



Jazz In America: The National Jazz Curriculum

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Lesson Plan #5 - The Bebop Era

TOPIC: Bebop: 1940 - 1955¹

1. Demise of big band swing
2. Bebop (AKA "Bop"): Philosophy and Performance Practices
3. Important Figures
4. Cultural Implications

STANDARDS:

National Standards for United States History (Grades 9-12)²

Historical Thinking

Students should be able to:

1. draw upon visual, literary, and musical sources. (Historical Comprehension Standard 2g)
2. compare and contrast differing sets of ideas, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions (Historical Analysis and Interpretation Standard 3b)
3. consider multiple perspectives (Historical Research Capabilities Standard 3d)
4. hypothesize the influence of the past (Historical Analysis and Interpretation Standard 3j)
5. obtain historical data (Historical Research Capabilities Standard 4b)

Historical Content (Contemporary United States)

Students should be able to:

1. demonstrate understanding of the cultural clashes and their consequences in the postwar era (Emergence of Modern America, Standard 3a)
2. demonstrate understanding of the development of mass culture and how it changed American society (Emergence of Modern America, Standard 3c)
3. demonstrate understanding of how diverse peoples and their cultures have shaped American life (Major Social and Economic Development in Contemporary America Standard 2a)
4. demonstrate understanding of contemporary American culture (Major Social and Economic Development in Contemporary America Standard 2e)

¹ All styles of jazz from Dixieland to contemporary are still being performed and recorded today; all style dates given are the approximations of when each respective style came to the forefront of jazz and experienced its most concentrated development; of course, styles and dates overlap.

² National Center for History in the Schools, UCLA

National Standards for Arts Education (Music Grades 9-12)³

Content Standard #6 - Listening to, Analyzing, and Describing Music

Students:

- a. analyze aural examples of a varied repertoire of music, representing diverse genres and cultures, by describing the uses of elements of music and expressive devices
- b. demonstrate extensive knowledge of the technical vocabulary of music
- c. identify and explain compositional devices and techniques used to provide unity and variety and tension and release in a musical work and give examples of other works that make similar uses of these devices and techniques
- d. demonstrate the ability to perceive and remember music events by describing in detail significant events occurring in a given aural example
- e. compare ways in which musical materials are used in a given example relative to ways in which they are used in other works of the same genre or style
- f. analyze and describe uses of the elements of music in a given work that make it unique, interesting, and expressive

Content Standard #9 - Understanding Music in Relation to History and Culture

Students:

- a. classify by genre or style and by historical period or culture unfamiliar but representative aural examples of music and explain the reasoning behind their classifications
- b. identify sources of American music genres, trace the evolution of those genres, and cite well-known musicians associated with them
- c. identify various roles that musicians perform, cite representative individuals who have functioned in each role, and describe their activities and achievements
- d. identify and explain the stylistic features of a given musical work that serve to define its aesthetic tradition and its historical or cultural context.
- e. identify and describe music genres or styles that show the influence of two or more cultural traditions, identify the cultural source of each influence, and trace the historical conditions that produced the synthesis of influences

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

The student will:

1. gain a fundamental understanding of Bebop
 - a. transition from the Swing Era
 - b. performance practices
2. learn the basic definition of several terms associated with jazz
 - a. contrafact
 - b. range
 - c. scat singing
 - d. standard
3. listen to Bebop recordings
4. become acquainted with Charlie Parker and Billie Holiday
5. participate in a class discussion regarding jazz's contribution to and reflection of American culture in the 1940s and early '50s

³ MENC: The National Association for Music Education

EQUIPMENT:

1. CD player
2. chalkboard (with chalk and eraser)
3. overhead projector (optional)
4. computer logged onto www.jazzinamerica.org (optional)

MATERIALS:

1. *The Instrumental History of Jazz*
 - a. two CDs
 - b. accompanying booklet
2. Student Handouts (one per student)⁴
 - a. chapter glossary
 - b. one American History (AH) handout: *A Reaction to Racism in American Literature, Art, and Music*
 - c. Bebop Characteristics
 - d. time line (Bebop era)
 - e. Jazz Biographies (JB) handout (Charlie Parker and Billie Holiday)
3. Overhead projector transparencies⁵

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES:

The instructor will:

1. distribute student handouts
2. have students read the student handout, *A Reaction to Racism in American Literature, Art, and Music*; lead a discussion on how the arts promotes awareness of critical social issues
3. discuss Bebop
4. examine the biographical sketches of Charlie Parker and Billie Holiday
5. play significant Bebop recordings
 - a. *Ko-Ko*, Charlie Parker (IHJ) and/or *A Night in Tunisia*, Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie (Web)⁶
 - b. *Shaw 'Nuff*, Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker (IHJ) and/or *Blue Monk*, Thelonious Monk (Web)
 - c. *How High the Moon*, Ella Fitzgerald (Web)
6. play *Strange Fruit*, Billie Holiday (Web)
7. lead a class discussion regarding jazz's contribution to and reflection of American culture during the Bebop Era

ASSESSMENT: Test Bank

1. Multiple Choice
2. Fill in the Blank
3. True-False
4. Matching
5. Essay

⁴ Student handouts may be down loaded from the Jazz in America website (www.jazzinamerica.org), printed, and photocopied.

⁵ Any material from the Jazz in America website (www.jazzinamerica.org) may be down loaded, printed, and made into a transparency as the instructor sees fit.

⁶ "IHJ" = selection is found on Willie Hill's *The Instrumental History of Jazz*; "Web" = selection is found on the Jazz in America website (www.jazzinamerica.org)

OUTLINE

I. Reasons for the demise of Swing

A. World War II

1. the draft - many jazz musicians were called to war, leaving few at home
2. bands raided each other - with such few musicians left home, band leaders "stole" band members from other bands, offering them a slightly better deal; bands that were in tact before the war were depleted
3. transportation was difficult (e.g., to night spots outside city limits)
 - a. gas shortages (gas rationing)
 - b. rubber shortages (tire rationing)
 - c. dismantling of the urban and interurban railways
4. midnight curfews (brown-outs)
5. 20% amusement tax (customers would have to pay 20 cents tax on the dollar in any night club that included dancing)
6. good players did not have to travel (with so few musicians left at home, a good player could make a living without having to travel outside his city)

B. Restrictive musical formats

1. extremely restricted solo opportunities in big band swing (solos had to be short)
2. overworked harmonic formulae (i.e., the same basic chord progressions were used over and over)
3. lack of creativity - stereotyped rhythms and rhythm sections (lacking creativity)
4. general lack of surprise in any given musical circumstance; jazz had fallen into a rut
5. by the early 40's, with the exception of a few, most big bands sounded stylistically alike

C. Recording ban (July 1942 - November 1943)

1. in response to increased use of recorded music on the radio and in jukeboxes and the threat this posed to live working musicians, the American Federation of Musicians (i.e., the musicians union) ordered a ban on all instrumental recording by union members
2. not being able to record new material, many big bands broke up

D. Racism--inequities between African and European American jazz musicians

1. African American musicians were usually paid less than their European American counterparts
2. African Americans had to contend with the most oppressive manifestations of racial prejudice and segregation; even the black jazz stars featured with name white bands were subjected to the most demeaning indignities
3. in general, most African American jazz musicians became increasingly disenchanted with swing music the more they watched their innovations capitalized on by European Americans; they wanted to create their "own" music, a music that was too difficult, too virtuosic, and too hip for their white counterparts (a music that was not for dancing but for listening--a true African American ART form)

II. Bebop

A. Philosophy

1. bebop was ART music, not "entertainment" music (i.e., not for dancing but for listening); bebop had the effect of removing jazz from the mainstream of popular commercial music
2. bebop musicians considered themselves artists, not entertainers
3. bebop was a conscious attempt on the part of young African American jazz musicians to open new channels of improvisation and create a music which reflected the seriousness of their endeavors
4. bebop was a completely African American invention; today it is listened to, studied, and performed by people of all races and cultures

B. Performance Practices

1. primarily a small group music (usually a quintet: trumpet, saxophone, piano, bass, and drums)
2. designed for improvisation, not elaborate arrangements
3. virtuosic music; very difficult to play
4. "trimmed down" arrangements (rarely written, mostly just discussed)
 - a. few introductions, endings, interludes, backgrounds, etc.
 - b. instead of complex arrangements, bebop utilized complex heads (melodies)
5. usually used a basic format
 - a. first chorus: head played in unison
 - b. middle choruses: improvised solos (each player in turn improvises for as many choruses as desired)
 - c. trading fours or eights (optional): keeping the form, each musician improvises for four bars in alternation with the drums (e.g., saxophone for four bars, drums for four bars, trumpet for four bars, drums for four bars, piano for four bars, drums for four bars, etc.)
 - d. last chorus: head in unison
6. the music is instrumental in nature
 - a. rangy (very low to very high notes)
 - b. rhythmically complex
 - c. extremely difficult to sing
 - d. when sung, singers would "scat sing" (i.e., sing as if they were a jazz instrumentalist using nonsense syllables instead of lyrics for their improvisations; play *How High the Moon*, Ella Fitzgerald (Web))
7. tune sources
 - a. the blues
 - b. standards (popular music of the day that has lasted the test of time)
 - c. contrafacts (complex bebop tunes written utilizing the same chord progression as extant standards)
 - d. originals (tunes written specifically to be played in the bebop style)

C. Minton's Playhouse

1. famous jazz night club in New York's Harlem known for its role in the incubation of bebop
2. in the early late 1930's and early 40's, weekly jam sessions and after-hours playing provided the opportunity for up-and-coming beboppers (e.g., trumpet player Dizzy Gillespie, pianist Thelonious Monk, drummer Kenny Clarke) to explore new musical ideas together; their experiments played a most important role in the development of the bebop style

D. Fifty-Second Street

1. in the 1940's and 50's, jazz was performed in several famous jazz night clubs along 52nd Street in New York City (e.g., *Birdland*, *The Three Deuces*, *The Onyx Club*)
2. 52nd Street became to be known as the *Street of Bop*

E. Play significant Bebop recordings:

Ko-Ko, Charlie Parker (IHJ) and/or *Shaw 'Nuff*, Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker (IHJ), and/or *Blue Monk*, Thelonious Monk (Web)⁷

F. Latin influence

1. Latin music has made an enormous impact on jazz composition and performance
2. trumpet player Dizzy Gillespie and percussionist Tito Puente were two of the first responsible for fusing jazz with Latin music
3. play *A Night in Tunisia*, Charlie Parker (Web) and/or *Salsa Caliente*, Tito Puente (Web)

III. Important Figures

- A. Kenny Clarke, drums (1914-1985)
- B. Ella Fitzgerald, vocal (1918-1996)
- C. Dizzy Gillespie, trumpet (1917-1993)
- D. J.J. Johnson, trombone (b. 1924)
- D. Thelonious Monk, piano (1917-1982)
- E. Charlie Parker ("Bird"), alto saxophone (1920-1955)
- F. Max Roach, drums (b. 1924)
- G. Clark Terry, trumpet (b. 1920)

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IV. Cultural Implications

A. Geographical: bebop was centered in New York City

B. Cultural

1. racism and segregation were rampant in America during the swing and bebop eras; for example, African Americans:
 - a. often had to stay at separate hotels; in some cases traveling musicians would have to stay at black rooming houses or sleep on the bus
 - b. would often have to eat at separate restaurants; in some cases African American musicians were not even permitted to eat at the same nightclub/restaurant they were filling with large audiences night after night (sometimes they were not even permitted to use the front entrance)
 - c. were often required to use separate public bathrooms and water fountains
 - d. were often required to sit in the back of city busses
2. the 1930's and '40's, and 50's witnessed horrific injustices against African Americans including lynchings; play *Strange Fruit*, Billie Holiday (Web)
3. as with so many styles of jazz, bebop reflected the culture of the times, growing out of the desire of African Americans to create their own music; like the African American experience at the time, the music:
 - a. was difficult
 - b. eluded to the blues
 - c. was exploring new directions, uncharted territory
 - d. was separate from the mainstream of America
4. many jazz musicians, in their struggle to deal with oppression and related issues, became addicted to drugs, particularly heroine; many, in fact, met their demise due to drug abuse