



BEYONCÉ, SANTANA, AND RHYTHM AS A REPRESENTATION OF PEOPLE AND PLACE

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How does “the beat” of popular music reflect the histories of multiethnic populations and places?

OVERVIEW

At different times in American history, rhythm has been a contested issue. Within the cultural “melting pot” of the nation, both the way people feel rhythms and musical meter and the instruments they use to express them have sometimes been interpreted as “dangerous.”



During the years in which slavery was a part of American life, the ships that crossed the Atlantic Ocean en route to the Americas, ships carrying African slaves, also brought the music and dance traditions of these people. Many of these traditions were rich with rhythmic complexity. Even today the rhythms we think of as “the beat” in popular music carry traces of the West African music brought to the Americas by slaves, and nearly all of the music we hear now is the result of musical and cultural mixing between the many ethnic populations that have cohabited here since. Music has always been a meeting place, sometimes challenging the “official” systems of social organization.

When the slave trade was in practice, each colony and country responded differently to the cultural practices of the forced labor that drove their economies. In Cuba, slaves were permitted to gather at specific times. In these communal moments music and dance traditions from throughout West Africa were both maintained and adapted to their new home. Slaves identified as having musical talent were also required to learn Spanish dance music and perform for plantation owners. Modern Cuban music is a germination of these dual influences, the African and the Spanish. But throughout the slave territories of the American South, with the singular exception of New Orleans, African drumming was forbidden. In West Africa, drums are used to communicate across long distances--rhythm conveying a language, much like Morse Code--and plantation owners were afraid that drumming could be used to incite revolt. However, West African rhythmic traditions were not lost so much as filtered into permissible musical experiences: singing and clapping in religious settings, call and response vocal during field work, and in playing stringed instruments such as the banjo, violin and later guitar.

OVERVIEW (CONTINUED)

Many think of current popular music as decidedly “American.” Yet just beneath the surface, popular music, like all music, is rich with bits of musical information about its sources, the places from which its component parts came and the people who performed those parts. As percussionist Sheila E. says of Latin Salsa music in Soundbreaking Episode Five, “it’s my DNA, it’s the foundation of who I am.”

This lesson explores several strands of the musical “DNA” that make up the beat of popular music. Looking to the past, this lesson asks what it means to call music “Afro-Cuban” “Afro-Caribbean,” or more broadly, “African-American.” Students will use Soundbreaking clips of Santana and Beyoncé and the Soundbreaking Rhythmic Layers TechTools to locate in American popular music influences stemming from the African-American church, Latin America and West Africa. Students will then explore the ways “the beat” of this music has, to some listeners, been perceived as “dangerous” while, for others, it is believed that music has been able to challenge obstacles of racism and segregation, bringing people from varied ethnic groups and lifestyles together in ways that words and laws could not.



OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):

- Basic history of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade
- Specific details about slavery in Cuba and the American South
- How West African cultural ideas were retained and reimagined by enslaved populations
- Elements of Latin-American music including specific instruments and their West African or European origins
- The cultural connections between New York, Puerto Rico and Cuba that created the “Nuyorican” cultural landscape

2. BE ABLE TO (SKILLS):

- Consider the ways in which colonialism affected cultural practices
- Discuss the ways in which the cultural practices of immigrant and minority groups can influence the dominant culture
- Articulate how elements of music culture reflect people and place
- Understand connections between popular culture and the time, place and social circumstances in which it was created
- Discuss how the careers of particular artists reflect the attitudes of the society from which they emerged
- Make connections between popular culture and historical events such as urbanization and segregation
- Integrate and evaluate information presented in visual, oral and audio formats

ACTIVITIES

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY:

Ask your students the following questions, keeping track of answers on the board:

- Is there music in your life that says something about who you are? What about this music do you think represents you and why? (Students may think of songs that are sung in the family, something that represents their culture, or certain pop songs that “speak” for them. All answers are valid.)
- Is the music of your family heritage among the music that represents you? What is it, and in what ways does it express something about your heritage?

PROCEDURE:

1. Show Clip 1, Soundbreaking - “Gospel Music of the Southern U.S.” and ask your students:

- There is no drummer in this group, so how is the group creating the “driving beat” that Jason King mentions? (Students may notice that the singers create multi-layered rhythms with clapping and also that their vocals are rhythmic. The “call and response” style of the lead vocalist and the three background singers also creates rhythm.)
- Does the lead singer only sing words? What else do you hear her sing? (Students may notice that she extends the lyrics, using non-verbal syllables and her breath to create a defined rhythm.)

2. Distribute Handout 1: African Music and “Spirituals” in the U.S. South and have your students take turns reading the paragraphs out loud, following the slave ship routes across the Atlantic and noting the number of people moved to the Americas from West Africa. Have your students recall the lyrics of the first song the vocal quartet was singing in Clip 1 (replay it if necessary) and ask:

- Having now read about the suppression of drumming in the U.S. and thinking back to Clip 1, in what ways do you hear what we might call “a beat” in the music even in the absence of drums?

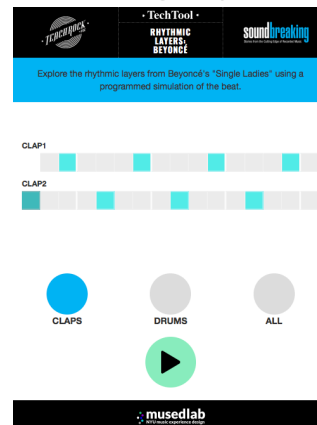
3. Show Clip 2, Soundbreaking - “‘Single Ladies’ and the Church.” Ask your students:

- Does “Single Ladies” sound like a “church” song to you? If yes, how? If no, why?
- What instruments do you hear on “Single Ladies”? (Students may notice that other than a few synthesized bass notes and the “quirky sound,” it is entirely drums, clapping and vocals.)
- The-Dream says that from the hand clap sound used in “Single Ladies,” he is, “thinking about

the Southern [U.S.]...about church, I can see the paper fans and the wooden benches.” Why do you think the sound of a hand clap conjures so much imagery for him? Does “Single Ladies” evoke any similar feelings for you?

- Tricky Stewart says he was trying to “connect the dots” with the beat of “Single Ladies.” What connections do you think he is trying to make? (Students may infer that Stewart is creating a connection between the past and present by juxtaposing, first, modern drum sounds with “church clapping” and, second, Beyoncé, a present-day African-American woman of fame, wealth and cultural power, with a musical tradition developed during a time when blacks could only safely express themselves by subverting power.)

4. Open the Soundbreaking Rhythmic Layers – Beyoncé TechTool that will allow the class to hear a programmed simulation of the component parts of “Single Ladies” using the following steps:



Begin by selecting and playing the “Claps” track. This track demonstrates the “hand claps” of the beat in isolation. Then ask the class:

- Does this sound evoke any images to you? Why?
- Are these claps alone enough to sound like “a beat” to you?
- Do these claps sound “modern” to you? Would you expect to hear a track like this on a pop song?

Now unselect the “Claps” track and select the “Drums” track. Ask your students:

- Does this sound evoke any images or feelings to you?

PROCEDURE: (CONTINUED)

- Where would you expect to hear a beat like this?

Now select “All” to play both the “Claps” and “Drum” tracks together and ask your students:

- In what ways can you hear the juxtaposition of sounds of which Beyoncé’s producers spoke?

5. Tell your students that you will now follow a similar thread of rhythmic and cultural mixing as occurred between Latin American music and Rock. Ask your students the following question and write their answers on the board:

- When you think of a Rock band, what instruments come to mind?

6. Tell your students that when Santana appeared at Woodstock they were a new act, yet to release an album. Santana’s instrumentation was similar to most rock bands, except they also featured two Latin-style percussionists. Play Clip 3, Soundbreaking - The Santana Drum Break from the Woodstock festival and ask your students:

- Are there any instruments featured here that you’re not accustomed to seeing in a rock band? (Students may notice the inclusion of percussion instruments.)
- Do these instruments make you think of a place or certain people? (Students may suggest the drums are from Africa, Latin America, or even recognize them as something associated with certain cultures of the U.S.)
- In what ways do you think featuring these Latin Percussion instruments in their performance might have marked Santana as different from other bands on the Woodstock festival?

7. Distribute Handout 2: Santana and Afro-Cuban Rock and have your students read the paragraphs out loud. Ask your students:

- How do you think the attitude of the Spanish slave owners toward music differed from

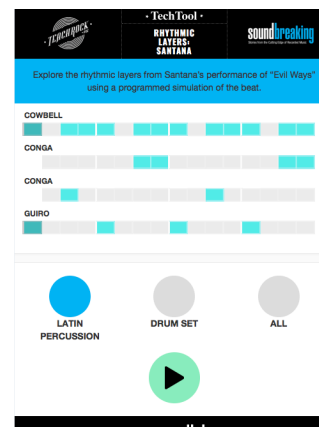
that of the British and early Americans who practiced slavery we discussed earlier in this lesson?

- What musical affect do you think this different attitude would have had? Can you see it reflected in Santana?

8. Play Clip 4, Soundbreaking - Santana and Latin Rock. Ask your students:

- What do you think made the San Francisco area in the 1960s an ideal musical “laboratory” for Carlos Santana? (Students may suggest that San Francisco was a diverse area culturally, and the 1960s was a time of people opening up to and accepting ideas from outside of the dominant, white culture.)
- Why do you think Ashley Kahn describes Santana’s work as “getting these different languages to talk one language together”? (Encourage your students to think about language as another marker of place and ethnicity. Santana managed to merge the “languages” of different types of music into a sound that reflected his Latin music “language” yet didn’t come across as unintelligible or “foreign” to the predominantly white rock audience of Woodstock.)

9. Open the Soundbreaking Rhythmic Layers – Santana TechTool. Using this TechTool, students can explore a programmed simulation of the drum and percussion parts of “Evil Ways” in isolation and together using the following steps:



Play the “Drum set” part. Ask your students:

PROCEDURE: (CONTINUED)

- Does this sound “Latin” to you?
- Can you imagine this beat on any songs you know? (Students may have many ideas about this because it is a fairly common drum groove that one could hear in almost any song.)

Now select the “Latin Percussion” part. Inform students that they are hearing the conga, the cowbell and the güiro (SEE PICTURES) and ask:



- Does this sound like a “Rock” song to you? If not, what does it sound like?

- Why do you think these sounds evoke the idea of “Latin” to so many people? Do you usually hear these sounds and rhythms in Rock music?

Select the “All” button to play the “Drum” and “Percussion” tracks together. Ask students:

- When we add the Rock drums and the Latin percussion together, does one seem dominant?
- Do you think the two sets of instruments and rhythms fit comfortably together?
- Do you think someone could include percussion like this in a Rock song and not evoke a sense of Latin influence? Why or why not? (Encourage students to consider how the actual instruments of conga and cowbell evoke the idea of Latin heritage.)

SUMMARY ACTIVITY:

Discuss as a class Sheila E.’s description of Latin music as part of “her DNA.” Ask your students:

- In the previous clip we heard percussionist Sheila E. say of Latin music, “it’s my DNA, it’s the foundation of who I am.” What is “DNA” and why do you think Shelia E. made this analogy? (Students many have learned in biology class or elsewhere that “DNA” is the main constituent of chromosomes and the carrier of genetic information in the human body. Students may recall that she said it was “always around me,” suggesting that she learned Latin music from her family, her community, and the people around her when she was a child. Latin music represents a connection to the people and places she has developed relationships with beyond music.)
- Though music is not “genetic” in a scientific sense of the term, in what ways have you seen music’s capability to represent a history of people and place throughout today’s discussion? How do you think a “beat” can carry information about people and place?
- If you moved to a country where people spoke a different language and music sounded completely different, can you think of any types of music that would make you think of home or represent your feelings of ethnicity and nationality? Is there a beat that represents you?

POST-LESSON ACTIVITY: SHORT ESSAY AND PRESENTATION:

Have students research the music of their “DNA.” Instruct students to interview a parent, grandparent, uncle, aunt or other relative about music that was a part of their childhood lives which thus entered into the musical “DNA” of their extended family. Students should use the interview as a basis for an essay about that music, then sharing it with the class. If possible, students should accompany their presentation with a representative music recording. Students should use the following questions as a



POST-LESSON ACTIVITY: SHORT ESSAY AND PRESENTATION: (CONTINUED)

guideline and feel free to develop more questions as well:

- What do you call this kind of music?
- Where is it from?
- Was it something you participated in or something you watched and heard?
- Who played it?
- If you played it, how did you learn it?
- What instruments were used to play it?
- Are those instruments from a particular place?
- When was this music played?
- What language was this music sung in?
- Why is this music meaningful to you?
- What do you feel it says about who you are and, by extension, who we are?

STANDARDS

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

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

Reading 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

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

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

Writing 9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening for Grades 6-12

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.

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

Language 6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

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

Theme 1: Culture

Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change

Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Theme 7: Production, Distribution and Consumption

Theme 8: Science, Technology and Society

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

- Soundbreaking – Gospel Music of the Southern US
- Soundbreaking – Single Ladies and the Church
- Soundbreaking – Santana and Latin Rock
- Soundbreaking – The Santana Drum Break

HANDOUTS

- Handout 1: African Music and “Spirituals” in the U.S. South
- Handout 2: Santana and Afro-Cuban Rock