Music of the Chicano Movement:

A Smithsonian Folkways Learning Pathway for students in Grades 6–8.

Teacher's Guide

Lesson 2:
A History of Struggle:
Precursors to the Chicano Movement

Lesson Overview

Although most of the important events of the Chicano movement took place during the 1960s and 1970s in the southwestern part of the United States, the Mexican American community's history of displacement, exploitation, and discrimination began hundreds of years earlier. In fact, this history of oppression can be traced all the way back to the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire in the 16th Century. After the Spanish conquered Mesoamerica, they imposed their language, institutions, and religion on the native peoples, and frequently exploited them for their labor.

After the Mexican-American War (1846-1848), many Spanish and Mexican land owners were pushed off their land by Anglo American settlers. The Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) was another important historical event that had long-lasting implications for the Mexican American community, in both negative and positive ways. During this conflict, many people were forced to flee their homeland (Mexico) in order to escape the violence. This wave of immigration changed the demographics of the American Southwest and triggered anti-immigrant/anti-Mexican backlash. During the Chicano movement, revolutionary figures (e.g., Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata) served as role models and symbols—they inspired and motivated people to stand up against injustices, fight on behalf of the poor, and demand change.

The learning experiences included in this lesson will prompt students to explore the ways in which historical events contributed to the systemic oppression and discrimination that ultimately inspired activists to rise up and fight for Mexican Americans' civil rights during the Chicano movement.

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Lesson Components and Student Objectives*

1. **A History of Displacement** (30+ minutes)
    - Students will explain why important historical events (e.g., Spanish Conquest of Mesoamerica, Mexican-American War, Mexican Revolution) contributed to the systemic oppression faced by the Mexican American community.

2. **Historical Symbols and Musical Sounds** (25+ minutes)
    - Students will identify the ways in which singer-songwriters used imagery, historical symbols, and the elements of music within their compositions to convey expressive intent.

3. **Music and the Mexican American Generation** (45+ minutes)
    - Students will compare and contrast two versions of "La bamba"
    - Students will perform an arrangement of "La bamba" inspired by Ritchie Valens's version of this song.

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*Note: The learning icons used above signify the type of learning used in each Component. Keep in mind that these Components are not intended to be sequential; rather, teachers or students may choose which Components they'd like to use from each Lesson. The time estimate given for each component indicates "in class" time. The + indicates there are optional extension activities and/or a suggested homework assignment.

While all learning types (📖 History and Culture, 🎧 Music Listening, 🪕 Music Making and Creation, and 🎨 Creative Connections) fulfill 2014 National Music Standards, non-music teachers will be able to use 📖 History and Culture and 🎨 Creative Connections Components without specific musical knowledge.

Teaching Plan

1. A History of Displacement

To Prepare:

- Preview Component 1 of the ***Lesson 2 Slideshow.***
- Print or prepare to display the "Corrido de Aztlán" song lyrics (find below).

Process: Guide student learning while facilitating the student slideshow.

- Open the "Launch Slideshow" link on the righthand menu of the Lesson landing page. If you are able to use a different screen than the students, have them open the "Student Slideshow" link just below that, which will not show the notes.

1. **Share Information**:
   - **Use the information provided in the slideshow** to share background information about (and discuss):
     - The Spanish Conquest of the Aztec Empire
     - The Mexican-American War
     - The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo
     - Aztlán

2. **Listening Activity:** "Corrido de Aztlán"
   - Follow along with the song lyrics while listening to "Corrido de Aztlán."
     - Ask students to pay close attention to (underline or circle) lyrics that invoke the imagery of Aztlán.

3. **Discussion:** Lyrical Meaning
   - Lead a short class discussion based on student responses to the listening exercise.
     - **Discussion points are provided in the slideshow.**

4. **Share Information:**
   - **Use the information in the slideshow** to provide additional background and contextual information about:
     - Suni Paz (the recording artist)
     - The Mexican Revolution
     - Subsequent anti-immigrant sentiment

5. **Optional Extension Activity:** Create a Historical Timeline
    - If you choose to do this activity, students will work together to put the events discussed in this lesson component in chronological order.
        - To save time, teachers can create a set of event cards ahead of time (using images in this slide deck or supplementing the events in this lesson with other images).
        - Then, pass out the cards in class have students work together to find the dates of the events (alternatively, students could assemble the cards and images themselves, find the dates, and add them).
        - Once the cards are completed and dated, they can be arranged on the wall or floor in chronological order.

2. Historical Symbols and Musical Sounds

To Prepare:

- Preview Component 2 of the ***Lesson 2 Slideshow.***
- If you want to do the drum-building activity, have students bring an empty container (e.g., oatmeal, coffee) and plastic lids, felt, foam, rubber, etc. to cover the end.

Process: Guide student learning while facilitating the student slideshow.

- Open the "Launch Slideshow" link on the righthand menu of the Lesson landing page. If you are able to use a different screen than the students, have them open the "Student Slideshow" link just below that, which will not show the notes.

- Scroll to the Component Menu slide (slide 3) and click on Component 2.

1. Listening Activity 1: "Corrido de Aztlán"
   Students will identify the ways in which music elements are used in "Corrido de Aztlán," in particular:

   - *Which instrument is playing the steady beat?* (**tambourine**)
   - *Which other instruments do you hear? (***guitar, *güiro*** [GWEE-row]**, bongos, bombo drum**)

2. **Optional Extension Activity:** Make a Drum!
   Using an empty container (e.g., oatmeal, coffee) students can make their own drums.
   - Cover the ends of the container with plastic lids, felt, foam, rubber, etc.
   - Experiment with making different sounds.
   - Listen to the recording again and play along with the sound of the bombo.
     - **NOTE: Students could also play along on the güiro as they listen.**

3. **Listening Activity 2:** "Adelita"
   Students will identify the ways in which music elements are used in Lydia Mendoza's version of "Adelita," in particular:

   - *What instrumental sounds do you hear?* (**female voice, 12-string guitar, audience participation**)

   - *What do you think this song is about?*
     - Share and discuss background information provided on slides:

        - **Although this well-known song was originally written about one particular female soldier (*soldadera*) during the Mexican Revolution, over time the term "Adelita" has been used to describe women "warriors," women who are willing to stand up and fight for their rights.**

- *What two words would you use to describe Lydia Mendoza's voice on this recording?*
    - Share and discuss background information provided on slides:
        - **Lydia Mendoza possessed a clear, powerful voice and accompanied herself on an unconventionally tuned 12-string guitar.**

4. **Optional Extension Activity:** Research Women Warriors!
   Consider the following suggestions as you facilitate this activity:
   - *In what other cultures, times, and places can we see examples of women warriors?*
   - Find an example of an "Adelita" in another context.
   - Find an example of a song about a strong woman from any culture, time, or place. Compare the song with the song "Adelita."
   - Share what you discover with the class!
       - Make sure the students know the difference between a woman who really lived, and women from folklore. The teacher can decide if only actual historical figures can be used or if depictions from folklore can be included. Fictional characters from movies and cartoons should be avoided.
       - Potential Sources:
           - https://www.jetmag.com/life/unsung-sheroes-10-historical-black-women-figures/
           - https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/dahomeys-women-warriors-88286072/
           - https://foundationforwomenwarriors.org/
           - https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/59287/9-female-warriors-who-made-their-mark-history

3. Music and the Mexican American Generation

To Prepare:

- Preview Component 3 of the ***Lesson 2 Slideshow.***
- Print the listening template for each student (find below)[1].

Process: Guide student learning while facilitating the student slideshow.

- Open the "Launch Slideshow" link on the righthand menu of the Lesson landing page. If you are able to use a different screen than the students, have them open the "Student Slideshow" link just below that, which will not show the notes.

- Scroll to the Component Menu slide (slide 3) and click on Component 3.

1. **Share Information:**
   A. **Use the information provided in the slideshow** to share background information about "cultural assimilation" and the "Mexican American Generation."
   B. **Use the information in the slideshow** to provide background information about Ritchie Valens.
      - An optional video and reading activity are provided.

2. **Listening Activity:** "La bamba"
   Students will listen to two distinct versions of "La bamba" and write down observations about music elements and expressive qualities on the provided listening template (courtesy of teachrock.org).

3. **Active Music Making Activity: "**La bamba"
   Use the suggestions provided in the slideshow to help students actively engage with Ritchie Valens's version of this song.
   - Students can:
     - Play chords
     - Sing
     - Play rhythmic patterns
     - Learn and play a recognizable "riff"

[1] Reprinted with permission of TeachRock: www.teachrock.org

2014 National Music Standards Connections

MU:Pr4.1.a Demonstrate and explain how the selection of music to perform is influenced by personal interest, knowledge, and context, as well as their personal and others' technical skill.

- Can I interpret Ritchie Valens's choice to record the song "La bamba"?

MU:Pr4.2.a Demonstrate understanding of the structure and the elements of music (such as rhythm, pitch, form, and harmony) in music selected for performance.

- Can I describe/demonstrate the ways the elements of music are used in Ritchie Valens's rendition of "La bamba"?

MU:Pr4.2.c Identify how cultural and historical context inform performances and result in different music interpretations.

- Can I explain how cultural and historical context influenced the two different interpretations of "La bamba" we studied in this lesson?

MU:Pr4.3.a Demonstrate and explain how intent is conveyed through interpretive decisions and expressive qualities (such as dynamics, tempo, timbre, and articulation/style).

- Can I explain why Ritchie Valens's version of "La bamba" be interpreted as an example of *assimilation?*

MU:Pr6.1.a Perform music, alone or with others, with expression, technical accuracy, and appropriate interpretation.

- Can I make a musical contribution to our class performance of "La bamba" (inspired by Ritchie Valens's version)?

MU:Re7.1.a Demonstrate and explain, citing evidence, how selected music connects to and is influenced by specific interests, experiences, purposes, or contexts.

- Can I interpret the musicians' choices to create/perform/record the songs included in this lesson?

MU:Re7.2.a Describe how the elements of music and expressive qualities relate to the structure of the pieces.

- Can I describe how musical elements were used in the music we heard and performed (especially instrumental/vocal timbre in Component 2)?

MU:Re7.2.b Identify the context of music from a variety of genres, cultures, and historical periods.

- Can I identify the context of the songs used in this lesson?

MU:Re8.1.a Describe a personal interpretation of how creators' and performers' application of the elements of music and expressive qualities, within genres and cultural and historical context, convey expressive intent.

- Can I explain how the musicians featured in this lesson convey expressive intent and provide clues about their cultural/musical identity (through their choice of repertoire/style, use of the music elements, language, and expressive/interpretive choices)?

MU:Cn10.0.a Demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.

- Can I explain why these musicians wanted to create/perform/record these songs?

MU:Cn11.0.a Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

- Can I explain why the history (displacement, exploitation, discrimination, revolutionary figures, assimilation) influenced the music singer/songwriters wrote and performed during the time of the Chicano movement?

Additional Readings and Resources

Gregory, A. (2016). A brief history of the zoot suit. *Smithsonian Magazine*. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/brief-history-zoot-suit-180958507/.

Martinez, B. (1973). *Brotando del silencio: Breaking out of the silence*, by Suni Paz [Liner notes]. Paredon Records. https://folkways-media.si.edu/docs/folkways/artwork/PAR01016.pdf.

Montoya, M. (2016). *The Chicano movement for beginners*. For Beginner Books.

Rosales, F. A. (1996). *Chicano! The history of the Mexican American civil rights movement*. Arte Público Press.

Sheehy, D. E. (2003). *La bamba: Sones jarochos from Veracruz*, by José Gutiérrez & Los Hermanos Ochoa [Liner notes]. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. https://folkways-media.si.edu/docs/folkways/artwork/SFW40505.pdf.

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings (n.d.). Suni Paz: Argentinian singer and songwriter. *Explore: Artist Spotlight*. https://folkways.si.edu/suni-paz-argentinian-singer-songwriter/latin-world/music/article/smithsonian.

Strachwitz, C. (2001). *La alondra de la frontera – live!* By Lydia Mendoza [Liner notes]. Arhoolie Records. https://folkways-media.si.edu/docs/folkways/artwork/ARH00490.pdf.

Strachwitz, C., & Nicolopulos, J. (1993). *Lydia Mendoza: A family autobiography*. Arte Público Press.

TeachRock (n.d.). Ritchie Valens biography [Worksheet]. In *Teach Rock Lesson: Ritchie Valens*. https://teachrock.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/Handout-1-Ritchie-Valens-Biography_v2.pdf.

TeachRock (n.d.). "La Bamba" handout [Worksheet]. In *Teach Rock Lesson: Ritchie Valens*. https://teachrock.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/Handout-3-La-Bamba.pdf.

Zettler, J. (2009). C*orridos of the Chicano movement* [Liner notes]. Arhoolie Records. https://folkways-media.si.edu/docs/folkways/artwork/ARH00507.pdf.

Worksheets

"Corrido de Aztlán" song lyrics

By Daniel Valdez; recorded by Suni Paz

As you listen, circle lyrics in the translation that represent the idea of Aztlán.

De los files a los campos	From the grape rows to the fields,
De los barrios a los pueblos	From the ghettos to the towns,
Donde quiera que haya raza	Wherever there is *raza* (Chicanos)
Declaremos nuestras tierras	We declare our territory
Declaremos nuestro plan	We declare our plan.
Nuestra gente es la raza	Our people are *la raza*,
Y nuestro pueblo es Aztlán	And our nation is Aztlán.
(Estribillo)	**(Refrain)**
Ay, ay, ay, ay	**Ay, ay, ay, ay,**
Al grito de guerra	**With a cry of "war"**
Pa' liberar a nuestra gente	**We'll liberate our people,**
Y hasta morir por nuestras tierras	**And fight to the death for our lands**
Oye carnal, pon atención	Hey, blood-brother, pay attention
Nosotros somos raza del pueblo del sol	We are *la raza*, the children of the sun
Y aunque vengas tu del norte	And even though you come from the north,
Y yo venga del sur	And I come from the south,
Unidos venceremos	Together we will win victory
Pa' acabar la esclavitud	And put an end to slavery
(Estribillo)	**(Refrain)**
Nuestra lucha es de los pobres	Our struggle is with the poor,
No de ricos ni opresores	Not the rich nor the oppressors,
Pues nuestro pueblo ha dicho, basta!	Because our people have said, enough!
Abajo la explotación	Down with exploitation,
Por todita la nación	Throughout the whole nation,
Esta vez llegaremos a la gloria	And this time we will come to glory!

Continue to circle lyrics that represent Aztlán, but try to find them in the Spanish lyrics.

(Estribillo)	**(Refrain)**
Somos hijos de Zapata	We are Zapata's children
Con el alma de la raza	With the soul of *la raza*
Espíritu de Pancho Villa	And the spirit of Pancho Villa,
Y para Aztlán lucharemos	And we will fight for Aztlán
Que sus tierras protegemos	We will protect our lands,
Que nos une y nos guía como hermano	That unite and guide us brothers
(Estribillo)	**(Refrain)**
Ya con esta me despido	And so I say farewell now,
Con el alma y mucho ruido	And make a soulful commotion,
Porque mi gente al fín decide	Because my people have resolved:
Declaremos nuestras tierras	We will proclaim our lands
Declaremos nuestro plan	We will proclaim our plan
Nuestra gente es la raza,	Our people are *la raza*,
Y nuestro pueblo es Aztlán	And our nation is A

“La bamba” song lyric excerpt

Mexican folk song; recording by Ritchie Valens

Para bailar la bamba	To dance the Bamba (a dance),
Para bailar la bamba	to dance the Bamba,
se necesita una poca de gracia	one needs a bit of grace.
Una poca de gracia pa' mi pa' ti	A bit of grace for me, for you,
y arriba y arriba	now come on, come on,
Ah y arriba y arriba	now come on, come on,
por ti seré, por ti seré, por ti seré	for you I'll be, for you I'll be, for you I'll be.

Handout 2 - "La Bamba" Listening Template

	Version 1: Traditional	Version 2: Ritchie Valens, 1958
Instrumentation What instruments do you hear? Which are emphasized? In what order do you hear them?		
Vocals What is the style of singing? How would you describe the singer's voice?		
Mood What kind of mood does the song create? How does it make you feel?		
Tempo Is the song fast, slow, or something in between?		
Beat/ Percussion Does the song have a strong beat? Does it make you want to move in some way?		
Lyrics What language are they in? Can they be easily understood? What basic ideas do they convey?		
Sounds Like Does the song remind you of any other songs you've heard? Be specific.		