hop beats, recite spoken word and present a multi-media digital presentation

on the role that music played during the Holliday's pre-civil rights era with the influence of hip-hop music during the post-civil rights era.

Rationale

“Hip- hop or rap as we call it is the son of Jazz, the older brother of R&B, and the second cousin removed from country...” (Ciear Hayes - Beeber Middle School 6th grade, introduction, persuasive essay, 2007).

Student Ciear Hayes' introduction attempts to show the relationship between hip-hop, jazz and other music forms. Yet most of my students feel removed from the music that gave the birth of the civil-rights movement. Artists such as Billie Holliday, Duke Ellington, and Lena Horne are almost mystical figures to many of my middle school students.

The problems of racism had a serious impact on Billie Holliday's career. During her tours and radio broadcast with Artie Shaw's big band she was frequently forbidden to sit on stage with the rest of the band and some of her radio spots were cancelled. Once when the band had a booking at the Lincoln Hotel in New York City, Holliday was forced to use the freight elevator. Her encounters with racism took a toll on her spirit. But when Café Society opened in Greenwich Village in 1938, it was very timely that Holliday became one of first performers at this venue to perform for an integrated audience. It was also fitting that the song “Strange Fruit,” with its chilling metaphoric description of a southern lynching, became one her biggest selling records. (Kastin 117)

David Margolick, in his book *Strange Fruit*, notes that this song sets the beginning of the Civil-Rights Movement. Time Magazine, in 1995, included this song as one of the best songs of the century. The city of New York and the Café Society gave birth to this song. (Margolick, 2000) By exploring the lyrics from the song “Strange Fruit” students can begin to understand the impact metaphors and lyrics have on society, discover the common threads that run through the poetry and music, and how the themes and subject matter of song lyrics often reflect the lifestyle of the period. I believe it is important that my students examine the role that various styles of music play in shaping society, and discuss the similarities and differences in the themes of music from the pre-civil rights movement with hip hop music of today.

Hip hop culture plays a significant role in how many of my students view their world. Yet many of my students do not fully understand the complexities of hip-hop. Many students simply consider rap to be synonymous to hip hop. In fact, rap is a subset of hip hop. According to Dyson and Kitwana, “hip hop is a catch-all term for a contemporary, urban-centered youth lifestyle associated with popular music, break dancing, certain dress and hair styles, graffiti, and street language.” Hip-hop culture does

not only include rap, but also break dancing, dj-ing, and graffiti. Hip-hop further includes dialects, attitude, expression, mannerisms, and fashion (Dyson, 2001; Kitwana, 2002). In the transcript of a United States Information Service web cast interview, Toni Blackman noted that hip-hop artist KRS might say that “hip-hop represents the culture while rap is one of the elements of the culture.” (Blackman; USINFO Webchat, 1 August 2006). Rap began as “instrumental” dance music; like ragtime and jazz it was not initially a lyrical music. When rap first became popular the groove or beat was more important than the lyrics. The DJ’s role as a lyricist would evolve over a period of time. (Williams 165). In reference to its wider appeal, Kitwana asserts, “rappers” access to global media and their use of popular culture to articulate many aspects of this national identity renders rap music central to any discussion of the new Black youth culture (Kitwana, 2002).

Hip Hop could offer a bridge to help my students make connections to the music made popular by Billie Holliday and her contemporaries from the Swing era of the 1930-1940’s. Kastin notes that the origin of rap music—which was originally referred as “break-beat music” –provides a link to this “African derived disposition.” He further asserts that the “break’ was—as the word suggests—a short respite or interlude within a musical performance. In a song, the break could refer to a brief instrumental section between the vocal passages, while in a jazz instrumental, it is usually a short solo by a member of the ensemble. In the world of “break-beat music” the word specifically meant percussion break. (Kastin 318)

It is interesting to note that some contemporary rap artists pay homage to jazz. Michael Spies’ article in the Village Voice notes that hip-hop artist Nas, in his song “Can’t Forget about You,” offers us a nostalgia-fused how-I-fell-in-love-with-hip-hop retrospective, using will.i.am’s sample of Nat King Cole’s “Unforgettable.”

In his critique he notes that the hook, sung by Chrisette Michele, is a gorgeous melody that could easily pass for a Billie Holiday sample. A consummate imagist, Nas, contemplates something more peaceful than death: “There comes a day in your life when you want to kick back/straw hat on the porch when you old perhaps. We had a good run for a while. No tears now. It’s time to start over.” (Spies Dec. 15 2006)

By demonstrating how hip hop is a global cultural force which connects with other musical genres, I hope to interest my students in exploring jazz and other earlier music forms.

There are relevant precedents for using hip-hop in the classroom. The Art Sanctuary, located at the Church of the Advocate in North Philadelphia offers a series of workshops and activities to support teachers in using hip-hop in the classroom. Art Sanctuary was founded in June 1998 by author and educator Lorene Cary with a vision to bring the creators of contemporary black arts into the community. The Art Sanctuary

presents interactive hip-hop concerts and workshops for students and teachers that incorporate literature, dance, visual art, and music. The Art Sanctuary's *Do the Knowledge* curriculum guide demonstrates that hip-hop provides a medium for introducing the experiences and knowledge of urban youth into traditional academic contexts (Irby 15 Feb. 2007). Thus, by comparing the swing music of Billie Holiday's era with hip-hop music, my students will be motivated and engaged to read, write, speak, listen, and think about the role music plays in society.

"Hip-hop is a very powerful educational tool; it's very exciting," says Toni Blackman, the U.S. Department of State's ambassador of hip-hop. As an American cultural ambassador for hip-hop, Blackman and her band have performed in concerts and led educational workshops in Botswana, Ghana, Indonesia, Poland, Senegal, Swaziland and Thailand, among other places. "In order to take advantage of this tool, teaching has to change." Blackman states, "when teachers have to compete with technology and media for students' attention, you have to get your game tight if you want to succeed." (Hellweg September 05)

I have had some experience using the lyrics of the song "Strange Fruit" to teach students about the power of figurative language. During a social studies lesson I used the song "Strange Fruit" to contextualize the impact that racism and Jim Crow had on society. During a social studies and reading lesson I was able to use the lyrics of "Strange Fruit" to demonstrate how irony and metaphors can convey powerful messages within a text. Understanding figurative language is an important standard for reading and writing for my sixth grade students. However, many of my students have struggled to discern metaphors and irony found in a text. Some of the students were prone to taking the lyrics below in quite literally—as poetry about trees and fruit:

Southern trees bear strange fruit
Blood on the leaves
Blood at the root
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees
Pastoral scene of the gallant south... (Holliday 1939)

Figurative language is the heart of poetry and music lyrics. After carefully reviewing "Strange Fruit" lyrics my students were better able to analyze the figurative language. Many students had that "ah hah" moment when they realized that the metaphor, strange fruit, represented lynching and struggles of black people during the pre-civil rights period. While we listened to the song, read the lyrics, and watched a documentary related to the song, I became aware of how lyrics allowed students to better understand irony and metaphor. I also realized that it was important for students to understand events that provide the social context that make songs such as "Strange Fruit" significant. My

students were able to apply what they learned about irony and metaphors and compose their own poetry as well as better respond to fiction and non-fiction text that used irony and metaphors.

By exploring and analyzing the lyrics of “Strange Fruit” and understanding the power of lyrics and metaphors found in swing and hip-hop music, my students and I will be able to better understand social context which creates music and discover how music is an integral part of our history. Students will discover that Billie Holliday and her contemporaries of the 1930’s interpreted and articulated their response to the poverty, racism, and drug use in the same way that Blackman and the hip-hop generation have responded to similar experiences. Having students find figurative language in hip-hop music will further improve my students’ understanding of and ability to synthesize figurative language.

In more recent hip-hop lessons I taught I provided examples of how the appearance of hip-hop in Japan and other countries demonstrates its global influence. According to ECD, a Japanese hip-hop artist, “hip-hop crosses borders and sets the world alight”(Condry 31). ECD gives credit to pioneers Grandmaster Flash, Kool Herc, Rakim, and KRS-One, but points out that hip-hop is a global revolution. He further points out that hip-hop provide a means for youth to express themselves through rhythm and rhyme.

By learning the formal history of rap music, my students should begin to better understand why student Ciar Hayes’ analogy of rap being the son of jazz is relevant. Sherley Anne Williams, in her article “Two Words on Music: Black Community” in the Anthology *Black Popular Culture* provides a critical discussion of the origins and development of rap:

Originally, rappers rapped about the DJs; the words were almost incidental to the groove or beat. Aggressive, self aggrandizing boast about a rappers’ prowess were added, in the traditions of the bad-man street toast... These tributes, boasts and slogans were unified by internal rhymes... Boastful as the blues, and even more bare of figurative language, the new genre was built on the black verbal traditions. (Wallace 165-166)

Ultimately by exploring the boastful lyrics of rap music alongside the aesthetics of swing music my students should be able to better apply rap’s verbal nuance and verbal showmanship to poetry and other forms of literature.

Objectives

Through this curriculum unit students will improve their reading, writing, speaking, critical thinking and research skills. Students will study and analyze music lyrics, explore culture and conduct an inquiry on the role that music and popular culture have on society. By the end of this unit students will be able to synthesize and apply their knowledge to write their own lyrics set to jazz and hip hop beats, recite spoken word, and present a multimedia, digital presentation comparing the role music played during Billie Holliday's pre-civil rights era with the influence of Hip Hop in the post civil rights era. Detailed objectives within the 3 categories of reading, writing, speaking, critical thinking, and researching are described below.

Objectives for Researching and Analyzing Music and Culture

This unit will require students to research and analyze the music and social milieu of both the swing, pre civil rights era and the hip-hop, post civil rights era. To further understand these time periods students will read biographies of significant musical figures such as Billie Holliday, Lena Horne, Duke Ellington, Tupac Shakur, Queen Latifah, Chuck D, etc. Students will describe the swing music era and make personal connections by reflecting on how the 1930s situation is not that much different from the one the hip hop generation experiences. Lastly, students will complete an I-search, first person narrative report about their journey of discovery concerning "Strange Fruit" and how music is reflective of its time period.

Objectives for Interpreting and Analyzing Lyrics, Poetry and other Text

Students will critically read song lyrics, rap lyrics, poetry, and other non-fiction and fiction text related to pre- and post-civil rights eras. Students will interpret and analyze a variety of text to place music and culture in its proper context. Through interpretation and analysis of films and videos students will learn to appreciate swing and hip-hop music's aesthetics along with the metaphors and irony found in these and other idioms. Students will learn to read and respond to lyrics in much the same way they would a work of fiction or non fiction text and make connections with theme, character, setting, plot, etc. Lastly, students will write compare and contrast essays about the styles of swing and hip-hop music, and understand the role that music and popular culture has on society.

Objectives Related to Creating Original Lyrics, Media, and Literary Arts.

One of the final outcomes of this unit will be students' presentation of the findings from their inquiry about how music is a reflection of the times. Students will incorporate their findings in multi-media presentations using lyrics, texts, images, and sound to present content from their I-search report. Students will write their own lyrics or spoken word poetry set to jazz or hip-hop beats. In a culminating showcase, students will perform short biographical skits about key musical figures from both the swing and hip-hop era;

present their PowerPoint, and digital I-search reports; and perform their own lyrics and spoken word poems for a live audience.

The objectives of this unit will engage students on multiple platforms with a variety of assessment anchors. This unit will meet standards required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Academic Standards in Social Studies, Reading, Writing, and Speaking and Listening along with Standards for Arts and Humanities. This unit employs mini-lessons which easily tie into the Philadelphia School District's Core Curriculum standards. The specific standards which are aligned with the Pennsylvania Department of Education Academic Standards are provided in Appendix 1.

Strategies

Beeber Middle School is an urban public school that features an emerging creative and performing arts magnet program within a comprehensive neighborhood school. I teach two sixth grade classes during literacy and social studies learning blocks of at least 120 per minutes per day. Because I have these ample learning blocks, I can incorporate a humanities focus within my learning units over the course of the 4-6 weeks or one grading period. This unit will be taught primarily during my social studies block. As mentioned, however, the unit will stretch across the curriculum and include reading, writing and performing arts. Furthermore, I will collaborate with our music teacher and choir director to support our inquiry on the role music plays in society.

Inquiry Learning Strategies

Inquiry learning provides students an opportunity to improve their critical thinking skills. David S. Jake, et al. in an online article *Inquiry Based learning and the Web* on biopoint.com summarizes the benefits of this structured learning strategy:

Inquiry-based learning is a process where students formulate investigative questions, obtain factual information, and then build knowledge that ultimately reflects their answer to the original question. Students may engage in this process as individual learners, or in cooperative teams. Additionally, the process is pliable, permitting various permutations of the process to be used effectively with all types of learners. (Jake et al 15 March 2007)

To support my students' inquiry and research skills, I will ask them to explore the essential question "how is music a reflection of a time and place?" An essential question such as this one frames the research and requires students to make decisions and make a plan of action. My students will complete I-search papers during their inquiry process. Ken Macroie in an article *The I Search Paper*, from the National Council of Teachers of

English Journal, notes that “an I-Search is when a person conducts a search to find out something he needs in his life and writes a story of his adventure.” (Macroie 45) Using an I-Search project will be a major anchor of this unit. Through their own discoveries, students will be able to better articulate and respond to the aesthetics and symbolism found in both swing and hip-hop music.

Graphic Organizers

Using graphic organizers provides an effective strategy to elicit students’ prior knowledge as well as illustrate what they are learning from topics they explore. James Burke, author of *Tools for Thought: Graphic Organizer for Your Classroom*, offers a variety of graphic learning tools and methods to engage students from grades 6-12 in all subject areas. Examples of few graphic organizers that I plan to use are included are outlined below.

KWL

The KWL (What You Know Already, What You Want to Know and What You Learned) graphic organizer is a great way to elicit students’ prior knowledge. I will use KWL charts to spur students’ inquiry about what they already know about jazz, hip-hop, and how music is reflection of its time period. A Sample KWL chart is provided in Appendix 2.

Vocabulary Squares

A vocabulary square is a graphic organizer divided into four quadrants to demonstrate understanding of the word origin or part of speech, synonyms or antonyms for a word, visuals logos or icons and a formal brief definition of words (Burke, 178) I might use vocabulary squares when introducing key literary terms like “metaphors” and “irony,” as well as interesting or difficult musical or historical terms found in the lyrics, poems, non-fiction, or fiction text used in this unit. A layout of a vocabulary squares can be found on the following link: <http://www.englishcompanion.com/pdfDocs/vocabsquares.pdf>.

Venn Diagram

A Venn diagram is used to compare any two things or concepts. After viewing, and obtaining background information about key historical figures and events of both the swing and hip-hop era, my students will create a Venn diagrams to identify differences and similarities of swing era and hip-hop generation. Using an interactive graphic organizer from the ReadWriteThink website, a partnership between the International Reading Association (IRA), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), <http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/venn/>, I can provide mini-lessons on how to complete Venn diagrams to compare poems created during different time periods.

BDA (Text Rendering)

The BDA strategy (Before Reading, During Reading and After Reading) is an interactive note-taking tool that allows students to read and comprehend information and literary text. Before reading, students can prepare to read by scanning text and pictures for clues, making predictions, or setting a purpose. During reading, students can ask questions and have dialogue with the text. “Text rendering” is an example of a during-reading activity I will use to help students interact with text from music lyrics, biographical or historical information about musicians or specific time periods. I learned the “text rendering” strategy from professional development provided by the Philadelphia Writing Project. It directs students to say or highlight any words, phrases or sentences that resonate for any reason, including confusion and lack of understanding. After reading, students can summarize and synthesize what they learned from the text. I plan to use the BDA strategy for reading song lyrics as well as non-fiction and fiction text related to jazz and hip hop.

Sensory Notes

Sensory notes is a graphic organizer tool that helps students pay close attention the details and figurative language while reading. Students will take notes on what they hear, smell, feel and think as they read and interact with certain text. The lyrics of “Strange Fruit” are very suitable for sensory notes. Other rap lyrics, poems and biographical text could also be used for this purpose.

Time Line

Timelines provide a tool to activate prior knowledge and assist students in placing historical events in proper chronological sequence. I find that many of my students are familiar with historical events related to music and popular culture. For example, most know that Jazz is an America’s classical form of music. But if you ask most of my students when jazz originated they may confuse its origins with the start of Motown’s R&B sound. I plan to use the interactive timeline on the PBS Kids web site <http://pbskids.org/jazz/time/index.html> to present the images, sounds, places, key figures and events that created Jazz, America’s Classical Music.

Strategies for Implementation

Because the objectives of the unit are varied, lessons can be easily staggered over a longer time period, or implemented in a stand-alone fashion. The strategies in this unit can be similarly grouped into three categories:

Strategies for Researching, and Analyzing Music and Culture

Conducting mini-lessons to lead students' inquiry and providing lessons and activities to support students' completion of their I-search reports will anchor this unit. To support students in the collecting primary and secondary data I plan to take field trips to special venues such as the Art Sanctuary, African American Museum, and the public library. I further plan to have special guest artists visit my classroom to present topics about the connections between jazz and hip-hop. At school students will visit the school library and music/media lab to access the internet and other reference materials related to their inquiry topics. I will demonstrate and model to students how to use graphic organizers to plan, structure, and outline and draft their I-Search reports. Students will be provided with time to work in small groups during a writers' workshop for revising, editing, and publishing, their I-search papers.

Strategies for Interpreting and Analyzing Lyrics, Poetry and other Text

To support students reading, writing and critical thinking skills I will conduct mini-lessons on how to interpret and analyze lyrics. In particular, mini-lessons will be taught on how to analyze metaphor and irony in lyrics like "Strange Fruit." I will use documentary films, dramatic films and music videos to discuss and aesthetics of jazz and hip-hop music and how society and social events influenced the development of these music genres. Mini-lessons will be conducted on responding to music lyrics, poetry, and other forms of texts. In addition to writing critical reviews on selected swing and hip-hop lyrics I can have students can write persuasively about the positive and negative aspects of hip-hop or jazz culture. Through having students interpret, analyze and respond to lyrics I believe they will better understand the role that music and popular culture have on society.

Strategies Related to Creating Original Lyrics, Media, Poetry and Stories

The strategies for creating original lyrics, media and literature will form a major part of the assessment for this unit. Performance and Response Portfolios will be maintained by students for both the student and teacher to evaluate the learning outcomes. The teacher will conduct mini-lessons on analyzing and using metaphors and other figurative language to compose lyrics, poems and digital media. The teacher will show students how to use ideas from their I-search papers as seed ideas for composing lyrics and spoken word poems. Furthermore, mini-lessons will be conducted on how to complete digital and multi-media renditions of their original lyrics and research findings.

Project Assessments

Assessments will include an evaluation of each student's I-Search report as well as their performance and constructed responses. The I-Search report will be graded on the

completeness of the research; proficiency of writing (focus, content, organization, style and convention); as well as the validity of students' research sources. Included in the grade will be an assessment of the student's ability to use internet sources, personal interviews, direct quotes, lyrics, and film and video shots. Students will further demonstrate how different generations responded to racism, poverty, and other social issues through the lyrics and songs made popular by their respective generations. Students' lyrics and response logs will be assessed for completeness. Their responses should be aesthetic in nature, but also include research and writers workshop notes on concepts and strategies used during mini-lessons, field visits and learning activities.

Resources:

In previous years, I have collaborated with the Philadelphia Arts and Education Partnership (PAEP) which offers jazz and poetry residencies. In addition to the resources available at school, I will rely on the University of Pennsylvania's and Free Library of Philadelphia collections for books, videos and music material. As mentioned, I plan to collaborate with the Art Sanctuary of the Church the Advocate in North Philadelphia.

Films, Music Videos & Lyrics

A complete list of the resources I plan to use is provided in the annotated resources section. What follows is a brief description of how I plan to use some of the multi-media resources.

I will use the DVD *Strange Fruit*. This film sets context for the time period and events that create the lyrics and the song *Strange Fruit* Made famous by singer Billie Holiday. The film will allow students to visually connect with the metaphor and irony of this song. Furthermore, I will use the DVD collection from the PBS Jazz Documentary by Ken Burns. This collection presents a comprehensive timeline of jazz's impact on society. Another film I can use excerpts from is *Lady Sings the Blues*. This biopic film, starring Diana Ross, is based on the life of Billie Holliday. It can be viewed to supplement our biographical and historical review of the time period that influenced Holiday and the music she sang.

To support students in learning and appreciating of the aesthetics of swing and hip-hop music I will use a variety of lyrics and songs. Duke Ellington's "Take the A Train" and "It Don't Mean a Thing" could be examples from the swing era. Grand Master Flash's "The Message," The Fugees "The Masks" or Kanye West's "Diamonds from Sierra Leone" are songs I could use to demonstrate the poetic form found in some hip-hop music.

A detailed list of films, music videos and lyrics is provided in the annotated students resource, filmography and discography sections.

Classroom Activities / Lesson Plans

Presented here are 3 sample lesson plans to be used in this unit. Teachers can use the ideas for a single a single lesson or plan an entire integrated unit based upon the objectives and strategies aforementioned.

Sample Lesson Plan 1

Title: Strange Fruits: Finding Metaphors in the Music

Grade Range: 6th - 8th Grade

Subjects: Social Studies and Literacy (Reading and Writing):

Duration of Lesson: 2-4 Class Periods of at Least 45 Minutes.

Standard(s): Pennsylvania

Reading, Speaking # 1 & 2, Writing # 1, # 2 & 3: Asks relevant questions, and respond to questions; write in a variety forms; write for variety of purposes; and speak using effective communication skills. Social Studies Standard(s): culture, time continuity & change, people, places and environment.

Specific Goals

Identify significant events and people in the major eras of United States and world history.

Explain the history of slavery, racial and ethnic discrimination, and efforts to eliminate discrimination in the United States and elsewhere in the world.

Analyze how radio, movies, newspapers, and popular magazines created mass culture. Understand the relationships between music, history, and culture.

Use a variety of primary sources to gather information for research topics.

Use a variety of print and electronic sources to gather information for research topics (e.g., news sources such as magazines, radio, television, and newspapers; government publications; microfiche; telephone information services; databases; field studies; speeches; technical documents; periodicals; the Internet).

Understand metaphor and irony found in lyrics and literature.

Understand the concept of “strange fruit” in both a literal and figurative sense.

Read and analyze lyrics and poetry and write responses to irony and metaphors found in text.

Inquiry Question: How do lyrics help us understand literary and figurative language?

Warm Up Activity – Before Reading: Text Rendering

Students will first silently read the lyrics from “Strange Fruit,” then in groups of four read the lyrics aloud. After this, students will choose a word, phrase, or line that in some way affects them. As a whole class students will recite their selected word, phrase, or line from the lyrics.

Students will share aloud one word that summarizes their feelings after reading the lyrics of “Strange Fruit.” Afterwards, they will draw a picture of what strange fruit means to them.

Mini Lesson - Musical Time Line & Billie Holliday Biographical Graphic Organizer

Using PBS Kids interactive web site, <http://pbskids.org/jazz/time/index.html>, the teacher will present a musical time line depicting the places, key figures and events that created Jazz, America’s Classical Music. The students and teacher will read a biography of Billie Holliday and complete a biographical graphic organizer summarizing her experiences with racism, her personality traits, why she was famous, and her contributions to society.

Activities - Response to the Documentary *Strange Fruit*

Students will do a close viewing of the film *Strange Fruit* paying attention to how the lyrics of the song relate to the documentary. The teacher and students will explore the irony and metaphors found in the lyrics as well as discuss issues related to racism and injustice. Students’ response notes may cover the following questions.

What does the title “Strange Fruit” represent, what is the irony of this title?

What mood does Billie Holiday create when she sings the song?

Does the effect of seeing the video and hearing the song create a different mood to just reading the lyrics alone?

How does it make you feel to know that a white person wrote the lyrics of the song “Strange Fruit”?

If Billie Holliday never agreed to sing this song, do you think the lyrics would have the same effect on society?

At the end of the film, the filmmaker shows other artists singing the song “Strange Fruit.” What is the difference in the various interpretations of the song? What was it like to hear the song with a reggae style vs. a folksy blues style?

What examples of rap lyrics can you think of that use irony and metaphors?

After completing the discussion questions students will write a short 2-3 paragraph response, explaining the irony and metaphors found in the lyrics “Strange Fruit”. Students should also address how they feel about the issues of racism and injustice reflected in the film.

Wrap up or Extension—Waterfalls & Lady Sings the Blues

As a wrap up or follow up students may listen to the lyrics from TLC song *Waterfalls*. Students will use a Venn diagram to compare the irony and metaphors found in the songs *Waterfalls* and *Strange Fruit*. After completing the Venn diagram, students may explore which song is more effective and why. As an extension the students and teacher may view the Motown Film, *Lady Sings the Blues*. Students may reflect on how the theme of the Song *Waterfalls* relates to the Film *Lady Sing the Blues*.

Sample Lesson Plan 2

Title: Finding the roots of Jazz in Hip Hop – Comparing Jazz and Hip Hop

Grade Range: 6th - 8th Grade

Subjects: Social Studies and Literacy (Reading and Writing):

Duration of Lesson: 4-8 Class Periods of at Least 45 Minutes.

Standard(s): Pennsylvania

Reading, Speaking # 1 & 2, Writing # 1, # 2 & 3: Asks relevant questions, and respond to questions; write in a variety forms; write for variety of purposes; and speak using effective communication skills. Social Studies Standard(s): culture, time continuity & change, people, places and environment.

Specific Goals

Describe the characteristics of jazz, hip-hop music and poetry.

Compare and contrast the themes and lyrics of jazz, hip-hop music and poetry.

Analyze how poetry, jazz, hip-hop and poetry reflect the culture of the time.

Inquiry Question: What are the similarities and differences between swing jazz music and rap music?

Warm Up Activity –Swing and Hip-Hop Flow: Describing the Music

Students will listen to sample music samples from: Duke Ellington's "Take the A Train," "It Don't Mean a Thing;" Grand Master Flash's "The Message;" The Fugees "The Masks;" and Kanye West's "Diamonds from Sierra Leone." Students will use the following guidelines to record in their response notebooks the characteristics of each song:

Describe the beat and mood of the songs

What was the message of the song?

How did the song make them feel?

To whom was the message directed?

What words were used to convey the message?

What does the message say about the everyday lifestyle of people?

How were the messages similar or different?

Mini Lesson – Venn Diagram

The teacher will model how to construct a Venn diagram to compare and contrast how swing music and hip-hop music are different and alike. To make this mini-lesson interactive the teacher will use the International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English *Read-Write-Think* Web site resource to model how to compare and contrast music styles. (International Reading Association & NCTE 16 Feb. 2007)

Activities: Compare and Contrast Essay

Working in pairs or groups of fours students will create a plan and first draft of a compare and contrast essay. Students will compare and contrast a swing era song with a hip hop song. Students can select one of the songs heard during the warm up, or select other songs available of the Ken Burns PBS website. Students will come up with an attention grabbing introduction. Students will provide details on how the songs selected are alike and how they are different. Students will use appropriate transitional words – "both," "as well as," "similarly," "in contrast," etc. Students will use the Pennsylvania State Writing Assessment rubrics to guide compare and contrast essay. The essay should be proficient in its focus, content, organization, style and convention.

Wrap up or Extension – I Search Paper

After exploring swing and hip-hop music using compare and contrast essays, students will be in the position to direct their own inquiry project on how music from the swing and hip-hop eras are reflection on the times. Students will use the internet, as well as other secondary and primary sources to write their own first person narrative about their discovery of swing and hip-hop music and the connections that these musical styles share.

Sample Lesson Plan 3

Title: Using Metaphors to Make Our Own Social Protest Songs

Grade Range: 6th - 8th Grade

Subjects: Social Studies and Literacy (Reading and Writing):

Duration of Lesson: 6-8 Class Periods of at Least 45 Minutes.

Standard(s): Pennsylvania

Reading, Speaking # 1 & 2, Writing # 1, # 2 & 3: Asks relevant questions, and respond to questions; write in a variety forms; write for variety of purposes; and speak using effective communication skills. Social Studies Standard(s): culture, time continuity & change, people, places and environment.

Specific Goals

Produce, perform and exhibit music and spoken word poetry.

Display multi-media and visual arts products reflecting swing jazz and hip hop eras.

Demonstrate historical and cultural context of swing and hip-hop music.

Inquiry Question: Can metaphors and music make a difference?

Warm Up Activity - Write a poem about an important social issue.

Students will draft a poem about any important social issue. The poem could be about violence, pollution, poverty, bullying, teenage pregnancy or any topic that is important to students. Students will be encouraged to find effective ways to use metaphors to convey their message.

Mini Lesson – Revisiting Strange Fruit – Revising Poem

Teacher will guide students in revising their poems set to pattern of the Strange Fruit lyrics. Teacher and students will analyze the rhyming pattern of the poem – three stanzas AABB, CCDD, EEFF.

Activities - Music and Writer and Multi-Media Workshop

Working in groups of fours, students will form production teams to produce a digital rendition of their spoken word poems or music lyrics. Students will create digital storyboards based on their spoken word poem or music lyrics. The teacher and teaching artist will model for students how to complete a digital story using poetry and music. After students complete story boards, they will write a mini- screen play for a 1-3 minute digital spoken word or music video. Students may use images found during their I-Search project, as well as creating their own illustrations. Students will use a digital camera to record images to be used in their video. They will use I-movie during the post production of their digital spoken word poem or song.

Wrap up or Extension — Spoken Word and Music Cafe

This unit may culminate with a showcase celebration of students’ final products. With support from a community arts partnership such as the Philadelphia Arts Education Partnership or the Arts Sanctuary, students’ digital projects may be presented at outside venues.

Annotated Bibliography, Citations and Resources

Teachers Resources

Blackman, Toni “Rap Music Artist Discusses Hip-Hop, International Diplomacy.” USINFO Webchat Transcript. 1 August, 2006.
< <http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Archive/2006/Aug/01-973885.html>.> Blackman, the US ambassador to hip-hop discusses the role hip-hop plays throughout the world.

Burke, James. *Tools of Thought: graphic organizers for your classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002. A book written by Jim Burke of Burlingame High School, California, is a must have for teachers using graphic organizers for English and Humanities content.

- Condry Ian. *Hip-Hop Japan: Rap and the Paths of Cultural Globalizations*. Chapel Hill, N.C: Duke University Press, 2006. This book examines the influence of hip-hop in Japan and its global influence on popular culture.
- Dyson, Michael. E. *Between God and Gangsta Rap*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1996. Dyson, a noted hip hop scholar, provides critical insights into hip hop culture.
- Dyson, Michael E. *Holler if you hear me: Searching for Tupac Shakur*. New York: Basic Civitas Books. 2001. Dyson analyzes and critic the impact of the life of Tupac Shakur.
- Hellweg, E. "Hip Hop High." 15, Feb 2007.
<http://www.edutopia.org/magazine/ed1/article.php?id=art_1334&issue=sep_05.>
This article from Edutopia magazine describes how teachers are embracing hip hop in the classroom.
- Irby Decotue J. "Do the Knowledge: A Standards Based Learning Guide," 15 Feb 2007.
<<http://www.artsanctuary.org/site/artsanctuary/content.php?type=1&id=13548>.>
This resource guide developed by the Art Sanctuary with support by the Samuel Fels Foundation provides practical ideas for using hip-hop to teach reading, writing and critical thinking.
- International Reading Association & National Council of Teachers of English.
"ReadWrite Think: Student Materials: Venn Diagram." 16 Feb. 2007.
<http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/venn/index.html>. NCTE web site offers valuable tools like this interactive Venn diagram. This site could be used to model for students how to use Venn diagram to compare and contrast different styles of music.
- Jake, David, Pennington Mark E., Knodle Howard. A. "Using the Internet to Promote Inquiry-Based Learning." 15 Feb 2007.
<<http://www.biopoint.com/inquiry/ibr.html>.> This e-paper describes a structured approach to using the internet to support inquiry-based learning.
- Kastin David. *I Hear America Singing, An Introduction to Popular Music*. Upper Saddle River, NJ Prentice Hall. 2002. This book explores the evolution of popular music including but not limited to jazz, blues and hip hop
- Kitwana Bakari. *Hip-Hop Generation: Young Blacks and Crisis in African American Culture*. New York: Basic Civitas Books. 2002. This book provides an in depth study on hip-hop's influence on the post-civil rights generation.

Mancuso Chuck. *Popular Music and the Underground, Foundations of Jazz, Blues, Country and Rock 1900-1950*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/ Hunt Publishing Company. 1996. This book takes a comprehensive review of the musical stars and the music covering the first half of the 20th century. It provides great biographical information about jazz greats like Billie Holiday, Duke Ellington. Louis Armstrong.

Margolick David. *Strange Fruit: Billie Holliday, Café Society, and an Early Cry for Civil Rights*. Philadelphia, PA: Running Press. 2000. This book provides the historical background surrounding the song which the author credits as setting the stage for the Civil Rights Movement.

Perry Imani. *Prophets of the Hood, Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 2004. This book provides discourse and criticism on the complexities and contradictions of hip-hop culture.

Simkins M., Cole K., Tavlin F., Mean B. *Increasing Students Learning Through Multimedia Projects*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2002. This book published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development provides a format work for using multimedia for project based-learning classrooms.

Spies, M. "Die Another Day." The Village Voice. Feb 15, 2007.
<<http://www.villagevoice.com/music/0651.spies.75322.22.html>> This article demonstrates how contemporary hip-hop artist like Nas pay homage to the influence of jazz on hip-hop.

Teach With Movies. "Lady Sings the Blues." Feb 15, 2007.
<<http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides.html>> This web site offers lesson ideas for teaching Lady Sings the Blues and other movies in the classroom. There is a nominal annual fee to register to fully use this site.

Williams, Sherey A. *Two Words on Music: Black Community*. Black Popular Cultural A Project by Michele Wallace. Ed. Gina Dent. Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1992. Williams' discussion is a part of a series from "Discussions in Contemporary Culture." Her discourse describes how rap lyrics rely on figurative language that is connected with boasting. Her discussion also shows the connections between rap, blues, jazz and R&B.

Students' Resources

Rampersad Arnold, ed. *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*. New York NY:

Knopf, 1996, c1994. (Held by University of Virginia). Students may read selected Langston Hughes poems such as *The Weary Blues* and *Montage of A Dream Deferred*. These poems and other Hughes work can be found in many standard American Literature anthologies.

Terkel, Studs. *Giants of Jazz*. Alexandria, VA: Time Life, 2006. This book provides brief biographies of thirteen jazz musicians such as Billie Holliday, Louis Armstrong and John Coltrane. Students and teachers may use these biographies for secondary research for their inquiry projects.

Toyomi, Igu. *I see the Rhythm*. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press, 1998. This is a great picture book suitable for middle school students. The text is in prose poetry and pictures provide a useful time line which sets the social context, of various types of music. It shows the African origins from slave songs through ragtime; the blues; big band, bebop, and cool jazz; gospel; rhythm and blues; and the contemporary sounds of rock, hip-hop, and rap.

Ward, Geoffrey C., Burns Ken. *Jazz a History of America's Music*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf. I personally own a copy of this reference book for my classroom library. The book is based on Ken Burns' documentary film covering the history of Jazz. Students and teachers may use this book to support their inquiry projects.

Web Resources

Public Broadcasting Service. "Duke Ellington's Washington." 16 March 2007. <<http://www.pbs.org/ellingtonsd/>>. This site is based on the PBS film by Hendrick Smith Production. This site provides an interactive biography about Ellington Duke. The site shows how Washington DC nurtured his talents and that of many other African Americans.

Public Broadcasting Service. "Fooling with Words with Bill Moyer" 17 March 2007 <<http://pbs.org/foolingwithwords/>>. This is an excellent resource to show students noted poets recite bringing the musicality of poetry to the stage. The site includes the text and clips of Amiri Baraka and Lucille Clifton reading at the Dodge Poetry Festival.

Public Broadcasting Service. "Jazz. a Film by Ken Burns" 16 March 2007. <<http://www.pbs.org/jazz/>>. This site is based on the Ken Burns PBS Jazz series. The site has links for students and teachers. Sound recording and biographies can be reviewed interactively with students.

| Public Broadcasting Service. "The Hip-Hop Phenomenon: Online NewsHour" 24 Feb. 1999. 17 March 2007.

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/jan-june99/hiphop_2-24.html.>
This link provides an interactive transcript of a Jim Leher segment which provides commentary and insights about hip-hop. Interviews with Damon Dash and Ice Cube are include in video format.

Filmography and Discography

Ellington, Duke. *It Don't Mean A Thing* (Classical Recording Vol. 2. 1930-1934) Naxos Record, 1991. Our choir director uses this song in our middle school repertoire. Students can learn about scatting and apply this technique to spoken word poetry or jazz lyrics.

Hip Hop Legends. By Lightyear Video Dir. Mike Corbera, Tracey G. Underhill 2007 DVD. This film provides a rich history of hip-hop with exclusive interviews from pioneers of the industry. After viewing excerpts of this film students should have a better appreciation of the music style that represents the post-civil rights era.

Holliday, Billie. *Strange Fruit*. Verve Music Group 1939.
<http://www.pbs.org/jazz/video/audioplayer/jazzaudio_strangefruit.html.> This recording is available on PBS's Jazz series by Jen Burns.

JAZZ by Public Broadcasting Service. Dir. Ken Burns 2001 10 set DVD series. This gripping series show how Jazz America's classical music reflects the heart of Americas race problems. Students can view excerpts covering the swing jazz era as well follow the biographies of significant jazz greats

Jean Wyclef, Hill Lauryn, Pras, Duplessis Jerry. "The Mask." Ruffhouse Records, Columbia Records, 1996. The song combines hip-hop and reggae elements. The lyrics can be used to help students explore issues around self-identity.

Loops, Lisa with TLC. "Waterfalls." LaFace Record, 1994. This recording combines hip-hop and R&B elements. These lyrics can be used to show students the power of metaphors.

Sadler, Joseph. Grand Master Flash's "The Message." Sugarhill Records, 82. This classical hip-hop song can be used to demonstrate how rap lyrics used figurative language.

Strange Fruit. by Independent Television Series, Dir. Joel Katz, 2002 DVD. Oniera Films LLC. This documentary explores the history and legacy of a song made famous by Billie Holliday. I plan to send letters to parents explaining some of the images of lynching depicted in the film may be objectionable to some students.

Strayhorn, Billy with Duke Ellington's orchestra, "Take The A Train." (Original Recording Reissued) Prime Cuts, 1996 . The song has a classical swing sound. It could used the model the poetic pattern AABA form, in a lyric couplets. Students may want to use this pattern to compose their own jazz inspired lyrics.

West, Kanye. "Diamonds From Sierra Leone." Roc-A-Fela Records, 2005. This song used the James Bond Theme Diamonds are forever to describe the plight of West African children who mine diamonds. The lyrics of this song can demonstrate how contemporary artist use hip-hop to address important social issues.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Pennsylvania's Department of Education Academic Standards

The School District of Philadelphia's Core Curricula Standards are aligned with the Pennsylvania's Department of Education Standards. The Standards below are applicable for grades 6-8.

Standard: Reading #1

Apply effective reading strategies to comprehend, organize, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate texts to construct meaning.

Standard: Reading #2

Read a variety of materials including fiction and non-fiction, classic and contemporary texts from a diversity of cultures (especially African, Asian/Pacific, European, Latino, and Native American cultures), communication systems, and functional texts.

Standard: Reading #3

Read for a variety of purposes: to seek information; to apply knowledge; to enhance enjoyment; to engage in inquiry and research; to expand world views; to understand individuality, shared humanity, and the heritage of the people in our city as well as the contributions of a diversity of groups to American culture and other cultures throughout the world.

Standard: Literature

Listen to, read, recognize, and respond to literature as a record of human experience that provides individual perspective, promotes understanding of multiple perspectives, and reflects the importance of cultural influences.

Standard: Writing #1

Plan, draft, revise, and publish writing using correct grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, spelling, and effective vocabulary, appropriate to the purpose, context, and audience.

Standard: Writing #2

Write for academic, personal, social, civic, and school-to-career purposes.

Standard: Writing #3

Write in a variety of forms including journals, essays, stories, letters, plays, poems, and reports using figurative, descriptive, literary, and technical language.

Standard: Writing #4

Conduct and document inquiry-based research using oral, print, and communications systems.

Standard: Speaking #1

Speak for a variety of purposes including informing, persuading, questioning, problem solving, sharing ideas and stories, reaching consensus, and responding sensitively and respectfully using language appropriate to the context, audience, and purpose.

Standard: Speaking #2

Speak using effective communication skills including enunciation, inflection, volume, fluency, and non-verbal gestures.

Standard: Listening #1

Listen actively for a variety of purposes including comprehending, interpreting, analyzing, evaluating, responding effectively, and for enjoyment

Standard: Listening #2

Recognize the diversity of oral English language use, patterns, and dialects, and understand its implications across social contexts, cultures, ethnic groups, and geography.

Standard: Viewing

View media, technology, and live performances for a variety of purposes including gathering information, making informed judgments, processing information, and for enjoyment.

Social Studies Standards;

Culture

Demonstrate an understanding of culture and how culture affects the individual and society.

Time, Continuity, and Change

Analyze historical events, conditions, trends and issues to understand the way human beings view themselves, their institutions, and others, now and over time, to enable them to make informed choices and decisions.

People, Places, and Environment

Apply geographic skills and knowledge to demonstrate an understanding of how geography affects people, places, movement, and environments.

Individuals, Groups and Institutions

Demonstrate an understanding of the role of individuals, groups, and institutions and how their actions and interactions exert powerful influences on society.

Appendix 2

I SEARCH

Music and Place – Jazz and Hip-Hop

KWL CHART

What do you Know? | What do you think you Will learn? | What did you Learn?