Lesson Title/Topic: Exploring History Through Music

Created by: Joely Castillo, BMCC, CUNY
Faculty Mentors: Professor Alex Ho, BMCC and Professor RaShelle Peck, BMCC
Graduate Fellow: Janelle Poe, Graduate Center

Lesson Description:
Students will be asked to choose a country and narrow down 3-5 genres of music to create their own timeline. This can be a good time to pick out a country you're not from and get to know a culture a friend or classmate might be from. You should be able to gain an understanding of the country's history through your musical exploration. Students should analyze their learning by using a logic model to present the most salient aspects explored in their research. I, for example, categorized my learning in 4 boxes: glossary words (new words learned via research), historical context (what was happening at the time), video or film of performances, and songs of musicians that made their mark. By being sure to explore the music, visuals, and history, we can give your future audience a more holistic understanding of the music and what it says about your country. Students should think of a research question to guide their search, for example "What is Haitian Twoubadou music's connection to binational migrant laborers?" In my timeline, "Rhythms of the Past: Exploring Early Haitian Music Genres," I have a section that draws the influence of Twoubadou music to Haitian men laboring in neighboring countries.

Learning Objectives:
- Technical: Students will categorize genres of musical styles from the country of their choosing and organize research content.
- Observe: Students will spend time listening to songs and watching videos of musicians to get an understanding of the music. They should have an idea of what instruments are being played and what the song is trying to convey in order to guide their research.
- Analyze: Students will use the historical context to analyze the meaning and origins of the music studied and the country of origin.

Materials Needed:
- Access to a computer, laptop, or tablet and Wifi.
- Access to YouTube
- Access to Sutori or Canva
- Printed, emailed, or projected presentation
- Access to public library and institutional photo archives.
- Online research databases such as Oxford Music, Wikipedia, Library of Congress, and any other databases available to students.

Key Words: Archives, digital database, digital archives, open educational resource

Learning Outcomes: Students will create a timeline with their research. This can be done on online design platforms, such as Sutori, Canva, and Google Slides. The creation of this timeline should help students gain a deeper understanding of a country's cultural history.

Lesson Agenda/Schedule: This project plan should take 4-5 weeks to complete.

Week One: Selecting a country, research question, and genres
- Think of a country you would like to learn more about, maybe it is a country a friend or a classmate is from. This is the country whose music you will be exploring and researching. Think of a research question to guide your search. This question should be able to tie in all that you will be putting together. For example, think about the historical context, how it might relate to the music, and what this has to say about the country. When thinking about what genres you will choose (3-5 of them), consider including the country's earliest music, its most popular music, and its most global sound. This can be achieved by a quick Google search that should pull up pages like Wikipedia, Library of Congress, [Oxford Music Online](), etc.
- With your findings you should take to Youtube and find the music of any artist mentioned in your search as well as any others in the genre. This is a good time to explore the sounds that you like or might find interesting. As you find artists you enjoy and information that feels meaningful to your research question, place them in a document within their respective categories. For example, you should have a section for youtube links to music and visuals and another for notes.

Week Two and Three: Reseaching genres
- These weeks should be used for research! We want to know how the genre came about, what sounds influenced it, what the music genre had to say, etc.! Some genres of music are known to be more political while other genres of music are known for being more romantic! It's important to identify the message of a genre of music in order to understand its creation by its people!
- Students should use wikipedia to get started on their research for each genre, Wikipedia is a great tool to help get ideas about what one should be researching. Wikipedia usually provides a reference list located at the bottom of the page to help students expand their research. If you can find a reference list, this will give you authors to look into that may be talking about the very genre you're researching or the historical context of the country. Be sure to save where you are getting your information from and consider creating an annotated bibliography or reference list of your own in order to preserve our sources and give credit to said authors. Wikipedia is also a great place to find images that have a Creative Commons license that allows for open use of the image (make sure to credit the image and ask a teacher about how it is done).
- After gathering additional references, students should take to Google or their local library to find articles, books, and archival media on their genres. Libraries are a great place to go to do research! Oftentimes, they have access to books, images, film, and records! Be sure to do a good Internet search before the library in order to have a good understanding of what it is that you want to look for on your visit! Ask your librarian questions about your research; they are very knowledgeable about this kind of thing and can often provide pointers to manage the work!

- Students should reference their research question while doing their research and be sure to take note of all things they find that are related to their research. Make sure you're taking notes while you are doing this research in order to preserve your findings for the upcoming weeks! Your document should have a section for historical context; this includes the origin of the music, context on the time period when the music was made, etc. You should also consider having instrumentation, music, and media sections in which you identify the instruments being used and provide a photo of what that looked like in your research country. This will take about two weeks to fully gather and organize.

Week Four and Five: Making a timeline
- This week should be spent on transferring your notes and findings to your visual platform of choice. A more user-friendly option is using Canva, Google Slides, or Powerpoint which are all mostly free. There is also the option of Sutori, which I used, but it is a little limited in that you only have 30 days of free editing before the platform prompts you to create a subscription.
- When organizing your project, consider what your viewer will see and how you want them to experience your work! It is important to find a system of organization that makes chronological sense, being that this is a timeline.
- You can also consider transferring the work in the way that you took your notes! There can be a section for photos, music, videos, history/origin, and instruments. You can add descriptors to the photos or definitions of what it is. Think about the way you want to transfer this information, it can be written, in video, and/or in voice notes. This can be especially helpful when considering how accessible we want this to be for everyone! Folks who are hearing impaired might do better with written words while someone who is visually impaired might do better with sounds.
- Consider the following when creating your visual project…
    - How accessible is your project; is it on a free accessible platform or private?
    - Is your project constructed in a visually appropriate manner? Is your font legible? Is there enough contrast in background and front images and lettering?
    - Are there enough audio aspects of your timeline to help vision-impaired folks engage with your project? This can mean audio recordings uploaded into your project that detail the visuals.
    - Does your project answer your research question? Sometimes, we come to find that all of our research ends up answering a different question! Don't be afraid to change your question towards the end in order to match your research.

This project should teach students a different way they could learn about a country's history and its people. It should engage us in an art form that tends to bring people together and hopefully encourages you all to bring others into your findings as well! Have fun, and happy learning.