



Jazz In America: The National Jazz Curriculum

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Lesson Plan #7 - Avant Garde/Free Jazz and Fusion

- TOPIC:
1. Avant Garde/Free Jazz (1959-1970)¹
 2. Fusion (1969-1990)
 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Historical Content (Contemporary United States)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 struggle for racial and gender equality and for the extension of civil liberties (Postwar United States, Standard 4A)
2. demonstrate understanding of how diverse peoples and their cultures have shaped American life (Major Social and Economic Development in Contemporary America Standard 2a)
3. 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

³ MENC: The National Association for Music Education

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

The student will:

1. gain a fundamental understanding of Avant Garde/Free Jazz
2. gain a fundamental understanding of Fusion
3. gain a fundamental understanding of Pop/Contemporary Jazz (AKA Smooth Jazz)
4. gain a fundamental understanding of jazz education's role in society today and become acquainted with some of jazz education's key figures
5. learn the basic definition of several terms associated with jazz
 - a. atonal
 - b. avant garde
 - c. fusion
 - d. intonation
 - e. pop/contemporary, aka "smooth jazz"
 - f. tonal
6. listen to Avant Garde/Free Jazz, Fusion, and Pop/Contemporary ("Smooth Jazz") recordings
7. become acquainted with Ornette Coleman and Herbie Hancock
8. participate in a class discussion regarding jazz's contribution to and reflection of American culture in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s

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: *The 1960s: A Tumultuous Decade*
 - c. Avant Garde/Free Jazz Characteristics
 - d. Fusion Characteristics
 - e. time line (1960s)
 - f. Jazz Biographies (JB) handout (Ornette Coleman and Herbie Hancock)
3. Overhead projector transparencies⁵

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.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES:

The instructor will:

1. distribute student handouts
2. have students read and discuss *The 1960s - A Tumultuous Decade*
3. discuss Avant Garde/Free Jazz
4. discuss Fusion
5. discuss Pop/Contemporary Jazz ("Smooth Jazz")
6. examine the biographical sketches of Ornette Coleman and Herbie Hancock
7. play significant Avant Garde/Free Jazz recordings: *Enter Evening*, Cecil Taylor (IHJ), and/or *Full Force*, Art Ensemble of Chicago (IHJ), and/or *Lonely Woman*, Ornette Coleman (Web)⁶
8. play significant Fusion recordings: *Birdland*, Weather Report (IHJ), and/or *The Spin*, Yellow Jackets (IHJ), and/or *Chameleon*, Herbie Hancock (Web)
9. play significant Pop/Contemporary ("Smooth Jazz") recordings: *Morning Dance*, Spyro Gyra (IHJ), and/or *Breezin'*, George Benson (IHJ), and/or *Mountain Dance*, Dave Grusin (IHJ), and/or *Mister Magic*, Grover Washington (IHJ), and/or *Change of Heart*, David Sanborn (Web)
10. lead a class discussion regarding jazz's contribution to and reflection of American culture during the Free Jazz and Fusion Eras
11. discuss jazz education's role in society today
12. inform students that if they happen to own a favorite jazz CD that they would like to share with the class, they should bring it to the final jazz class

ASSESSMENT: Test Bank

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

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. Avant Garde/Free Jazz (1959-1970)⁷

A. Reaction to Cool and Hard Bop

1. if Bebop was a reaction to Swing, Cool was a reaction to the reaction, and Hard Bop was a reaction to the reaction to the reaction, then Free Jazz was a reaction to all that
 - a. Swing, Bebop, Cool, and Hard Bop improvisations were based on predetermined chord progressions, standard forms, and choruses (see Lesson Plan 2)
 - b. Free Jazz improvisations were generally not based on predetermined chord progressions, forms, and choruses
 - i. Free Jazz musicians "freed" themselves of these "constraints," improvising solely on the emotion of the moment
 - ii. with Free Jazz, traditional values of melody, harmony, and rhythm were discarded, providing more improvisational freedom for the soloist; preconceived notions of what jazz was "supposed" to be (and even what *music* was "supposed" to be) were laid to the wayside
2. Free Jazz allowed for the exploration of new tonal colors, that is, new harmonies (or lack of same), sounds, and musically expressed emotions
3. from its earliest roots (i.e., the music of West African slaves), jazz has been related to and represented freedom; embedded in Free Jazz was the freedom:
 - a. to explore new musical horizons
 - b. to improvise in "unorthodox" ways
 - c. from the musical past
 - d. from traditional melodies
 - e. from common practice scales, chords, and rhythms
4. Free Jazz pushed the limits of what musicians could play and what audiences could accept
5. Free Jazz widened the emotional and expressive parameters of jazz
6. discarding European chord progressions, Free Jazz became even more Afrocentric than Hard Bop; it reached back to the ethnic roots of the music, becoming modern, in a sense, by returning to the primitive

B. Performance Practices

1. the **size** and **instrumentation** of Avant Garde/Free Jazz groups were more varied than those of prior jazz genres (e.g., Ornette Coleman's recording *Free Jazz* in 1960 featured a "double quartet," that is, two quartets playing together each having bass and drums and two horns)⁸
2. the music was not based on traditional chords, forms, or structures
3. the music was not tonal, that is, based on an accepted, somewhat predictable series of notes and chords; instead it was atonal, that is not based on an accepted, somewhat predictable series of notes and chords

⁷ 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.

⁸ The octet on Ornette Coleman's 1960 release *Free Jazz* was comprised of alto sax, pocket trumpet (a smaller, specially made trumpet), regular trumpet, bass clarinet, two basses, and two drum sets.

4. the concept of pitch varied according to musical circumstances, personal feelings of the performers, context, accompanying rhythms, etc., not what notes sounded "right" with the chord being played at the moment; intonation (i.e., playing "in tune" as opposed to playing "in the cracks" between the notes on the piano) was a matter of context and expression
 5. the use of rhythm was highly varied, often with no steady pulse; melodies and phrases served as the impetus for rhythm and pulse and vice versa
- C. Important Figures
1. Ornette Coleman, alto saxophone (b.1930)
 2. Cecil Taylor, piano (b. 1929)
 3. Art Ensemble of Chicago (led by trumpet player Lester Bowie)
- D. Play *Enter Evening*, Cecil Taylor (IHJ), and/or *Full Force*, Art Ensemble of Chicago (IHJ), and/or *Lonely Woman*, Ornette Coleman (Web)⁹

II. Fusion (1969-1990)¹⁰

- A. Jazz musicians fuse jazz and rock
1. as a result of the rapid maturation of rock through the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, and others in the 1960s, jazz and rock were ripe for a merger
 2. Fusion experienced jazz musicians experimenting with electronic instruments (e.g., electric guitars, electric basses, electronic keyboard synthesizers, etc.), rock rhythms, long vamps, and rock riffs
 3. Fusion basically fused the sophistication and virtuosity of jazz with the raw power and emotion of rock
- B. Reaction to Free Jazz
1. many jazz musicians resented the "art-for-art's-sake" attitude of Free Jazz players, accusing them of alienating jazz audiences with music that was relevant only to a special few
 2. Fusion appealed to a broader spectrum of tastes, bringing to jazz a popularity not witnessed since the Swing era
 3. generally speaking, Free Jazz ignored its audience ("art-for-art's-sake"); Fusion strived to reach and affect its audience
 4. Free jazz was "cerebral;" Fusion, borrowing from rock's raw energy, was also "physical"
 5. Free jazz was acoustic, Fusion was electric
 6. Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* was the landmark album that launched Fusion

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C. Performance Practices

1. the **size** and **instrumentation** of Fusion groups varied, combining jazz and rock instruments; group size and instrumentation would often change from composition to composition
 - a. jazz instruments: trumpet, saxophone, acoustic (upright) bass
 - b. rock instruments: electric guitar, electric bass, electronic keyboard synthesizers
2. Fusion groups often employed multiple electronic keyboard players and percussionists (playing a wide variety of percussion instruments, e.g., congas, bongos, shakers, cymbals, etc.)
3. Fusion groups utilized amplification, synthesizers, reverb, distortion effects, and other electronic devices
4. Fusion groups were characterized by collective improvisation, high energy, heavy drama, extended (long) compositions/performances
5. Fusion repertoire consisted of almost exclusively original material (written specifically for/by the particular group recording/performing it)

D. Important Figures

1. Miles Davis, trumpet (1926-1991)
2. Weather Report (led by keyboardist Josef Zawinul and tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter)
3. Herbie Hancock, piano and electric keyboards (b. 1940)
4. Chick Corea, piano and electric keyboards (b. 1940)
5. John McLaughlin, electric guitar (b. 1942)
6. Jaco Pastorius, electric bass (1951-1987)

E. Play *Birdland* Weather Report (IHJ), and/or *The Spin*, Yellow Jackets (IHJ), and/or *Chameleon*, Herbie Hancock (Web)¹¹

F. Besides rock, Fusion combined jazz with musical elements from such styles as funk, soul, and especially, Latin music; play *Salsa Caliente*, Tito Puente (Web)

G. Pop/Contemporary Jazz, aka "Smooth Jazz" (1970-today)

1. a simpler, more "listenable" commercial style of jazz
2. fuses jazz with black popular song, blues, rhythm and blues, soul, funk, rock, Latin, and gospel music
3. main focus: to sell recordings
4. jazz musicians "crossing over" into the pop field is nothing new (e.g., Louis Armstrong was a huge commercial and pop music success)
5. while many jazz purists object to Pop/Contemporary Jazz even being called jazz, the philosophy of jazz has usually been one of inclusiveness, not exclusivity (jazz has torn down barriers, not put them up)
6. many Pop/Contemporary Jazz artists are often excellent straight-ahead jazz (i.e., hard bop) players as well, performing and recording "smooth jazz" to supplement their income (e.g., George Benson is one of the greatest straight ahead jazz guitarists of all time)
7. while less sophisticated than Hard Bop, Free Jazz, or Fusion, Pop/Contemporary Jazz is filled with a fresh light rhythmic buoyancy, offering "feel good" emotional content to its listener (music does not have to be sophisticated to be good)

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8. Important Figures
 - a. George Benson, guitar (b. 1943)
 - b. Dave Grusin, piano and electric keyboards (b. 1934)
 - c. David Sanborn, alto saxophone (b. 1945)
 - d. Spyro Gyra (led by saxophonist Jay Beckenstein)
 - e. Grover Washington, tenor, alto, and soprano saxophones (1943-1999)
9. play *Morning Dance*, Spyro Gyra (IHJ), and/or *Breezin'*, George Benson (IHJ), and/or *Mountain Dance*, Dave Grusin (IHJ), and/or *Mister Magic*, Grover Washington (IHJ), and/or *Change of Heart*, David Sanborn (Web)
10. inform students that if anyone happens to own a favorite jazz CD that they would like to share with the class, he/she should bring it to the final session

III. Cultural Implications

A. Avant Garde/Free Jazz

1. jazz musicians remained at the forefront of the artistic avant-garde
2. from its earliest roots, jazz has been about freedom; Free Jazz is a natural outgrowth of this issue
3. in a nation transformed by the social trauma, civil tumult, cultural and behavioral changes, drugs (such as hallucinogenics that stimulated chemically induced escapes from reality), and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction of the 1950s and 60s' artistic expression in all the arts was transformed; for example, these decades witnessed:
 - a. free verse poetry
 - b. abstract art
 - c. circular novels
 - d. modern dance
 - e. Free Jazz
4. Free Jazz was very much a part of the post World War II era, a time when traditional concepts of behavior, art, order, and even reality were questioned
5. Free Jazz reflected a growing movement in major inner cities toward an Afrocentric form of spirituality
6. Free Jazz reflected both black pride and anger
7. via its blending of dissonant harmonies and simple naive-sounding chant-like tunes, Free Jazz reflected both anger and lost innocence of African American childhood and tradition; it was able to express a vulnerability and fragility that black political militants could not express

B. Fusion

1. Fusion developed in the late 1960's out of, perhaps, the most confusing and pessimistic time for jazz and American society at large
2. Fusion was the stage for new cultural roles in jazz brought on by Americans' search for meaning in their lives in their struggle:
 - a. against communism, North Vietnam, and poverty
 - b. for civil rights, racial equality, and the American dream
3. America's faith in progress was shaken by continuous images of bloodshed, waste, and corruption; its postwar feelings of affluence, righteousness, and liberal progress were thwarted

4. America responded to society's strife by turning inward, giving rise to the "me generation"
 - a. music became a vehicle for Americans' search for satisfaction
 - b. musical styles reflected America's various subcultures' separate and "private" preferences, not a shared public experience
5. "Smooth Jazz" was associated with the uncommitted, private, detached life styles of a fragmented 1970s mass public
6. although new cultural trends took the urgency and protest out of music, allowing mass marketing to direct much of America's musical taste in jazz, many social revolutions that had begun in the 1960's were continued and realized; that, too was reflected in the music
7. Fusion was heard as the backdrop of many motion pictures and television shows, especially adult thrillers (e.g., *Body Heat*, *Jagged Edge*, *Nine and a Half Weeks*, *Miami Vice*)

IV. Jazz Education

- A. in the 1970s, the public became increasingly aware of the importance of jazz to America's history and culture
 1. high schools (and even middle schools) increasingly added jazz bands to their music programs
 2. jazz has been increasingly "legitimized" in formal academia
 - a. university jazz studies programs proliferated in the 1970s, '80s, and '90s
 - b. today, jazz students study and practice side by side with their classical music counterparts in America's most prestigious university schools of music and conservatories (e.g., Eastman, Indiana University, New England Conservatory)
 - c. today, students can earn a bachelors, masters, or even a doctoral degree in jazz studies
 3. many university music departments specialize in jazz studies (e.g., University of Miami, University of North Texas, Berklee College of Music)
 4. because jazz encompasses so many musical styles, the study of jazz provides practical training for budding professional musicians
- B. the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, a non-profit education organization founded in 1986, offers the world's most promising young musicians college level training by America's jazz masters and presents public school-based jazz education programs for young people around the world
- C. in 1987, the Joint Houses of Congress passed a resolution declaring jazz an American National Treasure; jazz education has henceforth been considered *American art education*

D. The A B Cs of Jazz Education: Aebersold, Baker, Coker

1. expanding on the "Music Minus One" concept, **Jamey Aebersold** has produced nearly 100 playalong recordings, enabling today's jazz students to play along with a recorded rhythm section (i.e., practice with accompaniment) anytime they want; the play-along recordings feature professional jazz rhythm sections which play accompaniment to common chord progressions, standards, and classic jazz tunes (the CDs are categorized by jazz artist, particular standards, and common chord progressions)
2. **David Baker** is considered one of the world's most eminent jazz pedagogues; he (1) founded the jazz studies program at Indiana University, (2) has written over 60 books and 400 articles on jazz improvisation, arranging, composition, pedagogy, how to learn tunes, how to practice, and related topics, and (3) is active today as Director of Jazz Studies at IU, a composer, performer, clinician, and Director of the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra; he is President Elect of the International Association of Jazz Educators
3. **Jerry Coker** founded the jazz program at the University of Miami (one of the most innovative schools of jazz today) in the late 60s; he also has written a number of books on jazz improvisation, how to teach, how to practice, how to hear common chord progressions, how to listen to jazz, and related topics