



# INTRODUCING GLAM ROCK

## OVERVIEW

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How was Glam Rock a reaction to the “seriousness” of popular music at the time?

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In the wake of the somber introspection of the Singer-Songwriter movement, Glam Rock brought a sense of theater back to Rock and Roll.

With artists such as James Taylor and Gordon Lightfoot becoming major figures on the international popular music scene, many considered Rock and Roll to be losing its connection to the “show.” For listeners who grew up with R&B, it was clear that things had shifted. If a James Brown live show included dance, costume, and theatrics, a James Taylor live show included none of that. Earnest, stripped down, often presented by a solo artist with a guitar or piano, the music of the Singer Songwriter movement aimed at intimacy and honesty.

Glam Rock was a kind of reaction, an unsettling opening up of the possibilities. It took different forms, from Roxy Music’s Pop Art approach to Slade’s back-to-basics Rock and Roll to David Bowie’s theater of identity. But, across the board, it brought the “show” back to popular music.

This preliminary lesson centers on an investigation of Glam as a reaction. Through a set of comparisons, students will be asked to describe what they see as Glam Rock’s fundamental characteristics.



## OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

### 1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):

- The importance of David Bowie, Sweet, Slade, and Roxy Music as exemplars of the Glam Rock tradition
- The role of theater and the theatrical in Glam Rock performance
- The differences between the character of Singer-Songwriter performance style and that of Glam Rock

### 2. BE ABLE TO (SKILLS):

- Extrapolate arguments about music by assessing sound, mood, tone, instrumentation
- Draw connections among various print, audio and visual texts
- Write creatively for personal and/or small group expression
- Compare and contrast texts, arguments and ideas
- Common Core: Students will work together to probe the meaning of theatrical and examine how it is used to describe a musical performance (CCSS Reading 5; CCSS Speaking and Listening 1; CCSS Speaking and Listening 2; CCSS Language 5)

## ACTIVITIES

### MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY:

**1. Show the clips of Jackson Browne performing the song “Before the Deluge.” As they watch, tell students to consider these questions:**

- What is the mood of the performance?
- Does Browne appear to be focused on the audience as he performs? Describe the performance style as it relates to the conventions of musical showmanship.

**2. Show the clip of David Bowie performing the song “Rebel Rebel.” Ask students to write notes about what they see but wait before they begin to compare the songs and the performance styles.**

## PROCEDURE:

1. Divide students into pairs. Ask them to pick four adjectives for each of the performances. They could be addressing the clothes, the dance, the music—let them be free in what they comment on.
2. After a few minutes, have each pair share their adjectives, while you write the words down. Once the words have been gathered, ask the class to select which words (and, by extension, which artist) relate more to the theatrical possibilities of performance.
3. Once they have done this, ask the class to define what they think “theatrical” means in relation to musical performance.
4. Lastly, explain that Glam Rock attempted to bring back to Rock and Roll the theater that early Rock and Roll had. By way of illustration, show a clip of Little Richard performing “Tutti Frutti.” Ask the class if they think he is closer to Glam Rock or the Singer-Songwriter style, and why.

## SUMMARY ACTIVITY:

Show the class two clips: the first of Slade performing “Mama Weer All Crazee Now” and the second of Sweet performing “Blockbuster.” Ask the students to explain why, based on these clips, these two acts were grouped in with the Glam Rock moment.

## EXTENSIONS:

1. Have students read and respond to the article from Rock’s Backpages about David Bowie, written by Lenny Kaye. How, they should ask themselves, does Lenny Kaye write about David Bowie’s identity, about his theatrical style, about his showmanship? And, lastly, how might he describe a performance by a Singer Songwriter like Jackson Browne?
2. Design and create cover art for a Glam Rock band of your own creation.
3. Assign students to research the artists Andy Warhol and Marcel Duchamp, both of whom are mentioned in the Rock’s Backpages article about Roxy Music. Why might those artists be important to a Glam Rock performer such as Bryan Ferry of Roxy Music. For additional information about Ferry, see the two interview clips in the resources.

## STANDARDS

### COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

*College and Career Readiness Reading Anchor Standards for Grades 6-12 for Literature and Informational Text*

Reading 5: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

*College and Career Readiness Writing Anchor Standards for Grades 6-12 in English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects*

Speaking and Listening 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

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

*College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language for Grades 6-12*

Standard 5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

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

Theme 1: Culture

Theme 4: Individual Development and Identity

Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

### NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

*Core Music Standard: Responding*

Analyze: Analyze how the structure and context of varied musical works inform the response.

Interpret: Support interpretations of musical works that reflect creators' and/or performers' expressive intent.

Evaluate: Support evaluations of musical works and performances based on analysis, interpretation, and established criteria.

### *Core Music Standard: Connecting*

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

## RESOURCES

### VIDEO RESOURCES

- Jackson Browne – Before the Deluge (1976)
- Slade – Mama, Weer All Crazy Now (1972)
- Sweet – Blockbuster (1973)
- David Bowie – Rebel Rebel (1974)

### FEATURED PEOPLE

- David Bowie
- Jackson Browne
- Roxy Music
- Slade
- Sweet