ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What caused The Beatles to cease touring in 1966 and how did the innovative music they then created during their subsequent immersion in the recording studio both reflect and influence the world at that time?

OVERVIEW

The “Beatlemania” that swept much of the world in 1964 was so intense that many pundits projected it could not sustain beyond a year. However, the opposite was true. By 1966 The Beatles, who had played tiny pubs only a few years earlier, graduated from multi-night theater engagements to sports stadiums. As was often the case throughout The Beatles’ history, they were the first; no group had yet performed in venues this size. As trailblazers, The Beatles discovered many ways in which the technologies of producing live music events were not yet capable of supporting their needs. For instance, P.A. systems—the microphones, mixing boards and speakers through which sound is projected at concerts—were inadequate at these venues. The Beatles had no “monitor” speakers on stage and strained to hear one another over the screaming audience. And it could be hard for that audience as well: at Shea Stadium in New York, The Beatles sang through the tinny, pole-mounted speakers used by The Mets’ announcer to introduce baseball players. There were physical dangers too. On stage, rain meant the very real possibility of electrocution. Unlike the fortified boundaries between performers and fans one finds at present-day venues, The Beatles were exposed to their audience on nearly all sides at all times. Fans rushed the stage at concerts and blocked roads and swarmed The Beatles’ vehicles elsewhere.

By the end of their 1966 summer tour, The Beatles had grown weary of the live concert setting. Concurrently, they had become increasingly comfortable within, and inspired by the possibilities of the recording studio. In the fall of 1966, in a culminating moment, The Beatles announced that they would no longer tour and would instead focus their creative energy on making records.

Though The Beatles had already demonstrated a penchant for invention in the recording studio, Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band, their first post-touring effort released in June 1967, was revolutionary in its use of studio technology, its diverse instrumentation, its unified character as a “concept album,” and in The Beatles’ “surrealistic” approach to rendering popular song. It
was widely influential at the time and has never become less so. In 2012, a large panel of musicians and writers in Rolling Stone named Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band the “most important rock and roll album ever made.”

However, The Beatles were not the only entity undergoing transformation in the mid-1960s. The teenagers of the “Baby Boomer” generation, a demographic that represented more than 40% of the U.S. population in 1965 and was the driving force of Beatlemania, were now reaching adulthood. Though the voting age was 21, the draft age was 18, and American presence in Vietnam was rapidly increasing. The “Human Be-In,” a sit-in protest of 20,000 to 30,000 people held at Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, CA in January of 1967, addressed a wide swath of social, political and cultural issues generally linked to the new teenaged and young adult majority in the United States. Press coverage of the Human Be-In inspired a massive wave of young people to descend on San Francisco and other U.S. cities in 1967. The “Summer of Love,” as it came to be known, began technically on June 21, 1967. Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band landed on American shelves June 2. Like their fans, The Beatles had grown. The Human Be-In asked Americans to open themselves to a new political consciousness. Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band presented listeners with the opportunity to experience a new musical consciousness. Both belonged to and defined their historical moment.
Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

1. **KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):**
   - About the Baby Boomer generation as a shaping cultural force in mid-1960s America
   - About the Vietnam War and its effect on American popular culture in the mid-1960s
   - About the “Summer of Love” and major events of 1967
   - How The Beatles’ stadium tours in 1965-6 pushed the boundaries of concert technology
   - Why The Beatles decided to stop touring in 1966
   - How The Beatles 1967 album Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band made groundbreaking use of studio technology
   - How The Beatles reflected the cultural climate of the “Summer of Love”

2. **BE ABLE TO (SKILLS):**
   - Interpret a range of media, including songs, images, and text to develop and demonstrate an understanding of a particular historical period
   - Make connections between popular music and historical events
   - Extrapolate arguments about music by assessing sound, mood, tone, instrumentation

**ACTIVITIES**

**MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY:**

1. In what ways do you think music can reflect the time period in which it is made? (Encourage your students to think about this from many angles: the use of technology, attitudes about “appropriateness,” the topical content of lyrics, etc.)

2. In what ways do you think music can influence the world in which it is made?

3. Can you think of any current music that somehow express “now” to you? Why and in what ways?
PROCEDURE:

1. Ask your students if they have ever heard of “Beatlemania.” Inform them that beginning in 1963, The Beatles achieved an unprecedented level of global popularity. In the U.S., this was largely with young people of the “Baby Boomer” generation, most of whom were in their teens at the time. Play Clip 1, “The Beatles’ Stadium Tours” and ask your students:
   - Why do you think Larry Kane suggests that The Beatles had no choice but to play such large venues?
   - What kind of challenges do you think The Beatles faced as they moved their shows from established music venues such as 3,000-5,000 seat theaters to new larger venues with capacities up to 50,000 that had never been used for music?

2. Play Clip 2, “The End of the Touring Years.” Tell your students to use a piece of paper to keep track of: A. The instruments The Beatles use on stage and, B. The reasons the members of The Beatles cite for their decision to stop touring. Discuss as a class:
   - What instruments do you see on stage?
   - What are some of the reasons The Beatles give for their decision to stop touring?
   - Why do you think John Lennon describes The Beatles’ stadium shows as being a “freak show” or akin to a “circus” and that for many fans, “the music had nothing to do with it?”
   - What do you think would be different if The Beatles were performing in stadiums today?

3. Distribute Handout 1 - A Day in the Life and Surrealism in the Recording Studio and read the introduction as a class. Play Clip 3, “A Day in the Life” from The Beatles 1 collection and instruct your students to complete the worksheet while listening. After the worksheet is complete, discuss the four questions as a class.


5. Inform your students that Dali is a celebrated artist of the surrealist movement. Ask your class:
   - What do you think makes this painting “surrealistic”?
   - How do you think time is represented in this painting?
   - Can you relate this picture to “A Day in the Life” in any way?
   - Can you think of any ways that multitrack recording might have helped The Beatles achieve a surrealistic quality to their music? (Encourage students to consider how multitracking allowed The Beatles to layer sounds made at different times and by different people but still present them as being “one” piece of music. Like Dali does here, The Beatles used multitracking to create an experience that was not achievable in “real” time.)

6. Ask students if they know anything about the United States in the late 1960s, the time frame in which The Beatles stopped touring and recorded Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band. Now show Clip 4, “Peace March” (archival news footage from April 1967). Have your students take notes during the clip to address the following questions:
   - What social groups and political factions do you hear the narrator introduce? Are there more than two parties involved in these protests?
   - Write as many of the words as you can that the
PROCEDURE: (CONTINUED)
narrator uses to describe people at these events

• What is the official government response to these events?

7. Discuss your students’ notes on the “Peace March” clip as a class. Now distribute Handout 2 - 1967 and read it out loud as a class. Ask your class:

• What do you think made many in the Baby Boomer generation feel “alienated” in 1967?

• In what ways do you think “A Day in the Life” might have reflected musically what many who participated in the “Summer of Love” wished to reflect socially or politically? (Encourage your students to consider how The Beatles’ musical paradigm shift might have sounded to young people pushing for a social and political paradigm shift.)

8. Compare the following photos of The Beatles, one from 1964, one from 1967.

9. Discuss with your class:

• Visually, how have The Beatles changed between 1964-67?

• Do you see anything in the second photo that might represent the values of those involved in the “Summer of Love”?

SUMMARY ACTIVITY:

• In what ways do you think Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band might have represented the time period in which it was made?

• Having learned about 1967 as a year in American culture and music, can you think of any recent times during which music and American life have been so closely related?

WRITING PROMPTS:

1. Read the following articles:


• Excerpt from 500 Greatest Albums of All Time, Rolling Stone, 31 May 2012

2. Compare and contrast the two articles in a short essay addressing the following questions:

• What is the overall conclusion about Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band in each article?

• What descriptive terms does Richard Goldstein use to describe Sgt. Pepper’s?

• Are there any recurring analogies in Goldstein’s analysis of “A Day in the Life”? Do you think these are fair? Do you think The Beatles’ creativity was actually tied to these?

• Knowing what you’ve learned about the groundbreaking nature of Sgt. Pepper’s, why do you think Goldstein responded to it the way he did?
WRITING PROMPTS: (CONTINUED)

• Looking at the first paragraph of the Rolling Stone article, why do you think that 45 years later Sgt. Pepper’s is so revered?

• What is Goldstein’s response to The Beatles’ decision to substitute recordings for touring?

• Both lyrically and musically, how does “A Day in the Life” sound to you? Write your own short analysis of the song.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

College and Career Readiness Reading Anchor Standards for Grades 6-12 for English Language Arts

Reading 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Reading 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Reading 3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Reading 8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Reading 9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Writing 2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Speaking and Listening 2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Speaking and Listening 3: Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

Language 1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
Language 2: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing

**SOCIAL STUDIES – NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES (NCSS)**

Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change

Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

National Standards for Music Education

**Core Music Standard: Responding**

Analyze: Analyze the structure and context of varied musical works and their implications for performance

Enduring Understanding: Analyzing creators’ context and how they manipulate elements of music provides insight into their intent and informs performance

Essential Question: How do performers select repertoire?

- Identify how cultural and historical context inform performances [MU: Pr4.2.6c]
- Identify how cultural and historical context inform performances and result in different musical effects [MU: Pr4.2.8c]

**Core Music Standard: Performing**

Interpret: Support interpretations of musical works that reflect creators’/performers’ expressive intent

Enduring Understanding: How do we discern the musical creators’ and performers’ expressive intent?

Essential Question: How do we discern the musical creators’ and performers’ expressive intent?

- Describe a personal interpretation of how creators’ and performers’ application of the elements of music and expressive qualities, within genres and cultural and historical context, convey expressive intent [MU: Re8.1.6a]

**Core Music Standard: Connecting**

Connecting 11: Relate musical ideas and works to varied contexts and daily life to deepen understanding.

Enduring Understanding: Understanding connections to varied contexts and daily life
enables musicians’ creating, performing, and responding.

Essential Question: How do the other arts, other disciplines, contexts and daily life inform creating, performing, and responding to music?

Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life. [MU:Cn11.0.6a, 7a, 8a]

**RESOURCES**

**VIDEO RESOURCES**
- The Beatles 1+ – A Day in the Life
- The Beatles: Eight Days a Week – The Touring Years
  - The Beatles’ Stadium Tours
- News Reel – Peace March
- The Beatles: Eight Days a Week – The Touring Years
  - The End of Touring Years

**FEATURED PEOPLE**
- The Beatles

**HANDOUTS**
- Handout 1: A Day in the Life and “Surrealism” in the Recording Studio
- Handout 2: 1967