

BLACK MUSIC AND ART

LESSON PLAN

LEARNING GOALS

Students will be able to...

- Contextualize the Great Migration
- Recognize issues of Black Identity
- Identify Black Collectives in Music and Art

TEACHER NAME: Gregory Waits
CONTACT: gregory@waitsstudioworks.com

MATERIALS

Students will be using...

- Smartphone
- Drawing Pad
- Color Drawing Media

SUBJECTS

Students will engage...

- Black American Migration History and Issues
- Double Consciousness and Black Identity
- Collective Improvisation through Music and Art

LESSON DESCRIPTION

An understanding of the Black music and visual arts movements during the civil rights era and their quest for Black identity beyond the concept of double consciousness as exemplified by W.E.B. DuBois . The class will utilize the strategies of experimentation, improvisation, and collective involvement as employed by the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), and the African Commune of Bad Revelant Artists (AfriCOBRA), to engage students with issues of the past, present, and future.

VOCABULARY (5 MIN)

1. Double Consciousness
2. Identity
3. Collective Improvisation

GUIDING QUESTIONS (5 MIN)

1. What led African Americans to migrate from the south to Chicago in great numbers and when were the years of these migrations?
2. What does W.E.B. Dubois mean by the term double consciousness as it applies to African Americans?
3. How are issues of double consciousness in opposition to personal and collective identity?
4. How might personal expression through music and the visual arts enhance personal identity?

Can collective improvised music and the visual arts engage personal identity?
- 5.

INSPIRATION (5 MIN)

1. W.E.B. Du Bois: examined the effects of slavery, and second class citizenship on Black culture. His book, *The Souls of Black Folks*, saw music as a bastion for Black excellence against the onslaught of double consciousness imposed by the dominant White culture.
2. Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM): inspired by the futuristic musical genius of Sun Ra, AACM formed in 1968 to create a new language of Black musicology. The collective encouraged originality and integrating other art forms with music.
3. African Commune of Bad Revelant Artists (AfriCOBRA): formed during the Black Civil rights era in the late 1960s to fortify the Black collective with positive imagery. The founders received Western art training and sought to invert their education by incorporating African aesthetics into their creations by using bright “kool-aid” colors, text, motifs, and graphic messages that empowered the collective in their paintings and group murals.

ACTIVITY (25 MIN)

- 1.** Vocal Music Precedent: listen to a Bobby McFerrin recording to incorporate the possibilities of the human voice to produce music or to “vocalese” as it is called in jazz
- 2.** Individual Voice Expression: develop and record your voice as a musical instrument that expresses your internal feelings, and desires be it percussion, string, or wind instrument. Listen to this voice and refine to “vocalese” in group expression.
- 3.** Improvisational Art Precedent: present paintings/drawings by one or more of the AfroCOBRA artist conveying their expressionistic approach that married text and image, abstraction and figuration with positive messages about the Black collective
- 4.** Individual Art Expression: develop spontaneous drawing expression on drawing pad. Take photos of your drawings to make them digital for virtual presentation.
- 5.** Small Virtual Group Vocal Expression: implementing call and response with other group voices experiment and improvise to create a group sound analogous to a quartet. Record these group voice sessions for review and further refinement.
- 6.** Small Virtual Group Drawing from/with Vocal Expression: expand on your drawings in your drawing pad by integrating the recorded or live group sound whereby it should inherently effect the rhythm, composition, and other aspects of your drawings.
- 7.** Large Virtual Group Collective Vocal Expression: implementing call and response with the collective group voices experiment and improvise to create a collective sound analogous to a symphony. Record these collective group voice sessions for review and further refinement.
- 8.** Large Virtual Group Collective Drawing and Vocal Expression: expand on what has been developed from your small group drawings to further develop your drawings by integrating the recorded or live collective symphonic expression within your drawing pad.

DEBRIEF (5 MIN)

- 1.** Does working together collectively enhance the capacity for individual expression? Does your sense of collective identity through enacting music and art expand your sense of individual identity?
- 2.** How might this collective experience create new ways of working together with others without compromising your sense of personal identity?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Books:

The Promised Land : The Great Black Migration... 1991 by Nicholas Lemann

The Souls of Black Folks 1903 by W.E.B. Du Bois

The Freedom Principle : Experiments in Art and Music 1965 to Now 2015 by Naomi Beckwith and Dieter Roelstraete

Videos:

Many videos on YouTube on:

Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM)

African Commune of Bad Revelant Artists (AfriCOBRA)