

Unit 1: Music History

25 Class Meetings

Written July 2026

Essential Questions

- How do we categorize music into genres?
- How do artists fit into and break genre boundaries?
- How does a given genre of music fit into the story of the United States?

Enduring Understandings with Unit Goals

EU 1: Music can be divided into genres, which have specific traits.

- How did this genre originate?
- What instruments are common in a given genre?
- What techniques are used in this genre?
- What qualities define this genre?

EU 2: Individual musical artists and art works fit into and break genre boundaries.

- What musical artists and art works define this genre?
- What musical artists and art works originated this genre?
- What musical artists and art works were influenced by this genre?

EU 3: Genres of music are defined and influenced by time, place, and culture, and they influence culture in return.

- What cultures/subcultures formed around this genre?
- How does this genre connect with visual art and literature of the time?
- Where does this genre fit in the history of the United States?

Standards

Common Core State Standards:

NCAS.MU: Pr4.2.7.a: Explain and demonstrate the structure of contrasting pieces of music selected for performance and how elements of music are used.

NCAS.MU: Pr4.2.8.a: Compare the structure of contrasting pieces of music selected for performance, explaining how the elements of music are used in each.

NCAS.MU: Pr4.2.7.b: When analyzing selected music, read and identify by name or function standard symbols for rhythm, pitch articulation, dynamics, tempo, and form.

NCAS.MU: Pr4.2.8.b: When analyzing selected music, sightread in treble or bass clef simple rhythmic, melodic, and/or harmonic notation.

NCAS.MU: Pr4.2.7.c: Identify how cultural and historical context inform performances and result in different music interpretations.

NCAS.MU: Pr4.2.8.c: Identify how cultural and historical context inform performances and result in different musical effects.

NCAS.MU: Re7.1.7.a: Select or choose contrasting music to listen to and compare the connections to specific interests or experiences for a specific purpose.

NCAS.MU: Re7.1.8.a: Select programs of music (such as a CD mix or live performances) and demonstrate the connections to an interest or experience for a specific purpose.

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NCAS.MU: Re7.2.7.a: Classify and explain how the elements of music and expressive qualities relate to the structure of contrasting pieces.

NCAS.MU: Re7.2.8.a: Compare how the elements of music and expressive qualities relate to the structure within programs of music.

NCAS.MU: Re7.2.7.b: Identify and compare the context of music from a variety of genres, cultures, and historical periods.

NCAS.MU: Re7.2.8.b: Identify and compare the context of programs of music from a variety of genres, cultures, and historical periods.

NCAS.MU: Re8.1.7.a: Describe a personal interpretation of contrasting works and explain how creators' and performers' application of the elements of music and expressive qualities, within genres, cultures, and historical periods, convey expressive intent.

NCAS.MU: Re8.1.8.a: Support personal interpretation of contrasting programs of music and explain how creators' or performers' apply the elements of music and expressive qualities, within genres, cultures, and historical periods to convey expressive intent.

ISAAC Vision of the Graduate Competencies

Competency 1: Write effectively for a variety of purposes.

Competency 2: Speak to diverse audiences in an accountable manner.

Competency 3: Develop the behaviors needed to interact and contribute with others on a team.

Competency 4: Analyze and solve problems independently and collaboratively.

Competency 5: Be responsible, creative, and empathetic members of the community.

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Unit Content Overview

1. Genre Definitions and Characteristics

- Identify musical genres and the artists within those genres
- Identify core traits of a given genre
- Identify instruments, tools, and techniques used in a given genre

2. Artists and Artworks

- Identify the genre a given artist occupies
- Define originators vs definers in music history
- Assert and defend genre categorizations for specific art works based on evidence and personal opinion

3. Music in History

- Identify and explain subcultures connected to specific genres
- Connect elements of musical art (lyrics, instruments, texture, timbre, form, structure, dynamics) with elements of visual art (light, shadow, texture, color) and literary art (plot, structure, conflict, theme)
- Connect musical artists and genres to the social moments and movements of their time
- Discuss and debate how musicians interacted with systems of power, privilege, and prestige

Vocabulary and Key Terms: genre, art, artist, music, musician, harmony, melody, rhythm, beat, lyrics, instruments, texture, timbre, form, structure, dynamics, volume, conflict, power, privilege, prestige, originator, definer, niche, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Musical Theatre, vocal, R&B, hip-hop, rock & roll, the blues, jazz, culture, sub-culture,

Interdisciplinary Connection:

Social Studies, ELA, visual/media arts

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Daily Learning Objectives with TWPS

Students will be able to...

- Activate background knowledge about musical genres.
 - *What musical artists do you listen to? How do we categorize them?*
- Identify common musical instruments by sound and sight.
 - *When listening to this song, what instruments do you hear?*
- Analyze the traits and techniques of a selected genre.
 - *What instruments, traits, and techniques are common in _____ genre?*
- Identify the defining characteristics of a selected genre.
 - *What is/are the defining characteristics(s) of your selected genre? In other words, how do I know I'm listening to that specific genre?*
- Present research on a genre of their choice and engage in thoughtful discussion with peers.
 - *What did you learn from your peers' presentations?*
- Listen to and engage with presentations about other genres given by their peers.
 - *How did it feel to present your genre research? What gaps do you have in your knowledge?*
- Identify advances in technology that contributed to new forms of music.
 - *What did the invention of radio do to musical culture?*
- Identify how records and record labels changed American culture.
 - *How do you think record labels choose which artists to sign?*
- Use physical and internet resources to research historical musicians from the pre-radio era.
 - *How do you know if a source is credible?*
- Describe the lives and career of a historical musician.
 - *How did your selected musician make money?*
- Use internet resources to research contemporary musicians from the post-radio era.
 - *What is something new you learned about your artist?*
- Describe the life and career of a contemporary musician.
 - *How did your selected musician start their career?*
- Create a digital or physical poster comparing and contrasting two selected composers - one historical, one modern.
 - *What similarities do you see between musicians in the past and now?*
- Present to peers on both musicians they selected and be prepared to answer questions.
 - *What surprised you most in your research?*
- Participate in question and answer sessions for their classmates' presentations.
 - *What questions can you ask to determine if someone is an expert in their subject?*
- Describe the impact of communications technologies (radio, the printing press, social media, generative AI) on musicians and artists.
 - *Where did you first discover your favorite musician?*
- Collaborate with peers to connect genres with time periods using a timeline.
 - *What historical events can we also place on this timeline?*

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- Make connections between our genre timeline and historical events we know about.
 - *Do you think some genres talk about current events more than others? Why or why not?*
- Make connections between our genre timeline, our historical events timeline, and Billy Joel's *We Didn't Start the Fire*.
 - *What events do you recognize from this song?*
- Analyze a music video and discuss how visuals add to or detract from a work of music.
 - *How does the music video add to the experience of the music?*
- Identify and research a sub-culture that has a musical genre associated with it.
 - *What visual art, literature, clothing, and behaviors exemplify this sub-culture?*
- Discuss music by assessing sound, mood, tone, instrumentation, and lyrics.
 - *If you wrote this song today, how would you describe your generation?*
- Curate a playlist of music from multiple genres that connects to a central theme.
 - *How do you think art museums choose what art goes together?*
- Curate a selection of visual, musical, and literary art around a central theme, and describe how they are connected.
 - *What connects visual, musical, and literary art?*
- Present a selection of visual, musical, and literary art in a visually appealing, cohesive manner that helps the audience connect each piece to a central theme.
 - *Why did you choose your theme?*

Instructional Strategies/Differentiated Instruction

- Whole group instruction
- Paragraph frames and sentence starters
- Teacher modeling
- Think-write-pair-share and small-group discussions
- Graphic organizers and presentation templates
- Accountable talk
- Presentations
- Word walls with visuals
- Small group instruction
- Visual exemplars with teacher and student critiques
- Text and video chunking
- Spiraling back to guiding questions
- Multiple CFUs
- Close reading with text-dependent questions
- Guided music listening

EL Differentiation Strategies

- Word Banks and Word Walls with visuals
- TWPS (Think, write, pair, share)
- Pre-reading strategies
- Culturally responsive teaching

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- Explicit teacher modeling
- Key vocabulary
- Graphic organizers
- Strategic Grouping
- Non-verbal assessments

Assessments

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Do Now
- Academic Discourse
- Exit Slips
- Accountable Talk Discussions
- Completed notes

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

Quiz: Genre Project, Composer Project, Genre Timeline (EU1, EU2, EU3)

Unit Task: Art Curator

Unit Task

Unit Task Name: “Art Curator”

Description: Students will curate a selection of musical, visual, and literary art that connects to a central theme. Students will present evidence that connects each element of their collection to the theme and describe the musical genres using musical vocabulary. (EU1, EU2, EU3).

Evaluation: Teacher’s Scoring Guide

Unit Resources

- Google Classroom
- TeachRock
- Music Workshop
- Student journal