



Ideas for the classroom--teacher handout

Themes in music

Students listen to three or four different songs or music pieces on a specific theme from the Virtual Gramophone site. Some suggestions:

- War/pacifism
- Patriotism
- Role of women
- Racial tolerance/intolerance
- Family
- Politics
- Love and relationships
- Remembrance

Students compare the songs: how are they the same? They should consider:

- Treatment of theme (for or against? happy or sad? etc.)
- Style of music (waltz, foxtrot, ragtime, etc.)
- Lyrics
- Musical elements (beat, rhythms, pitch, etc.)
- Instruments used
- Performers (how many, gender, etc.)

They should also compare and contrast this music with modern music on the same theme.

A timeline of 20th-century music

Using music from the Virtual Gramophone and other sources, conduct a decade-by-decade study of 20th-century music. How did music change over the century? Consider:

- Themes
- Musical styles
- Instruments used
- Technological changes in recording and broadcasting

Students could also track major historical events in each decade. They could create a timeline of historical events, and mark the major musical movements and events of the century.



Year-by-year survey of songs

Students could search recordings by year to compare and contrast the types of songs released in each year. They could track them on a table by categories and graph the results:

- War/pacifism
- Patriotism
- Role of women
- Racial tolerance/intolerance
- Family
- Politics
- Love and relationships
- Remembrance

Students could also track musical styles (waltz, foxtrot, ragtime, etc.) and observe when new styles were introduced.

Technical difficulties

Recordings that have survived from the early twentieth century are often damaged and the sound, distorted. Students could visit the Virtual Gramophone [Technical notes](#) page and write a short report on the causes of these problems, and how they can be corrected.

As an extension activity, students could conduct research into what problems may arise in preserving music created today.

Creative writing

After listening to an historical piece of music, and discussing the theme and history behind it, students could write a poem or short story dramatizing the events of the song. Images taken from Images Canada could be used to help create mental imagery.

Interpretive drama or dance

Students could choose a song or piece of music from the Virtual Gramophone database and develop a piece of drama or an interpretive dance relating to the theme.

Students could also choose two songs, one modern, one from the Virtual Gramophone database, and create a dance that uses both pieces of music. This could highlight changes in the Canadian society and culture in the past 100 years.



Music and movement

This is an activity for drama students (or others) to be able to use music to heighten a dramatic pantomime. Students learn to adapt the action and activity of their pantomime to changes in the tempo, feeling and mood of the music.

Part 1

Students listen to a short piece of music from the Virtual Gramophone site and try to pick out the musical instruments used.

Part 2

Students listen a second time to get an overall feeling for the mood of the music, and try to think of a "plot" for a pantomime that will go with the music.

Part 3

After the second listening, students get into groups of 4-5 and share ideas of what "storyline" the music brought to their minds as they listened to it.

Part 4

Each group picks a favorite "storyline" out of those presented by others in the group and begins to outline a pantomime, assigning a part to each group member.

Part 5

The music is played repeatedly as students brainstorm, then write down, the sequence of actions for their pantomime.

Part 6

Once actions are written down, each group practices its pantomime to the music for approximately 15-20 minutes (play the music about 10 times). Their goal is to have the pantomime not only enhanced by the music being played, but to *end* the pantomime story when the music ends.

Part 7

Each group presents its pantomime, and other groups critique the performances.

This initial activity could be followed up with each group receiving a *different* piece of music so each group will be planning a pantomime scene to different pieces of music.

Costumes and props could be added.