

Estoy Aquí: Music of the Chicano Movement:

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



Teacher's Guide

Lesson Hub 2:

A History of Struggle:

Precursors to the Chicano Movement

Lesson Overview

An important social movement in United States history, the Chicano movement can be understood as a collective response to injustices faced by members of Mexican American communities in the southwestern part of the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. However, it is important to remember that this history of oppression, discrimination, displacement, and exploitation began hundreds of years before this time. In fact, it 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, frequently exploiting them for their labor.

After the Mexican American War (1846-1848), many Spanish and Mexican landowners were pushed off their land by white American settlers. The Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) was another important historical event that had long-lasting implications for people in Mexican American communities. During this conflict, many people were forced to flee their homeland (Mexico) 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.

In this lesson, students will engage with musical recordings from the Smithsonian Folkways catalog as they learn about important historical events that contributed to injustices members of Mexican American communities sought to rectify as the Chicano movement of the 1960s–1970s began.

In this Guide

Lesson Overview	1
Lesson Paths and Student Objectives*	2
Teaching Plan	3
Integrated Standards Connections	8
Additional Readings and Resources	11
Worksheets	13

Lesson Paths and Student Objectives*



1. Before the Chicano Movement: A History of Oppression (30+ minutes)

- Students will explain how important historical events (e.g., Spanish Conquest of Mesoamerica, Mexican American War, Mexican Revolution) contributed to injustices faced by the Mexican American community during the Chicano movement of the 1960s–1970s.



2. Historical Symbols and Musical Sounds (25+ minutes)







- Students will identify the ways in which singer-songwriters have 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.

*Note: The learning icons used above signify the type of learning used in each Path. Keep in mind that these Paths are not intended to be sequential; rather, teachers or students may choose which Paths they’d like to use from each Lesson. The time estimate given for each Path 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 Paths without specific musical knowledge.

Teaching Plan

Path 1: Before the Chicano Movement: A History of Oppression



To prepare:

- Preview Path 1 of the **Lesson Hub 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 details about (and discuss) these events and topics:
 - 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 the song lyrics identified by students during 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 Path in chronological order.
 - To save time, you 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, you can 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 (this can function as a form of assessment).

Path 2: Historical Symbols and Musical Sounds



To prepare:

- Preview Path 2 of the **Lesson Hub 2 Slideshow**.
- If you decide to facilitate the optional 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 Path Menu slide (slide 3) and click on Path 2.
1. **Listening Activity 1: “Corrido de Aztlán”**
In this activity, 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 / Adelitas!

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>

Path 3: Music and the Mexican American Generation



To prepare:

- Preview Path 3 of the **Lesson Hub 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 Path Menu slide (slide 3) and click on Path 3.

1. Share Information:

- Use the information provided in the slideshow** to share background information about “cultural assimilation” and the “Mexican American Generation.”
- 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

Integrated Standards Connections

2014 National Core Music Standards:

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 explain why Ritchie Valens chose to perform and 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 structural characteristics of “La bamba” and how Ritchie Valens used the elements of music in his rendition of the song?

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 Ritchie Valens’s interpretation of “La bamba”?

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 the interpretative decisions Ritchie Valens made in his performance of “La bamba” can be viewed 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 of the song)?

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 and explain how the songs introduced in this lesson connected to context and the interests, experiences, and purposes of the songwriters and musicians who created and performed them?

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 and expressive qualities relate to the musical examples we heard and performed in this lesson (especially instrumental/vocal timbre)?

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

- Can I identify the historical and cultural context of the songs introduced 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 conveyed expressive intent and provided clues about their cultural/musical identity (through their choice of repertoire/style, use of the music elements, language, and expressive/interpretive choices, etc.)?

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 historical events and symbols (related to displacement, exploitation, discrimination, revolutionary figures, Aztlán, etc.) were often referenced in the songs musicians wrote and performed during the time of the Chicano movement (1960s–1970s)?
- Can I identify connections between visual artwork and music created during this time period?

2014 National Core Visual Arts Standards:

VA:Re8.1.8a. Interpret art by analyzing how the interaction of subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, use of media, artmaking approaches, and relevant contextual information contributes to understanding messages or ideas and mood conveyed.

- Can I interpret the messages, ideas, and sentiments Roberto Rios conveyed about immigration through his 1978 mural, “Mexican Immigrant”?

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Standards:

D2.Civ.3.6-8. Examine the origins, purposes, and impact of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements.

- Can I explain the some of the purposes and impacts of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo?

D2.His.15.6-8. Evaluate the relative influence of various causes of events and developments in the past.

- Can I explain how and why important events in U.S. history (e.g., Spanish conquest; Mexican American War; Mexican Revolution) were related to and influenced events that took place during the Chicano movement of the 1960s–1970s?

Common Core State Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

- Can I determine and discuss the central idea of songs (primary sources) introduced in this lesson (e.g., “Corrido de Aztlán” and “Adelita”)?

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7. Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

- Can I integrate visual information with other information in this lesson (presented through text and music) by organizing a series of historic photographs into chronological order?

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- Can I contribute my ideas to collaborative discussions about historical events and issues (e.g., Spanish conquest, Mexican American War, Mexican Revolution, Aztlán) and their relationship to the injustices people faced during the Chicano movement of the 1960s–1970s?

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.2. Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

- Can I analyze and discuss the purpose of the songs introduced in this lesson and the motives behind the musicians who wrote them?

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.6. Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

- Can I accurately use new academic and domain-specific words and phrases introduced in this lesson (e.g., discrimination, oppression, displacement, exploitation, anomaly, assimilation, etc.).

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/>.

Harvard Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *Project zero's thinking routines toolbox*.

<https://pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines>.

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 jarocho 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., & Nicolopoulos, 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). *Corridos of the Chicano movement* [Liner notes]. Arhoolie Records. <https://folkways-media.si.edu/docs/folkways/artwork/ARH00507.pdf>.
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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
 De los barrios a los pueblos
 Donde quiera que haya raza
 Declaremos nuestras tierras
 Declaremos nuestro plan
 Nuestra gente es la raza
 Y nuestro pueblo es Aztlán

(Estrillo)

Ay, ay, ay, ay
 Al grito de guerra
 Pa' liberar a nuestra gente
 Y hasta morir por nuestras tierras

Oye carnal, pon atención
 Nosotros somos raza del pueblo del sol
 Y aunque vengas tu del norte
 Y yo venga del sur
 Unidos venceremos
 Pa' acabar la esclavitud

(Estrillo)

Nuestra lucha es de los pobres
 No de ricos ni opresores
 Pues nuestro pueblo ha dicho, basta!
 Abajo la explotación
 Por todita la nación
 Esta vez llegaremos a la gloria

From the grape rows to the fields,
 From the ghettos to the towns,
 Wherever there is *raza* (Chicanos)
 We declare our territory
 We declare our plan.
 Our people are *la raza*,
 And our nation is Aztlán.

(Refrain)

Ay, ay, ay, ay,
 With a cry of “war”
 We’ll liberate our people,
 And fight to the death for our lands

Hey, blood-brother, pay attention
 We are *la raza*, the children of the sun
 And even though you come from the north,
 And I come from the south,
 Together we will win victory
 And put an end to slavery

(Refrain)

Our struggle is with the poor,
 Not the rich nor the oppressors,
 Because our people have said, enough!
 Down with exploitation,
 Throughout the whole nation,
 And this time we will come to glory!

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

Somos hijos de Zapata
 Con el alma de la raza
 Espíritu de Pancho Villa
 Y para Aztlán lucharemos
 Que sus tierras protegemos
 Que nos une y nos guía como hermano

(Estrillo)

Ya con esta me despido
 Con el alma y mucho ruido
 Porque mi gente al fin decide
 Declaremos nuestras tierras
 Declaremos nuestro plan
 Nuestra gente es la raza,
 Y nuestro pueblo es Aztlán

(Refrain)

We are Zapata’s children
 With the soul of *la raza*
 And the spirit of Pancho Villa,
 And we will fight for Aztlán
 We will protect our lands,
 That unite and guide us brothers

(Refrain)

And so I say farewell now,
 And make a soulful commotion,
 Because my people have resolved:
 We will proclaim our lands
 We will proclaim our plan
 Our people are *la raza*,
 And our nation is A

“La bamba” song lyric excerpt

Mexican folk song; recording by Ritchie Valens

Para bailar la bamba
Para bailar la bamba
se necesita una poca de gracia
Una poca de gracia pa' mi pa' ti
y arriba y arriba
Ah y arriba y arriba
por ti seré, por ti seré, por ti seré

To dance the Bamba (a dance),
to dance the Bamba,
one needs a bit of grace.
A bit of grace for me, for you,
now come on, come on,
now come on, come on,
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.		