

Music of the Chicano

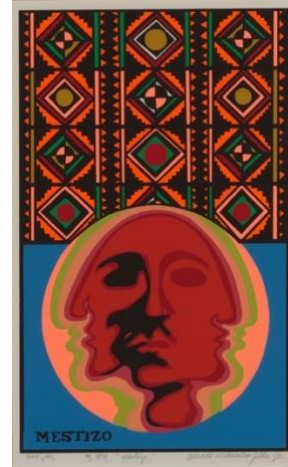
Movement:

A Smithsonian Folkways Learning Pathway for students in Grades 5–8.

Teacher's Guide

Lesson 9:

Race, Mestizaje, and Music



Lesson Overview

Especially in the 1940s and 1950s, many middle-class Mexican Americans worked hard to assimilate into American culture. They placed faith in the American education and electoral systems, wanted their children to speak English (sometimes English only), and wanted to be classified as “white.” As the 1960s began, more and more people began to challenge this **assimilationist** point of view, questioning whether blending into white America was the best pathway towards achieving equal rights and treatment as American citizens.

During the time we now know as the Chicano movement, many Mexican Americans began to accept, embrace, and celebrate the notion of **mestizaje**, which can be understood as the mixing of ethnic groups (most often Spanish/European and Indigenous). They were tired of being made to feel that “white was right” and “being Mexican was a source of shame” (Montoya, 2016, p. 25). Many writers, artists, poets, and musicians engaged with the concept of mestizaje through figurative language, musical sounds and expressive qualities, symbolism, and imagery. Some musicians also consciously reclaimed and re-interpreted Mexican-influenced musical styles (such as *son jarocho*), a practice that “represented an affirmation of their ethnic origin and identity” and at least in some ways, a rejection of “American musical values.” In this way, musical expression “played a crucial role in the construction of Chicano identity” (Loza, 2019, p. 77).

In this lesson, students will actively engage with music from the Smithsonian Folkways collection while considering the ways in which issues related to race have affected Chicana/o identity. Specifically, music will serve as a vehicle for understanding complex sociocultural concepts (such as assimilation and mestizaje). Students will also have opportunities to learn about and perform certain aspects of *son jarocho*: an improvisatory style of music that originated in Veracruz, Mexico and became a popular form of musical expression in the United States during the Chicano movement.

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Lesson Components and Student Objectives*



1. Challenging Assimilation and “Whiteness” (25+ minutes)

- Students will explain why many Mexican Americans wanted to assimilate into “American” culture by “claiming whiteness” during the 1940s & 1950s.



2. Embracing Indigeneity and Mestizaje (30 minutes)







- Students will describe the ways in which Chicana/o writers, artists, poets, and musicians have engaged with the concept of mestizaje through figurative language, musical sounds and expressive qualities, symbolism, and imagery.



3. Son jarocho: Musical Mestizaje (30+ minutes)

- Students will perform a zapateado dance step and will explore stylistic characteristics of son jarocho through performance.

*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. Component One: Challenging Assimilation and “Whiteness”



To prepare:

- Preview Component 1 of the **Lesson 9 Slideshow**.
- Print (or prepare to display) the song lyrics for “Lulac Cadillac” for each student (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. Attentive Listening Activity: “Lulac Cadillac”

A. Play an excerpt from the embedded recording of “Lulac Cadillac” and ask students to consider this question:

- *What do you notice about the languages represented?*
 - After soliciting student ideas, **advance to the next slide, which provides explanation about the languages represented** (Spanish, English, and a neighborhood dialect called Caló).
 - This “weaving together” of languages symbolizes the feeling of being torn between several different worlds.

B. Pass out (or display the lyrics). Play the recording, in its entirety. As students listen and follow along with the lyrics, they can think about this question:

- *What do the lyrics of this song mean?*
 - After soliciting student ideas, **use the contextual information embedded in the slideshow to unpack the meaning of this song** (which tackles the complex topic of cultural assimilation),
 - Share additional information (**embedded in the slideshow**) about the assimilationist stance taken by some members of the Mexican American community (mostly before – but also during and after) the time of the Chicano movement.

2. Discussion: Assimilation and Whiteness

For many middle-class Mexican Americans in the 1940s and 1950s, the idea of cultural assimilation and the idea of “whiteness” went hand in hand.

- Prompt students to think (and share their thoughts) about this question:
 - *Why do you think many Mexican Americans wanted to be classified as “white” during this time in history?*
 - **Explanation and discussion points are provided within the slideshow.**

2. Component Two: Embracing Indigeneity and Mestizaje



To prepare:

- Preview Component 2 of the **Lesson 9 Slideshow**.
- Print the song lyrics for “America de los Indios” and “El quinto sol” (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.
- Scroll to the Component Menu slide (slide 3) and click on Component 2.

1. **Discussion:** What is Chicano?

Present the following Ruben Salazar quote and ask students to consider the meaning of the statement and whether they agree or disagree:

- “A *Chicano* is a Mexican American with a non-Anglo image of himself.”
 - Invite students to share their thoughts within the context of a class discussion (students could also discuss in small groups or reflect through writing).
 - Then, **share contextual information about Ruben Salazar (embedded in the slideshow).**

2. **Show Video(s):** Ruben Salazar and Mestizaje

- Show the first embedded video (produced by the Smithsonian American Art Museum), which will provide additional context about the circumstances of Ruben Salazar’s tragic death and legacy.
 - **Note: The artwork featured in this video does contain several nude images. If you are uncomfortable with this, you can skip the video and instead share the contextual information provided in the notes section of the slideshow** (or, skip directly to the second video).
- Share embedded contextual information** about the role of race and mestizaje during the Chicano movement.
- Show the second embedded video (also produced by the Smithsonian American Art Museum), which further unpacks the idea of mestizaje.

3. **Share Information/Discussion:** Mestizaje and Chicano Identity

- Share additional historical and contextual information about mestizaje (embedded in the slideshow).
- Share information about Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, whose epic poem, *Yo Soy Joaquín*, emphasizes race (in particular, mestizaje) as an important aspect of

Chicano identity. This poem was instrumental in creating a sense of what it meant to be Chicana/o during the Chicano movement.

- Ask students to read a short excerpt from this poem (**embedded in slideshow**) and discuss the meaning behind the words.
- Consider leading a class discussion about the meaning behind this excerpt (or have students write about it and/or discuss it with partners or in small groups). *What does this poem have to do with mestizaje?*

4. Attentive Listening Activity: “America de los Indios” and “El quinto sol”

Pass out the lyrics to both songs and play the embedded audio recordings.

- As students listen (and follow along with the lyrics), they should circle or underline any lyrical references that reflect the musicians’ identification with the Indigenous part of their ethnic identity. They can also make a list of any musical sounds they think are intended to represent the Indigenous part of their ethnic identity.
- Next, ask students to share their thoughts with others (with partners, in a small group, or as a full class discussion).
 - **A list of musical characteristics and textual references for each song is provided within the slideshow.**

3. Component Three: Son jarocho: Musical Mestizaje



To prepare:

- Preview Component 3 of the **Lesson 9 Slideshow**.

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. Show Video and Share Information (1): Son jarocho: “Toro zacamandú” by Son de Madera

Show the embedded video that highlights a song and dance tradition called *son jarocho*.

- **Share embedded contextual information** about the Veracruz region and the notion of musical mestizaje (**the mixing and merging of music made by people from different ethnic groups**).

2. Show Video and Share Information (2): Son jarocho: “Son de Madera on improvisation”

Show the second embedded video, which provides more information about the son jarocho tradition.

- As students watch the video, ask them to think about whether the defining stylistic characteristics were influenced by Spanish, Indigenous, and/or African traditions.
- **Share additional embedded information** about:
 - Terminology (*son* and *jarocho*)
 - The social context of son jarocho
 - Spanish, Indigenous, and African influences
 - Instrumentation
 - Form/structure (If time allows, students can listen attentively to identify this)
 - The importance of improvisation

3. Engaged Listening: Rhythmic Structure: “Siquisirí” and “Toro zacamandú”

A. Lead students in an engaged listening activity that will require them to listen to a recording of the song “Siquisirí” and tap along with the triple subdivisions.

- After sharing embedded information about hemiola/sesquialtera, prompt students to read the written musical notation as they perform a rhythmic structure that alternates between a 6/8 and 3/4 feel.

- B. Play another excerpt from the song “Toro zacamandú.”
- This time, prompt students to clap along with the hemiola/sequialtera groove (you could also use rhythm sticks or other percussion instruments).

4. **Performance Activity:** Dancing Zapateado

A. **Share embedded contextual information about zapateado:** A dance that is associated with son jarocho.

B. Teach the rhythm that occurs in the dancers’ feet by using the phrase “café con pan” (coffee with bread).

- To begin, students can tap the rhythm on their lap, paying attention to “lefts” and “rights” (slowly at first).
- When they are ready, students can try to pat the rhythm along with the recording (“Siquisiri”).
- Next, students can put this rhythm in their feet (again, slowly at first).
 - It is helpful to remind them that as they step with one foot, they should lift the opposite foot (excepts with the first of each double step).
 - It is helpful to remind them that in this case (not always) - the accent falls on "pan"
- Eventually (but probably not on the first day), students will be ready to try the dance along with the recording (“Siquisiri”).
 - If time allows, facilitate some of the optional extension activities outlined in the slideshow (e.g., learning more about the poetic structure, writing son jarocho lyrics).
 - **Ideas for additional performance and composition extension activities are provided in the slideshow.**

5. **Share Information:**

Share the information embedded in the slideshow regarding the ways in which son jarocho gained popularity in the United States (especially California) during the time of the Chicano movement.

- If time allows, play the embedded recording of “El tilingo lingo”: A son jarocho that Los Lobos adapted to match events that were occurring during this time.
 - This is a great track for engaged listening activities (keeping a steady beat, clapping various rhythmic patterns, question/answer).
- Optional extension activity: Los Lobos is famous for recording the soundtrack for the Hollywood hit film *La bamba*.
 - Listen to Los Lobos’s arrangement of “La bamba” (probably the most famous son jarocho song of all-time). Pay attention to how the musicians pay homage to the more traditional version of the song at the end.

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, context, and technical skill.

- Can I explain why musicians/musical groups decided to incorporate son jarocho into their repertoire during the Chicano movement?

MU:Pr4.2.a Explain how understanding the structure and the elements of music are used in music selected for performance.

- Can I demonstrate (through performance) the ways in which the elements of music are used in the son jarocho tradition (especially rhythm)?

MU:Pr4.2.b When analyzing selected music, read and identify by name or function standard symbols for rhythm, pitch, articulation, and dynamics.

- Can I read, explain, and perform hemiola?

MU: Pr4.2.c Identify how cultural and historical context inform performances.

- Can I explain the meaning/use of this song in Veracruz, Mexico compared with the context in which it was used in the United States during the Chicano movement?
- Can I explain how cultural and historical context informs a son jarocho performance?

MU:Pr4.3.a Perform a selected piece of music demonstrating how their interpretations of the elements of music and the expressive qualities (such as dynamics, tempo, timbre, articulation/style, and phrasing) convey intent.

- Can I accurately clap/pat hemiola and perform a basic zapateado dance step with expressive intent?

MU:Pr5.1.b Rehearse to refine technical accuracy and expressive qualities to address challenges, and show improvement over time.

- Can I rehearse and refine the zapateado dance step and show improvement over time?

MU:Pr6.1.a Perform the music with technical accuracy to convey the creator's intent.

- Can I accurately clap/pat hemiola and perform a basic zapateado dance step with expressive intent?

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 explain how the songs “America de los Indios” and “El quinto sol” relate to the concept of mestizaje?
- Can I explain why Son jarocho gained popularity in the United States during the time of the Chicano movement?
- Can I explain the purpose of the song “Lulac Cadillac?”

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 music selections we studied during 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 the elements of music and expressive qualities relate to song structure within the son jarocho tradition (rhythm, harmony, form)?

MU:Re8.1a 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 creators of “El quinto sol” and “America de los Indios” used the elements of music and expressive qualities to reflect mestizaje identity?

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 musicians/musical groups decide to incorporate son jarocho into their repertoire during the Chicano movement?
- Can I explain why José Montoya wrote the song “Lulac Cadillac?”

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

- Can I describe how authors, musicians, and visual artists expressed the idea of mestizaje through their art during the Chicano movement?
- Can I describe the ways in which people in Veracruz, Mexico use Son jarocho music?

Additional Reading and Resources

- Azcona, E. C., & Rodriguez, R. (2005). *Rolas de Aztlán: Songs of the Chicano movement* [Liner notes]. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. https://folkways-media.si.edu/liner_notes/smithsonian_folkways/SFW40516.pdf
- Foley, N. (1997). Becoming Hispanic: Mexican Americans and the Faustian pact with whiteness. *New Directions in Mexican American Studies, 1*, 53–70.
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<https://www.carnegiehall.org/Education/Programs/Music-Educators-Toolbox/Resources/5-Rhythms-from-Around-the-World/Global-Encounters-Music-of-Mexico>
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- 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.
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- Stavans, I. (2010). The United States of mestizo. *Humanities: The Magazine of the National Endowment for the Arts*, 31(5). National Endowment of the Humanities.
<https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2010/septemberoctober/feature/the-united-states-mestizo>
- Valdez, L. (1969). *I am Joaquin: An epic Chicano film* [Video]. YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCVZ_rlBQR8

Worksheets

“Lulac Cadillac” song lyrics

Recorded by Trio Casindio (José Montoya, Rudy Carrillo, Esteban Villa)

As you listen, consider how the songwriters use sarcasm and humor to convey intent.

¡Órale! ‘Scuse me.

Hey, it’s you.

Where you been

Jellybean?

Sorry, man, I didn’t mean

I didn’t mean

To get you all upset.

It’s only me.

It’s been a while

Que no te veía

Con esos trapos y esa ruca,

No te conocía.

Now you say

You just come back

To look around

And to say goodbye.

Pues no hay fijón, Carnal frijol.

Just don’t forget how it’s supposed to be.

You’re gonna lose, it seems to me,

Your chile eatin’ ability.

And while you been stylin’

Your best role model

Y a la grandota

Ya se la llevaron.

And now she’s gone,

And you’re feelin’ all alone.

And now she’s gone

Back to Washington.

And she ain’t a comin’ back,

But you’re not alone.

You see that low rider

Cruisin’ low and slow?

Don’t let that fool you,

It can hop like a jumpin’ jack,

What is a low rider? What do you think it represents?

And it’s goin’ straight

For your LULAC Cadillac.

It’s goin’ straight

For your Cadillac.

What is a Cadillac? What do you think it represents?

You don’t have to give it up, Jack.

Why don’t you just come back?

1. “America de los Indios”

By Daniel Valdez

As you listen and follow along with the translation, circle or underline anything you notice that reflects the musicians’ identification with the Indigenous part of their ethnic identity.

Surcando el cielo de América,
Sangre de viento avanzando,
Forma de fuego en la noche
En ruina de allí.

Crossing the skies of America,
Blood of advancing wind,
Shape of fire in the night
From there in ruin.

Canto del llanto del indio,
Voces del tambor, tocando,
Flautas que hablan con Dios
Me dicen así.

Song of the cry of the Indian,
Sound of the drum playing,
Flutes that speak with God
Say this to me.

Sangre y fusil y la tierra,
Gritando revolución,
Flautas que hablan con Dios
Me dicen así.

Blood and firearm and the earth,
Shouting revolution.
Flutes that speak with God
Say this to me.

Manos de bronce en la tierra,
Flor de sudor van sembrando,
Esperanzas de los pobres
Nacen aquí.

Bronze-colored hands in the earth,
They are sowing the flower of perspiration.
Hopes of the poor
Are born here.

Continue circling or underlining. Do you hear any musical sounds that reflect the musicians’ identification with the Indigenous part of their ethnic identity? Make a list.

Corazón, amor tajado,
Caras de piedra se ven.
Niños llenos de tormenta
Han de nacer.

Heart, love sliced up,
You see them with faces of stone.
Children filled with torment
Will be born.

Sangre y fusil y la tierra
Gritando revolución.
Niños llenos de tormenta
Han de nacer.

Blood and firearm and the earth,
Shouting revolution,
Children filled with torment
Will be born.

América de los indios
Siglo explosivo llegó,
Ya van bajando los pueblos
Hacia la liberación.

America of the Indians
The explosive century has arrived.
The peoples are moving down
Toward liberation.

Sangre y fusil y la tierra,
Gritando revolución,
Ya van bajando los pueblos
Hacia la liberación.
¡América!

Blood and firearm and the earth,
Shouting the revolution,
The peoples are moving down
Toward liberation.
America!

2. “El quinto sol” song lyrics

Arranged by Los Peludos

As you listen and follow along with the translation, circle or underline anything you notice that reflects the musicians’ identification with the Indigenous part of their ethnic identity.

Ésta es la era del sol,
Del quinto sol.

This is the era of the sun
Of the fifth sun

Trajo gachupines con todo y frailes,
Trajo a Jesucristo y a Richard Nixon.
Trajo la viruela y hasta la sífilis.
Y ahora en vez de náhuatl, hablo español.
También trajo un vato, llamado Cortez
Que con la Malinche, metieron las tres.
Y de la conquista y la destrucción
Nacieron mestizos, hijos del sol.

It brought Spaniards (gachupines) with friars and everything,
It brought Jesus Christ and Richard Nixon.
It brought smallpox and even syphilis.
And now, instead of Náhuatl, I speak Spanish.
It also brought a fellow named Cortez
Who, with Malinche, made the three of them.
And from the conquest and the destruction
Mestizos were born, children of the sun.

(Estribillo)

**Pero este sol ya se acabó, se está apagando.
El gringo opresor ya está temblando.
Todo el mundo pobre ya va marchando.
Cantemos hermanos, al nuevo sol (2x)**

(Refrain)

**But this sun is coming to an end, it is burning out.
The gringo oppressor is now trembling.
All the poor people are now marching.
Let’s Sing, brothers and sisters, to the new sun
(2x)**

Continue circling or underlining. Do you notice anything interesting about the musical sounds themselves? How are the elements of music used? Make a list.

Por trescientos años colonizaron
Y al indio noble aniquilaron,
Y la independencia, nos dio las tierras
Pero los controles, venían de afuera.
Sudamericano, tú los sabes bien,
Tú sufres las hambres, y otros comen bien.
Muera el monopolio, y su religión.
Mueran las alianzas, con el opresor.

For three hundred years, they colonized,
And they annihilated the noble Indian.
And independence gave us land,
But control came from elsewhere.
South American, you know well,
You suffer hunger, and others eat well.
Death to the monopoly, and its religion.
Death to the alliances with the oppressor.

Estribillo

Presidente Monroe te lo prometía
Que las tierras libres, él respetaría.
Y así prometiendo, no colonizar,
Tomó Puerto Rico, Hawai’i, y Aztlán.
Hermano Chicano, no hay que decaer.
Busca en tus entrañas al indio de ayer.
Sólo su nobleza y su humanidad
Te darán las fuerzas de la libertad.

Refrain

President Monroe promised you that
He would respect the free lands.
And promising like that, not to colonize,
He took Puerto Rico, Hawai’i, and Aztlán.
Brother Chicano, you mustn’t fall back.
Look inside you for the Indian of the past.
Only his nobility and his humanity
Will give you the powers of liberty.