



Musical art—teacher handout

Subject and ages

Visual arts; 12-14

Summary

Students will learn about and use all stages of the design process (specifications, research, experimentation, roughs, prototypes, revision, presentation and reflection) to create, in the role of commercial artist, CD cover art for an early twentieth-century Canadian song. They will select the materials, artistic media, style and techniques that they judge best reflect the song's theme and artists, as well as its historical and technological context.

Materials or resources required

- Student handout for musical art
- Thorgerson, Storm, and Roger Dean. *The Album Cover Album*. New York, N.Y.: Collins Design, 2008.
- Computers with access to the Internet
 - [Virtual Gramophone](#)
 - [Sheet Music from Canada's Past](#)
 - [Images Canada](#)
 - Library of Congress sheet music resources
 - [African-American Sheet Music, 1850-1920](#)
 - [America Singing: Nineteenth-Century Song Sheets](#)
 - [Historic American Sheet Music, 1850-1920](#)
 - [Music for the Nation: American Sheet Music, ca. 1820-1860](#)
 - [Music for the Nation: American Sheet Music, ca. 1870-1885](#)

Instructional procedures

Students will need to be familiar with the elements and principles of design (line, colour, shape, space, texture, form)

Large-group work

Have students view and comment on a various samples of record album and CD cover artwork. Students could bring CD covers of their favourite artists to class as a starting point for discussion. Resources can include hard-copy texts such as *The Album Cover Album*, as well as any internet site related to album and CD cover artwork.



Questions to promote critical viewing of record album and CD cover art

1. Initial response

- What catches your eye?
- What words first come to mind?
- How does this work make you feel?
- Where might you exhibit this work?
- Do you see anything in this work with which you are familiar?
- Are you attracted or repelled by anything in this work?
- What "temperature", "volume" and "taste" do you associate with this work?

2. Analysis

- Where is your eye drawn? Why?
- What is it about the work that makes you feel the way you do?
- What technique did the artist use in order to achieve a particular effect?
- What purpose does text have within this work?
- How does the style of lettering differ from work to work? (Similarities?)
- Are any symbolic shapes or forms included in the work? What do they signify?
- What changes would you bring to the work to make it more interesting or effective?
- Does the work have a central focus point? What is it? Why do you feel this is the centre of importance in the work?
- Which is most important, the work's symbols or its words?
- Describe how the elements of design (line, colour, shape, space, texture and form) are used.
- Is there a shape (colour, texture, line) that is predominant?

3. Information acquisition

- What evidence do you see of the artist's time and world?
- Why do you think the artist created this work?
- Are there any of these CD covers that wouldn't have been understood a few years ago?
- How do the images relate to the product being sold?
- Why do some designs need/not need words or letters?
- How has this form of art changed over time?

4. Interpretation

- Does the artwork express anything about the artist's world or time?
- Do you agree with the opinions expressed?
- Select one work. What "personality" does it have?
- How do you think certain artworks influence you to buy the product?
- Does the artwork have a particular theme or message?



Small-group work

Students are asked to assume the role of commercial artists who will work in small teams (2-3 members) to design the CD cover artwork for a particular song. Introduce the students to the design process (see below) that they must use in order to achieve their product.

The design process

1. Specifications: A clear statement describing the expected outcome of the design process

Library and Archives Canada has hired you to create the CD cover artwork for an early twentieth-century Canadian song from their Virtual Gramophone website.

2. Research: Searching for, and obtaining the essential information needed for a successful design

- What important subject or issue does this song explore? What insight, opinion, or point of view does the song express about this issue?
- What do we know about the performing artist, composer or lyricist that might explain the perspective expressed in the song's music and lyrics?
- How might major world events of the time have affected the music and song?
- Investigate the different sound qualities of the old recordings. Students could visit the [Technical notes](#) page and research or brainstorm reasons for these characteristics.
- How and why might sound be distorted on an old recording?

3. Experimentation: Bringing innovation to previously existing designs. Students will rework an existing sample of CD cover artwork by substituting, exaggerating, combining, altering or reversing one or several of its elements of design (colour, line, shape, space, texture, form). Students should solicit feedback from other groups of their peers.

4. Roughs: Initial representations: sketches, models (the "first draft" of ideas). Students will produce as many sketches as possible.

5. Prototypes: Refinements brought to the selected rough(s), based on critical response to drafts.

6. Revision: Consultation/feedback from outside the classroom.

7. Presentation: Communicating to an extended community. Students collaborate with other artists (classmates) to prepare a formal exhibit of various cover artwork designs.

8. Reflection: Evaluating both process and product.