ESL
SCIENCE
BUSINESS
BILINGUAL
PRESCHOOL
MATHEMATICS
LIBRARY MEDIA
SOCIAL STUDIES
WORLD LANGUAGES
GIFTED & TALENTED
TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS
FINE & PERFORMING ARTS
FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCE
HEALTH & PHYSICAL EDUCATION

RAHWAY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

Content Area: English Language Arts

Course: Contemporary Issues and the Arts

Grade Level: 8

This curriculum is part of the Educational Program of Studies of the Rahway Public Schools.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Maureen Dalessio, Program Supervisor: English Language Arts/Social Studies 7-12, Gifted and Talented K-12

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Mrs. Lee Andrea Garvin, Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Subject/Course Title:
Contemporary Issues and the Arts
Grade 8

Date of Board Adoption:
August 25, 2026

RAHWAY PUBLIC SCHOOLS CURRICULUM

Contemporary Issues and the Arts: 8th Grade

PACING GUIDE

Unit	Title	Pacing
1	Art, Music, and Identity	5 weeks
2	Protest, Power, and Social Change	5 weeks
3	Hip Hop, Media, and Popular Culture	5 weeks
4	Global Voices and Cultural Connections	5 weeks

ACCOMMODATIONS

504 Accommodations:

- Provide scaffolded vocabulary and vocabulary lists.
- Provide extra visual and verbal cues and prompts.
- Provide adapted/alternate/excerpted versions of the text and/or modified supplementary materials.
- Provide links to audio files and utilize video clips.
- Provide graphic organizers and/or checklists.
- Provide modified rubrics.
- Provide a copy of teaching notes, especially any key terms, in advance.
- Allow additional time to complete assignments and/or assessments.
- Provide shorter writing assignments.
- Provide sentence starters.
- Utilize small group instruction.
- Utilize Think-Pair-Share structure.
- Check for understanding frequently.
- Have student restate information.
- Support auditory presentations with visuals.
- Weekly home-school communication tools (notebook, daily log, phone calls or email messages).
- Provide study sheets and teacher outlines prior to assessments.
- Quiet corner or room to calm down and relax when anxious.
- Reduction of distractions.
- Permit answers to be dictated.
- Hands-on activities.
- Use of manipulatives.
- Assign preferential seating.
- No penalty for spelling errors or sloppy handwriting.
- Follow a routine/schedule.
- Provide student with rest breaks.
- Use verbal and visual cues regarding directions and staying on task.
- Assist in maintaining agenda book.

IEP Accommodations:

- Provide scaffolded vocabulary and vocabulary lists.
- Differentiate reading levels of texts (e.g., Newsela).
- Provide adapted/alternate/excerpted versions of the text and/or modified supplementary materials.
- Provide extra visual and verbal cues and prompts.
- Provide links to audio files and utilize video clips.
- Provide graphic organizers and/or checklists.
- Provide modified rubrics.
- Provide a copy of teaching notes, especially any key terms, in advance.
- Provide students with additional information to supplement notes.
- Modify questioning techniques and provide a reduced number of questions or items on tests.
- Allow additional time to complete assignments and/or assessments.
- Provide shorter writing assignments.
- Provide sentence starters.
- Utilize small group instruction.
- Utilize Think-Pair-Share structure.
- Check for understanding frequently.
- Have student restate information.
- Support auditory presentations with visuals.
- Provide study sheets and teacher outlines prior to assessments.
- Use of manipulatives.
- Have students work with partners or in groups for reading, presentations, assignments, and analyses.
- Assign appropriate roles in collaborative work.
- Assign preferential seating.
- Follow a routine/schedule.

Gifted and Talented Accommodations:

- Differentiate reading levels of texts (e.g., Newsela).
- Offer students additional texts with higher lexile levels.
- Provide more challenging and/or more supplemental readings and/or activities to deepen understanding.
- Allow for independent reading, research, and projects.
- Accelerate or compact the curriculum.
- Offer higher-level thinking questions for deeper analysis.
- Offer more rigorous materials/tasks/prompts.
- Increase number and complexity of sources.
- Assign group research and presentations to teach the class.
- Assign/allow for leadership roles during collaborative work and in other learning activities.

ELL Accommodations:

- Provide extended time.
- Assign preferential seating.
- Assign peer buddy who the student can work with.
- Check for understanding frequently.
- Provide language feedback often (such as grammar errors, tenses, subject-verb agreements, etc…).
- Have student repeat directions.
- Make vocabulary words available during classwork and exams.
- Use study guides/checklists to organize information.
- Repeat directions.
- Increase one-on-one conferencing.
- Allow student to listen to an audio version of the text.
- Give directions in small, distinct steps.
- Allow copying from paper/book.
- Give student a copy of the class notes.
- Provide written and oral instructions.

	● Differentiate reading levels of texts (e.g., Newsela). ● Shorten assignments. ● Read directions aloud to student. ● Give oral clues or prompts. ● Record or type assignments. ● Adapt worksheets/packets. ● Create alternate assignments. ● Have student enter written assignments in criterion, where they can use the planning maps to help get them started and receive feedback after it is submitted. ● Allow student to resubmit assignments. ● Use small group instruction. ● Simplify language. ● Provide scaffolded vocabulary and vocabulary lists. ● Demonstrate concepts possibly through the use of visuals. ● Use manipulatives. ● Emphasize critical information by highlighting it for the student. ● Use graphic organizers. ● Pre-teach or pre-view vocabulary. ● Provide student with a list of prompts or sentence starters that they can use when completing a written assignment. ● Provide audio versions of the textbooks. ● Highlight textbooks/study guides. ● Use supplementary materials. ● Give assistance in note taking ● Use adapted/modified textbooks. ● Allow use of computer/word processor. ● Allow student to answer orally, give extended time (time-and-a-half). ● Allow tests to be given in a separate location (with the ESL teacher). ● Allow additional time to complete assignments and/or assessments. ● Read question to student to clarify. ● Provide a definition or synonym for words on a test that do not impact the validity of the exam. ● Modify the format of assessments. ● Shorten test length or require only selected test items. ● Create alternative assessments. ● On an exam other than a spelling test, don’t take points off for spelling errors.

UNIT 1 OVERVIEW

Content Area: English Language Arts/Visual and Performing Arts

Unit Title: Art, Music, and Identity

Target Course/Grade Level: Contemporary Issues and the Arts/8

Unit Summary: In this interdisciplinary unit, students will examine how art, music, media, and popular culture communicate identity, emotion, culture, and social experiences. Through the analysis of lyrics, visual art, music videos, digital media, and contemporary texts, students will explore how artists and creators use creative expression to communicate messages and shape perspectives. Students will investigate how culture, technology, media, and lived experiences influence both individual and collective identity. Through discussion, critical analysis, and creative projects, students will reflect on their own identities while developing empathy, media literacy, communication, and artistic expression skills.

Approximate Length of Unit: 5 weeks

LEARNING TARGETS

NJ Student Learning Standards:

Visual and Performing Arts:

- **1.3A.8.Re7C:** Identify and compare the context of programs of music from a variety of genres, cultures and historical periods.
- **1.5.8.Cr1b:** Develop criteria, identify goals and collaboratively investigate an aspect of present-day life, using contemporary practice of art or design.
- **1.5.8.Cr2c:** Apply, organize and strategize methods for design and redesign of objects, places, systems, images and words to clearly communicate information to a diverse audience.
- **1.5.8.RE7a:** Explain how a person's aesthetic choices are influenced by culture and environment, and how they impact the way in which visual messages are perceived and conveyed.
- **1.5.8.Re7b:** Compare and contrast cultural and social contexts of visual arts and how they influence ideas and emotions.
- **1.5.8.Pr6a:** Analyze how exhibitions in different venues communicate meaning and influence ideas, beliefs, and experiences.

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills:

- **9.4.8.DC.5:** Manage digital identity and practice positive online behavior to avoid inappropriate forms of self-disclosure.
- **9.4.8.DC.1:** Analyze the resource citations in online materials for proper use.
- **9.4.8.DC.2:** Provide appropriate citation and attribution elements when creating media products (e.g., W.6.8).
- **9.4.8.DC.7:** Collaborate within a digital community to create a digital artifact using strategies such as crowdsourcing or digital surveys.
- **9.4.8.GCA.1:** Model how to navigate cultural differences with sensitivity and respect (e.g., 1.5.8.C1a).

- **9.4.8.GCA.2:** Demonstrate openness to diverse ideas and perspectives through active discussions to achieve a group goal.
- **9.4.8.IML.1:** Critically curate multiple resources to assess the credibility of sources when searching for information.
- **9.4.8.IML.3:** Create a digital visualization that effectively communicates a data set using formatting techniques such as form, position, size, color, movement, and spatial grouping (e.g., 6.SP.B.4, 7.SP.B.8b).
- **9.4.8.IML.4:** Ask insightful questions to organize different types of data and create meaningful visualizations.
- **9.4.8.TL.2:** Gather data and digitally represent information to communicate a real-world problem (e.g., MS-ESS3-4, 6.1.8.EconET.1, 6.1.8.CivicsPR.4).
- **9.4.8.TL.3:** Select appropriate tools to organize and present information digitally.

Interdisciplinary Connections and Standards:

ELA:

- **RI.CR.8.1.:** Cite a range of textual evidence and make clear and relevant connections (including informational text features such as charts, graphs, and diagrams) that strongly support an analysis of multiple aspects of what an informational text says explicitly, as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **RI.CI.8.2.:** Determine a central idea of an informational text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
- **RI.MF.8.6.:** Evaluate the choices made (by the authors, directors, or actors) when presenting an idea in different mediums and the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) to address a question or solve a problem.
- **RI.CT.8.8.:** Analyze and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) two or more informational texts that provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.
- **W.AW.8.1.:** Write arguments on discipline-specific content (e.g., social studies, science, technical subjects, English/Language Arts) to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- **W.IW.8.2.:** Write informative/explanatory texts (including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes) to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- **W.RW.8.7.:** Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, metacognition/self- correction, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
- **SL.PE.8.1.:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **SL.PI.8.4.:** Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.
- **L.VL.8.3.:** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, including technical meanings, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- **L.VI.8.4.:** Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Social Studies:

- **6.3.8.CivicPI.4:** Investigate the roles of political, civil, and economic organizations in shaping people's lives and share this information with individuals who might benefit from this information.

- **6.3.8.CivicPD.2:** Propose and defend a position regarding a public policy issue at the appropriate local, state, or national level.
- **6.3.8.CivicPD.3:** Construct a claim as to why it is important for democracy that individuals are formed by facts, aware of diverse viewpoints, and willing to take action on public issues.

Unit Understandings:
Students will understand that…

- Art, music, and media are forms of communication that express ideas, emotions, experiences, and identity. (LGBTQ/D)
- People use music, visual art, fashion, language, and digital media to represent who they are and how they want others to see them.
- Personal identity is shaped by culture, community, experiences, interests, and social influences.
- Different genres of music and styles of art reflect the values, histories, and experiences of different groups of people. (LGBTQ/D, AAPI)
- Art and music can help people feel seen, connected, understood, and empowered. (LGBTQ/D)
- People may interpret the same artwork, song, or media message differently based on their own experiences and perspectives.
- Creative expression can build empathy and help people understand cultures, perspectives, and experiences different from their own. (AAPI)
- Identity and self-expression evolve over time and are influenced by both individual choices and society.
- Analyzing music, art, and media helps people think critically about messages, stereotypes, representation, and influence.

Unit Essential Questions:

- How do people use art and music to express who they are?
- How do art, music, and media influence the way people see themselves and others?
- In what ways can creative expression reflect personal experiences, emotions, and culture?
- How does social media affect the way people express their identities?
- Why do people connect differently to certain songs, artworks, or forms of media?
- How do artists and musicians use symbols, lyrics, visuals, and sound to communicate messages?
- How can art and music help people build understanding and empathy for others?
- What role does popular culture play in shaping trends, beliefs, and identity?
- How does technology change the way art and music are created, shared, and experienced?

Knowledge and Skills:
Students will know...

- The elements of music, including rhythm, melody, lyrics, mood, tone, and genre.
- The elements of visual art, including color, line, shape, texture, composition, and symbolism.
- How artists, musicians, and media creators use creative choices to communicate messages and emotions.
- How identity can be influenced by culture, community, family, language, traditions, interests, and personal experiences.
- Examples of artists and musicians who use their work to express identity, culture, and personal experiences.
- That audiences may interpret music, art, and media differently depending on their experiences and perspectives.

Students will be able to...

- Analyze how music, art, and media communicate ideas, emotions, and identity.
- Identify and explain the elements of music and visual art in a variety of works.
- Compare and contrast how different artists express identity and culture through their work.

- Interpret lyrics, images, symbols, and media messages using evidence from the text or artwork.
- Participate respectfully in discussions about identity, culture, and self-expression.
- Create original artwork, playlists, writing, or multimedia projects that express aspects of their own identity.
- Reflect on how personal experiences and perspectives shape their interpretation of art and music.
- Present ideas and creative work clearly through oral, written, visual, or digital formats.
- Evaluate how technology and social media impact the creation and sharing of artistic expression.
- Make connections between contemporary media, personal identity, and broader cultural influences.
- Discuss how media and popular culture influence identity, trends, and perspectives.
- Engage in collaborative discussions by building on classmates' ideas and expressing their own perspectives respectfully.
- Use discussion protocols to ask thoughtful questions and support ideas with evidence from music, art, and media.
- Present personal interpretations and creative work using appropriate eye contact, volume, pacing, and clear pronunciation.
- Explain artistic choices and respond to audience questions using relevant evidence.

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

Assessment:
What evidence will be collected and deemed acceptable to show that students truly "understand"?

- End of Unit 1 Assessments
- Oral Presentations
- Exit Tickets
- Quick Writes
- Peer Critique
- Socratic Seminar
- Gallery Walk
- Reflection Journals

Learning Activities:
What differentiated learning experiences and instruction will enable all students to achieve the desired results?

- Participate in class discussions, collaborative activities, and reflective conversations about identity, music, art, and media.
- Analyze song lyrics, album covers, music videos, photographs, digital art, and social media content to identify themes and messages.
- Listen to and compare music from different genres, cultures, and time periods to examine how artists express identity and emotion.
- Create personal identity projects such as playlists, digital collages, mood boards, poetry, visual art, or multimedia presentations.
- Use graphic organizers, guided notes, annotation strategies, and discussion protocols to support analysis and comprehension.
- Participate in small-group and partner activities to encourage collaboration and peer feedback.
- Engage with multimedia resources including videos, podcasts, music streaming platforms, and digital art tools.

- Use technology tools such as Canva, Google Slides, Padlet, or Soundation to create and present projects.
- Respond to prompts through written reflections, journals, quick writes, or creative responses.
- Receive differentiated supports such as sentence starters, modeling, visual examples, chunked assignments, and choice-based project options.
- Present creative work and explain artistic choices through oral, written, visual, or digital formats.

RESOURCES

Teacher Resources:

- Contemporary Issues and the Arts Pacing Guide
- YouTube; Prince EA; Button Poetry
- Canva
- Lesson Plans, PowerPoints

Equipment Needed:

- YouTube
- Canva
- Google Workspace
- Newline board
- Markers
- Colored Pencils
- Poster paper/construction paper

UNIT 2 OVERVIEW

Content Area: English Language Arts/Visual and Performing Arts

Unit Title: Protest, Power, and Social Change

Target Course/Grade Level: Contemporary Issues and the Arts/8

Unit Summary: In this unit, students will explore how artists, musicians, poets, and activists use creative expression to communicate messages, challenge injustice, and inspire social change. Through the analysis of protest songs, spoken word poetry, visual art, and media, students will examine how creative works reflect social issues and influence public opinion. Students will apply their learning by creating original works that use art, music, or poetry to advocate for a cause or communicate a meaningful message.

Approximate Length of Unit: 5 weeks

LEARNING TARGETS

NJ Student Learning Standards:

Visual and Performing Arts:

- **1.5.8.Pr6a:** Analyze how exhibitions in different venues communicate meaning and influence ideas, beliefs and experiences.
- **1.5.8.Re7a:** Explain how a person's aesthetic choices are influenced by culture and environment, and how they impact the way in which visual messages are perceived and conveyed.
- **1.5.8.Re8a:** Interpret art by analyzing how the interaction of subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, use of media, art making approaches, and relevant contextual information contributes to understanding messages or ideas and mood conveyed.
- **1.5.8.Cn10a:** Generate ideas to make art individually or collaboratively to positively reflect a group's identity.
- **1.5.8.Cn11b:** Analyze and contrast how art forms are used to reflect global issues, including climate change.

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills:

- **9.4.8.CI.2:** Repurpose an existing resource in an innovative way.
- **9.4.8.CT.1:** Evaluate diverse solutions proposed by a variety of individuals, organizations, and/or agencies to a local or global problem, such as climate change, and use critical thinking skills to predict which one(s) are likely to be effective.
- **9.4.8.DC.2:** Provide appropriate citation and attribution elements when creating media products.
- **9.4.8.GCA.1:** Model how to navigate cultural differences with sensitivity and respect.
- **9.4.8.GCA.2:** Demonstrate openness to diverse ideas and perspectives through active discussions to achieve a group goal.
- **9.4.8.IML.6:** Identify subtle and overt messages based on the method of communication.
- **9.4.8.IML.13:** Identify the impact of the creator on the content, production, and delivery of information.
- **9.4.8.IML.14:** Analyze the role of media in delivering cultural, political, and other societal messages.

- **9.4.8.IML.15:** Explain ways that individuals may experience the same media message differently.

Interdisciplinary Connections and Standards:

English Language Arts:

- **RL.CR.8.1:** Cite a range of textual evidence and make clear and relevant connections to strongly support an analysis of multiple aspects of what a literary text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **RL.CI.8.2:** Determine a theme of a literary text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
- **RI.CR.8.1.:** Cite a range of textual evidence and make clear and relevant connections that strongly support an analysis of multiple aspects of what an informational text says explicitly, as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **RI.IT.8.3.:** Analyze how particular elements of a text interact across multiple text types, including across literary and informational texts.
- **RI.TS.8.4.:** Analyze and explain how an author organizes, develops and presents ideas, establishes a point of view or builds supporting arguments through text structure.
- **RI.PP.8.5.:** Analyze how an author conveys or develops their perspective or purpose in a text by acknowledging and responding to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.
- **RI.MF.8.6.:** Evaluate the choices made (by the authors, directors, or actors) when presenting an idea in different mediums and the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums or formats to address a question to solve a problem.
- **RI.CT.8.8.:** Analyze and reflect on two or more informational texts that provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.
- **W.AW.8.1.:** Write arguments on discipline-specific content to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- **W.WR.8.5.:** Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.
- **W.SE.8.6.:** Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
- **W.RW.8.7.:** Write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
- **SL.PE.8.1.:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **SL.II.8.2.:** Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats and evaluate the motives behind its presentation.
- **SL.UM.8.5.:** Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

Social Studies:

- **6.3.8.CivicsPI.3:** Use a variety of sources from multiple perspectives to examine the role of individuals, political parties, interest groups, and the media in a local or global issue.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPI.4:** Investigate the roles of political, civil, and economic organizations in shaping people's lives.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPD.1:** Deliberate on a public issue affecting an upcoming election, consider opposing arguments, and develop a reasoned conclusion.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPD.3:** Construct a claim as to why it is important for democracy that individuals are informed by facts, aware of diverse viewpoints, and willing to take action on public issues.

- **6.3.8.CivicsPR.3:** Take a position on an issue in which fundamental ideals and principles are in conflict.

Unit Understandings:
Students will understand that…

- Art, music, poetry, and media can be powerful tools for communication and social change. (AAH, HG)
- Artists and musicians often respond to social, political, and cultural issues through their work. (AAH, HG)
- Creative expression can raise awareness, challenge perspectives, and inspire action.
- Protest art and music reflect the experiences, beliefs, and concerns of individuals and communities. (HG)
- Different audiences may interpret artistic messages in different ways.
- Social movements throughout history have used music, art, and media to unite people around a cause. (AAH, HG)
- Artists make intentional choices to communicate messages and influence audiences.
- Individuals can use creative expression to advocate for issues they care about.

Unit Essential Questions:

- How can art and music inspire social change?
- Why do people use creative expression to communicate messages and advocate for causes?
- How have artists and musicians responded to injustice throughout history?
- What makes a protest song, artwork, or spoken word performance effective?
- How can creative work influence public opinion and bring attention to social issues?
- What responsibilities do artists have when addressing important issues?
- How can individuals use their voices to make a difference in their communities?
- How do different forms of artistic expression communicate messages to audiences?

Knowledge and Skills:
Students will know...

- Characteristics of protest songs, spoken word poetry, murals, posters, and activist art.
- Historical and contemporary examples of art and music connected to social movements.
- How artistic techniques, symbolism, imagery, lyrics, and performance communicate messages.
- The role of media in shaping public awareness and opinion.
- Key vocabulary related to activism, advocacy, audience, purpose, symbolism, and social change.

Students will be able to...

- Analyze how artists, musicians, and poets communicate messages about social issues.
- Interpret lyrics, visuals, symbols, and themes in protest art and media.
- Compare how different artists address similar issues through different artistic forms.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of artistic works in communicating a message.
- Participate respectfully in discussions about social issues and diverse perspectives.
- Create original artistic works that communicate a message about an issue or cause.
- Present and explain creative choices using evidence and reflection.
- Make connections between historical examples of protest art and contemporary issues.
- Participate in respectful discussions and debates about historical and contemporary social issues.
- Deliver persuasive presentations that communicate a clear claim supported by evidence.
- Explain how artistic choices strengthen the message of protest art, music, or spoken word.
- Respond thoughtfully to peer questions and provide constructive feedback during presentations.

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

Assessment:
What evidence will be collected and deemed acceptable to show that students truly "understand"?

- End of Unit 2 Assessment
- Oral Presentations
- Project
- Exit Tickets
- Quick Writes
- Peer Critique
- Socratic Seminar
- Gallery Walk
- Reflection Journals

Learning Activities:
What differentiated learning experiences and instruction will enable all students to achieve the desired results?

- Analyze protest songs, spoken word poetry, murals, posters, photography, and media campaigns.
- Annotate lyrics, poetry, and visual texts to identify themes, symbolism, tone, and message.
- Compare historical and contemporary examples of protest art and music.
- Participate in discussions about social issues, activism, and artistic expression.
- View and analyze spoken word performances from youth poets and activists.
- Conduct short research activities on influential artists, musicians, poets, and social movements.
- Engage in collaborative analysis of songs, poems, and artworks using discussion protocols.
- Create original protest posters, poems, songs, or digital media projects.
- Use graphic organizers, sentence starters, and guided questions to support analysis and discussion.

RESOURCES

Teacher Resources:

- Contemporary Issues and the Arts Pacing Guide
- YouTube
- Poetry Foundation or Button Poetry
- Library of Congress
- Canva
- Google Slides

Equipment Needed:

- Computers/Chromebooks
- Headphones
- Projector and Speaker
- Art Supplies
- Whiteboard/Smartboard

UNIT 3 OVERVIEW

Content Area: English Language Arts/Visual and Performing Arts

Unit Title: Hip Hop, Media, and Popular Culture

Target Course/Grade Level: Contemporary Issues and the Arts/8

Unit Summary: In this unit, students will explore how hip hop, media, and popular culture shape identity, influence trends, and communicate messages about society. Through the analysis of song lyrics, music videos, advertisements, and digital media, students will examine how creators use storytelling and visual techniques to reach audiences. Students will apply their learning by critiquing media messages and creating original content that reflects their understanding of pop culture's impact.

Approximate Length of Unit: 4 weeks

LEARNING TARGETS

NJ Student Learning Standards:

Visual and Performing Arts:

- **1.4.8.Cr2a:** Articulate and apply critical analysis, extensive background knowledge, sociohistorical research, and cultural context related to existing or developing original theatrical work.
- **1.4.8.Cr2b:** Actively contribute ideas and creatively incorporate the ideas of others in existing or original theatrical work, demonstrating mutual respect for self and others and their roles sharing leadership and responsibilities in preparing or devising theatre.
- **1.5.8.Pr6a:** Analyze how exhibitions in different venues communicate meaning and influence ideas, beliefs and experiences.
- **1.5.8.Re7a:** Explain how a person's aesthetic choices are influenced by culture and environment, and how they impact the way in which visual messages are perceived and conveyed.
- **1.5.8.Re8a:** Interpret art by analyzing how the interaction of subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, use of media, art making approaches, and relevant contextual information contributes to understanding messages or ideas and mood conveyed.
- **1.5.8.Re9a:** Create a convincing and logical argument to support an evaluation of art. Explain the difference between personal and established criteria for evaluating artwork.

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills:

- **9.4.8.DC.1:** Analyze the resource citations in online materials for proper use.
- **9.4.8.DC.2:** Provide appropriate citation and attribution elements when creating media products.
- **9.4.8.DC.6:** Analyze online information to distinguish whether it is helpful or harmful to reputation.
- **9.4.8.GCA.1:** Model how to navigate cultural differences with sensitivity and respect.
- **9.4.8.GCA.2:** Demonstrate openness to diverse ideas and perspectives through active discussions to achieve a group goal.

- **9.4.8.IML.1:** Critically curate multiple resources to assess the credibility of sources when searching for information.
- **9.4.8.IML.6:** Identify subtle and overt messages based on the method of communication.
- **9.4.8.IML.7:** Use information from a variety of sources, contexts, disciplines, and cultures for a specific purpose.
- **9.4.8.IML.15:** Explain ways that individuals may experience the same media message differently.

Interdisciplinary Connections and Standards:

English Language Arts:

- **RI.CR.8.1.:** Cite a range of textual evidence and make clear and relevant connections (including informational text features such as charts, graphs, and diagrams) that strongly support an analysis of multiple aspects of what an informational text says explicitly, as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **RI.CI.8.2.:** Determine a central idea of an informational text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
- **RI.IT.8.3.:** Analyze how particular elements of a text interact (e.g., how contexts influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events) across multiple text types, including across literary and informational texts.
- **RI.TS.8.4.:** Analyze and explain how an author organizes, develops and presents ideas, establishes a point of view or builds supporting arguments through text structure.
- **RI.CT.8.8.:** Analyze and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) two or more informational texts that provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.
- **RL.CR.8.1.:** Cite a range of textual evidence and make clear and relevant connections to strongly support an analysis of multiple aspects of what a literary text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **RL.CI.8.2.:** Determine a theme of a literary text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
- **RL.IT.8.3.:** Analyze how particular elements of a text interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot, how ideas influence individuals or events, or how characters influence ideas or events) across multiple text types, including across literary and informational texts.
- **RL.TS.8.4.:** Compare and contrast the structure of texts, analyzing how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning, tone and style.
- **W.AW.8.1.:** Write arguments on discipline-specific content (e.g., social studies, science, technical subjects, English/Language Arts) to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- **W.IW.8.2.:** Write informative/explanatory texts (including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes) to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- **W.WR.8.5.:** Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.
- **W.SE.8.6.:** Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
- **SL.PE.8.1.:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **SL.II.8.2.:** Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

- **SL.PI.8.4.:** Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

Social Studies:

- **6.3.8.CivicsPI.3:** Use a variety of sources from multiple perspectives to examine the role of individuals, political parties, interest groups, and the media in a local or global issue.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPI.4:** Investigate the roles of political, civil, and economic organizations in shaping people's lives.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPD.1:** Deliberate on a public issue affecting an upcoming election, consider opposing arguments, and develop a reasoned conclusion.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPD.3:** Construct a claim as to why it is important for democracy that individuals are informed by facts, aware of diverse viewpoints, and willing to take action on public issues.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPR.3:** Take a position on an issue in which fundamental ideals and principles are in conflict.

Unit Understandings:

Students will understand that…

- Hip hop is a cultural movement that uses music, visual art, and language to tell stories and express identity. (AAH)
- Media and popular culture shape how people view themselves, others, and the world around them.
- Artists and creators make intentional choices about lyrics, visuals, and sound to influence audiences and convey messages.
- Media messages can be analyzed to uncover underlying themes, biases, and commercial motives.
- Digital platforms have changed how art is created, shared, and consumed by global audiences.

Unit Essential Questions:

- How does hip hop function as a form of storytelling and cultural expression?
- In what ways do media and popular culture influence our beliefs, values, and identity?
- How do artists use lyrics and visuals to comment on social issues or trends?
- What techniques do creators use to persuade audiences or sell products in the media?
- How has technology changed the relationship between artists and their audiences?

Knowledge and Skills:

Students will know...

- The origins and core elements of hip hop (DJing, MCing, breakdancing, graffiti).
- Key vocabulary related to media literacy (target audience, bias, propaganda, branding).
- How to identify persuasive techniques in advertisements, music videos, and social media.
- The impact of digital platforms (streaming, social media) on music and art distribution.
- Examples of how hip hop has evolved and influenced global culture.

Students will be able to…

- Analyze song lyrics and music videos for themes, symbolism, and social commentary.
- Evaluate media messages for credibility, bias, and persuasive intent.
- Write arguments critiquing representations in popular culture using evidence.
- Create original media content (podcast, video, or blog) that analyzes or responds to pop culture.
- Engage in discussions and debates about the role of media in modern society.
- Facilitate and participate in academic discussions about media influence and popular culture.
- Present media critiques using multimedia, evidence, and appropriate presentation techniques.
- Defend claims about media messages during debates or Socratic Seminars using textual and visual evidence.

- Adapt oral presentations for different audiences and purposes.

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

Assessment:
What evidence will be collected and deemed acceptable to show that students truly "understand"?

- End of Unit 3 Assessment
- Exit Tickets
- Quick Writes
- Peer Critique
- Socratic Seminar
- Gallery Walk
- Reflection Journals

Learning Activities:
What differentiated learning experiences and instruction will enable all students to achieve the desired results?

- Annotating Lyrics
- Deconstructing Media
- Comparing and Contrasting
- Creating Podcasts
- Conducting Research
- Participating in Debates

RESOURCES

Teacher Resources:

- Contemporary Issues and the Arts Pacing Guide
- Spotify or Apple Music
- YouTube
- Common Sense Education
- AdCouncil or PBS LearningMedia
- Canva
- Newsela or ReadWorks

Equipment Needed:

- Computer/Chromebook
- Headphones
- Projector/Speaker
- Whiteboard/Smartboard
- Graphic Organizers
- Post-It Notes and Chart Paper

UNIT 4 OVERVIEW

Content Area: English Language Arts/Visual and Performing Arts

Unit Title: Global Voices and Cultural Connections

Target Course/Grade Level: Contemporary Issues and the Arts/8

Unit Summary: In this unit, students will explore how art, music, and storytelling function across different cultures to build understanding and connection. Through the analysis of global literature, visual art, film, and music, students will examine how cultural perspectives shape creative expression and influence how stories are told. Students will apply their learning by researching global artists and creating projects that celebrate diverse voices and foster cross-cultural empathy.

Approximate Length of Unit: 4 weeks

LEARNING TARGETS

NJ Student Learning Standards:

Visual and Performing Arts:

- **1.4.8.RE9b:** Identify and interpret how different cultural perspectives influence the evaluation of theatrical work.
- **1.4.8.Cr2a:** Articulate and apply critical analysis, extensive background knowledge, sociohistorical research, and cultural context related to existing or developing original theatrical work.
- **1.5.8.Cr2b:** Demonstrate an awareness of ethical responsibility as applied to art making including environmental implications, responsibility in sharing images online, appropriation, and intellectual property ethics.
- **1.5.8.Cr2c:** Apply, organize and strategize methods for design and redesign of objects, places, systems, images and words to clearly communicate information to a diverse audience.
- **1.5.8.Pr6a:** Analyze how exhibitions in different venues communicate meaning and influence ideas, beliefs and experiences.
- **1.5.8.Re7a:** Explain how a person's aesthetic choices are influenced by culture and environment, and how they impact the way in which visual messages are perceived and conveyed.
- **1.5.8.Cn11a:** Analyze and contrast how art forms are used to represent, establish, reinforce and reflect group identity and culture.
- **1.5.8.Cn11b:** Analyze and contrast how art forms are used to reflect global issues, including climate change.

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills:

- **9.4.8.DC.1:** Analyze the resource citations in online materials for proper use.
- **9.4.8.DC.2:** Provide appropriate citation and attribution elements when creating media products.
- **9.4.8.DC.6:** Analyze online information to distinguish whether it is helpful or harmful to reputation.
- **9.4.8.GCA.1:** Model how to navigate cultural differences with sensitivity and respect.

- **9.4.8.GCA.2:** Demonstrate openness to diverse ideas and perspectives through active discussions to achieve a group goal.
- **9.4.8.IML.1:** Critically curate multiple resources to assess the credibility of sources when searching for information.
- **9.4.8.IML.6:** Identify subtle and overt messages based on the method of communication.
- **9.4.8.IML.7:** Use information from a variety of sources, contexts, disciplines, and cultures for a specific purpose.
- **9.4.8.IML.15:** Explain ways that individuals may experience the same media message differently.

Interdisciplinary Connections and Standards:

English Language Arts:

- **L.VI.8.4.:** Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
- **RL.CR.8.1.:** Cite a range of textual evidence and make clear and relevant connections to strongly support an analysis of multiple aspects of what a literary text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **RL.CI.8.2.:** Determine a theme of a literary text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
- **RL.TS.8.4.:** Compare and contrast the structure of texts, analyzing how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning, tone and style.
- **RL.PP.8.5.:** Analyze how an author conveys or develops their perspective or purpose in a text through the use of different perspectives of the characters and that of the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony).
- **RL.CT.8.8.:** Analyze and reflect on how the author's idea in fiction and literary nonfiction texts (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) is shaped by the author's emphasis on different evidence, advancing different interpretations of facts, or fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period.
- **W.IW.8.2.:** Write informative/explanatory texts (including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes) to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- **W.WP.8.4.:** With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, sustaining effort to complete complex writing tasks; seeking out assistance, models, sources or feedback to improve understanding or refine final products; focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.
- **SL.PE.8.1.:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **SL.II.8.2.:** Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.
- **SL.UM.8.5.:** Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.
- **W.WR.8.5.:** Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

Social Studies:

- **6.3.8.CivicsPI.3:** Use a variety of sources from multiple perspectives to examine the role of individuals, political parties, interest groups, and the media in a local or global issue.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPI.4:** Investigate the roles of political, civil, and economic organizations in shaping people's lives.

- **6.3.8.CivicsPD.1:** Deliberate on a public issue affecting an upcoming election, consider opposing arguments, and develop a reasoned conclusion.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPD.3:** Construct a claim as to why it is important for democracy that individuals are informed by facts, aware of diverse viewpoints, and willing to take action on public issues.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPR.3:** Take a position on an issue in which fundamental ideals and principles are in conflict.

Unit Understandings:
Students will understand that…

- Art and music are universal languages that communicate values, history, and traditions across different cultures. (AAPI, HG)
- Cultural context shapes how people create, interpret, and value artistic expression.
- Global perspectives help us understand our own culture better and build empathy for others. (AAPI)
- Stories and art can both preserve cultural heritage and drive social change within communities. (AAPI, HG)
- Collaboration across cultures leads to richer ideas and innovative solutions.

Unit Essential Questions:

- How does culture influence the way people express themselves through art and music?
- What can we learn about a community by studying its art and storytelling traditions?
- Why is it important to listen to and understand global voices and perspectives?
- How do artists balance preserving tradition with creating something new?
- How can creative expression build bridges between different cultures?

Knowledge and Skills:
Students will know...

- Characteristics of art, music, and literature from diverse global regions.
- Key vocabulary related to culture, perspective, heritage, and globalization.
- How cultural values and history are reflected in creative works.
- The role of global collaboration in contemporary art and media.
- Examples of artists who use their work to address global issues.

Students will be able to...

- Analyze art and media from different cultures to identify themes and cultural significance.
- Compare and contrast how similar ideas are expressed across different cultures.
- Create original work that incorporates or responds to diverse cultural influences.
- Participate in discussions that respect and explore diverse viewpoints.
- Engage in collaborative discussions that demonstrate respect for diverse cultural perspectives.
- Present research on global artists and cultures using multimedia and academic language.
- Compare cultural perspectives through structured discussions supported with evidence.
- Ask and answer questions that deepen understanding of different cultural traditions and artistic practices.

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

Assessment:
What evidence will be collected and deemed acceptable to show that students truly "understand"?

- End of Unit 4 Assessment
- Exit Tickets
- Quick Writes
- Peer Critique
- Socratic Seminar
- Gallery Walk
- Reflection Journals

Learning Activities:
What differentiated learning experiences and instruction will enable all students to achieve the desired results?

- Virtual Museum Tours
- World Music Listening Lab
- Folklore Comparison
- Pen Pal/Exchange Simulation
- Collaborative Mural
- Film Analysis
- Choice Boards

RESOURCES

Teacher Resources:

- Contemporary Issues and the Arts Pacing Guide
- Google Arts and Culture
- Smithsonian Learning Lab
- YouTube and Spotify
- Newsela or CommonLit
- Canva
- Google Earth

Equipment Needed:

- Computer/Chromebook
- Headphones
- Art Supplies
- World Maps
- Graphic Organizers