ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How did the Beatles’ image as a “rock band” affect young people in America?

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students learn about the impact of The Beatles on their teenage audience, particularly in relation to the group’s image as a “rock band.”

The “teenager” was a concept that changed the character of American life in the years following WW II. Where earlier many young people had gone into the workforce at an early age, now a post-war prosperity increased teenage leisure time and spending. The teenagers of the 1950s and 1960s experienced a new independence. When The Beatles “arrived” in America, particularly through their launch on The Ed Sullivan Show, young people saw something new: a pop act that seemed not like some distant, almost unreal entity, as Elvis Presley had, but a group, a gang, that seemed close, like peers. Theirs was an image that allowed the band member’s distinct personalities to emerge as much as it created a sense of the group as one. It appealed to young people, many of whom wanted to form their own such gangs. It was a moment of empowerment for teenagers. The Beatles were funny, smart, approachable, and capable of doing great things, particularly as a group. The day after the Ed Sullivan performance, rock bands popped up everywhere across the country.
Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):
   - About the emergence of “the teenager” as a demographic phenomenon
   - About changes in the perception of “youth culture,” including the Fair Rights Act of 1938 and “The High School” movement during the first half of the 20th century
   - How economic development and social forces helped to create the concept of the “teenage” years between childhood and adulthood
   - How American industries marketed to teenagers
   - About generational shifts and the “generation gap” of the 1960s
   - About The Beatles’ impact on global popular culture and the “youth movement”
   - About The Beatles’ effect on emerging “rock band” culture

2. BE ABLE TO (SKILLS):
   - Recognize how economic and social forces shape perceptions of age
   - Analyze the “cues” groups of people find in elements of popular culture
   - Analyze source documents to draw conclusions about historical social movements
   - Assimilate information from a timeline

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY:

Play Clip 1, “Beatlemania.” Have your students write notes about what the people interviewed say when they talk about The Beatles. Then ask your students:

- Why do you think one of the young people interviewed states that The Beatles “represent the teenage people?”
- What is a “teenager”? Does the word “teenager” suggest more than a set of numbers?
- How are you spending your teenage years? If you’re not yet a teenager, what do you expect from your teenage years?
PROCEDURE:

1. Distribute Handout 1 - Teenager Timeline and read it out loud as a class. Ask your students:
   - How do you think the various changes outlined here opened a space in American culture for the concept of the “teenager”?
   - Why do you think there was no concept of the “teenager” before the 20th century?

2. Divide your students into small groups and distribute Handout 2 - The U.S. Teen-Age Consumer Excerpt. Have each group name one student the “scribe” who will record the group's answers to the following questions:
   - In what way does this article consider the “teenager” a phenomenon?
   - Why do you think teenagers are such a powerful consumer group?
   - In what ways do you think teenagers manage and use money differently than adults?
   - How do you feel similar to or different from a teen of the 1950s? Do you spend money in any of the categories mentioned in the article? Which ones?

3. Discuss each group’s response to the questions as a class.

4. Replay Eight Days A Week Clip 1. This time tell your students to focus on The Beatles’ appearance and what the young fans say they like most about them. Ask your students:
   - Why do you think Liverpool was targeted directly by the German bombing campaign? (Help your students recognize that Liverpool was a port city and a gateway for supplies to the country.)
   - How would you describe the Beatles’ fans you see in this clip?
   - How are The Beatles like or unlike their fans?
   - Do the fans seem to have a favorite Beatle?
   - What did you hear the fans say they like about The Beatles?
   - What do you think these fans might have found inspiring about The Beatles’ image as “confident” and “natural”?

5. Have your students compare the following image of the early Beatles with this image of Elvis Presley and ask:
   - How is the group’s image different from the image of Elvis Presley?
   - Who seems more “natural”?
   - Where do you think The Beatles’ lives fit into the Teenager Timeline Handout?

6. Play Eight Days A Week Clip 2, “Malcolm Gladwell on International Teen Culture in the Mid-1960s,” and ask your students:
   - Using Gladwell’s term, what “cues” do you think young Beatles fans were looking for and finding in The Beatles’ music and image?
   - What did The Beatles represent that was important to their fans?
   - Why do you think young people in the mid-1960s might have needed The Beatles?
   - Why was it important that The Beatles were a group?

7. Ask your students if they know anything about events in the United States during the onset of Beatlemania, roughly 1963-4. Then distribute Handout 3 - The Generation Gap. Allow your students time to read the text and respond to the questions on the handout. Discuss the handout questions as a class. Now show the Clip 3, ABC News - “Americans React to the Assassination of...
PROCEDURE: (CONTINUED)

John F. Kennedy,” and ask your students:

• What opposing forces do you see on the timeline?

• Do you think young people were looking for an image of a small community that was separate from the parent generation? Why or why not?

• If the 1960s marked the beginning of a “generation gap,” how would events such as JFK’s assassination and race riots cause young people to pull away from the worlds of their parents to find something new, such as The Beatles’ “rock band” image?

8. Now play Clip 4, “A Hard Day’s Night” from The Beatles 1 collection and ask your students:

• How do you think this video represents The Beatles as a group of young people?

• Does it seem like The Beatles have fun?

• Does what they do—their music and presence on stage—seem attainable to others? (Explain to your students that The Beatles inspired the first wave of American “garage bands.” As Stevie Van Zandt told a LA CityBeat reporter, “Before The Beatles, there were no bands...On February 14th [1964, immediately following their debut Ed Sullivan performance] everybody wanted to start a band.”)

9. Play Clip 5, “‘Four Votes’: The Unity of the Beatles,” and ask your students:

• Thinking of all that you have learned today about the teenagers of the early 1960s, do you think the unity of The Beatles was an important factor in their early success? Why? What did their togetherness represent to teenagers at the time?

SUMMARY ACTIVITY:

Ask students whether there is something or someone in their own lives or the current teenage generation that is a model for them. Ask students:

• Do teens today have a Beatles of their own? Or do you have a Beatles of your own? If so, why do teens/you need this model?

WRITING PROMPTS:

Distribute the article “What Causes Beatlemania” from KRLA Beat, October 9, 1965. Have your students write a short essay, responding to the following questions:

• What do you think The Beatles represented to these young fans?

• Why do you think their fanhood manifested so physically? Why did they want to “grasp” The Beatles so closely?

• What do you think happened for fans in that “one brief moment” when The Beatles were “real”?

• Do you think it made a difference to these young fans that they were in such large groups together?

• Are there any people or places in your life that capture a similar intensity?

• Do you think Beatlemania could happen in the current world? Why or why not?
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 4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone

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

Writing 1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence

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

Speaking and Listening 4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience

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

Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change

Theme 3: People, Places, and Environments

Theme 4: Individual, Development and Identity

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?

Identity how cultural and historical context inform performances [MU: Pr4.2.6c]

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

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 enhances 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, and 8a]

RESOURCES

VIDEO RESOURCES
• The Beatles: Eight Days a Week – The Touring Years
  “Four Votes”: The Unity of the Beatles
• ABC News Archives – Americans React to the Assassination of John F. Kennedy
• The Beatles: Eight Days a Week – The Touring Years
  Malcolm Gladwell on International Teen Culture in the Mid-1960’s
• The Beatles 1+ – A Hard Day’s Night
• The Beatles: Eight Days a Week – The Touring Years Beatlemania

FEATURED PEOPLE
• The Beatles

HANDOUTS
• Handout 1: Teenager Timeline
• Handout 2: The U.S. Teen-Age Consumer Excerpt
• Handout 3: The Generation Gap