

The American Songbook

Lesson Plan Series

By Elizabeth M. Kimball

MICHAEL FEINSTEIN'S AMERICAN SONGBOOK

Rational for Tiered Lesson Application

Due to the ever-widening discrepancies between music education programs in both public and private schools, the lessons for each segment have been tiered according to student/teacher ability and time available. This way, teachers can select the lessons that are applicable to their own unique situation, the ability of their students, and the available resources of the school in general.

Also bear in mind that this lesson series presents a wide variety of activities, not with the goal of having every aspect completed, but to allow the teacher additional flexibility in tailoring a lesson to students' needs.

Putting on the Tail Fins: 1950s–1960s

Lesson One: First Episode

Segment Title

Putting on the Tail Fins: 1950s–1960s

Lesson Title

Life in the '50s: A Car in the Garage and a DJ on the Radio

Lesson Focus

Overview: Survey of the times

Purpose

Students will gather an understanding of the 1950s–1960s and the part music played for children, teens, and adults.

Objective

Students will be able to:

Compare social and family characteristics of the 1950s and present day.

Discriminate between the music listened to by parents and by teens in the 1950s.

MENC Standard

Content Standard #6: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.

Content Standard #9: Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

Cross-Curricular Tags

History—American Culture

Materials

The American Songbook Video Series

Bonus or Bogus Handout

Computer with Internet and speakers

LCD projector, SMART board, or appropriate technology to view the computer screen

Life in the Fifties Observation Grading Rubric

Lesson Introduction

1. Prior to this lesson, students will have asked an older adult what he or she

The American Songbook

Lesson Plan Series

remembered doing with friends and/or family when they were teens. These answers can either be posted on a classroom blog ahead of time and then discussed or presented originally in class as a lesson introduction.

2. *Bonus or Bogus*—Handout for small group or individual work
 - 2.1. Students are given a list of activities that families and friends did for fun. Students circle perceived real activities and cross out the fake. Discuss answers as a class. How do these compare with activities that you do now with your friends or with older adults.

Learning Activity

1. Introduce the term *Generation of Change* and have students brainstorm a definition. This can be done as a class or in small group.
 - 1.1 There are many free videos at Internet Archive from Coronet Instructional Media, http://www.archive.org/details/coronet_instructional_videos. The students might enjoy seeing *Are You Popular*, <http://www.archive.org/details/AreYouPo1947>, to get an idea of what life was like in the late '40s early '50s.

Reinforcing Activity

1. Ask students to compare the music that *they* listen to with the music that *older adults they know* listen to.
 - 1.1. Do the older adults like the current popular music?
 - 1.2. Do students like the older adults' music?
2. Ask students if they know when rock-n-roll became popular (1950s). Explain how both new rock-n-roll songs and the *American Songbook* "standards" shared *top of the chart* status. At this point, the teacher can play any rock-n-roll classic (Elvis Presley, Bill Haley and the Comets, Jerry Lee Lewis) and any of the later *American Songbook* "standards" (later Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Nat King Cole) for comparison.
3. Play the *Mother 'n' Father or Brother 'n' Sister* game—students listen to nine songs and determine if they were music that the parents listened to or the children's favorites. ("*Parent's*" music is representative of American popular song. "*Kids*" music is representative of early rock-n-roll.)
4. Review the answers as a class, replaying the music so that students hear the differences, especially in the instrumentation (orchestra versus jazz combo).

Measurement

Life in the Fifties Observation Grading Rubric reflecting completion of objectives—teacher observation

Resources

1950s Information—Notes

http://home.att.net/~boomers.fifties.teenmag/1950_history.html

Coronet Instructional Media at Internet Archives

http://www.archive.org/details/coronet_instructional_videos

Lesson Two: First Episode

Segment Title

Putting on the Tail Fins: 1950s–1960s

Lesson Title

Cover Artists and Remixes: Taking the Old and Making It New

The American Songbook

Lesson Plan Series

Lesson Focus

Broad concept: musical arrangements

Purpose

To explore different instrumentation, arrangements, and personal interpretations and the effect they have on a song.

Objective

Students will be able to:

Compile a list of adjectives and adverbs for describing musical elements and performance differences.

Articulate differences between performances of the same song.

Compose a narrative describing differences in music performances.

MENC Standard

Content Standard #6: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.

Content Standard #7: Evaluate music and music performances.

Content Standard #9: Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

Cross-Curricular Tags

History—American culture

Language Arts—Vocabulary

Language Arts—Journalism/writing

Materials

Computer with Internet and speakers

LCD projector, SMART board, or appropriate technology to view the computer screen

Lesson Introduction

1. *Three-Minute Round Table* or *Discussion Board* question
 - 1.1. Why do artists remake old songs?
 - 1.2. Are the covers “equal” to the originals?
2. Review answers as a class, encouraging them to come up with adjectives to describe the different sounds.

Learning Activity

1. Present a music video to the class. Before viewing, inform students that they are going to be constructing a Word Bank to help them describe the music they see/hear. They should think of verbs and adjectives that they feel describe what they see and hear. Encourage students to avoid emotional words like “love” and “hate.” Allow students to take notes, if desired.
2. After viewing, create a Word Bank as a class that not only describes what they viewed, but contains additional descriptive words for music.

Lesson Three: First Episode

Segment Title

Putting on the Tail Fins: 1950s–1960s

Lesson Title

Chorus versus Verse?

Lesson Focus

Advanced musical element: Song structure

Purpose

The American Songbook

Lesson Plan Series

To familiarize students with the structure of American popular song from the early to mid-twentieth century.

Objective

Students will be able to:

- Label *chorus* and *verse* in reference to this music time period
- Discover AABA structure from aural examples.
- Differentiate among phrases that reflect AABA form.
- Perform a simple accompaniment (whole note) on pentatonic pitches.

MENC Standard

- Content Standard #1: Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
- Content Standard #2: Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
- Content Standard #3: Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
- Content Standard #5: Reading and notating music.
- Content Standard #6: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.

Materials

- Three or four songs that have verse/chorus structure to use as examples
- Luck be a Lady* recording (http://s0.ilike.com/play#Frank+Sinatra:Luck+Be+A+Lady:17194:s2014854.9048429.12492569.0.2.44%2Cstd_d0bc8dc98254413e9c42af02fab90e45).
- Luck be a Lady* “Sing-a-Long” recording
- Luck be a Lady* Jigsaw Puzzle
- Variety of Percussion Instruments
- Glue Sticks
- Computer with Internet and speakers
- LCD projector, SMART board, or appropriate technology to view the computer screen

Lesson Introduction

1. Sing a variety of familiar songs that use standard verse/chorus structure; for example, *The Old Carrion Crow* (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fYxuLei_bw0), *The Cat Came Back* (http://ilike.myspacecdn.com/play#Fred+Penner:The+Cat+Came+back:953824:s60365856.15926099.22654544.0.2.129%2Cstd_f1600b70b145401c9335b6ea36234b50), *Clementine* (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUzQy4mmT3Q>).
2. Select one of the songs and lead students to identify the *chorus* and *verse*, writing the definition on the board.
3. Sing through the song again with one set of percussion instruments maintaining a steady beat through the *verse* and another set (different in timbre) through the *chorus*.
4. Choose another song and repeat the process, identifying the *chorus* and *verse*.
5. Play a popular song that has a *verse/chorus* format for the students (Jason Mraz and Jack Johnson are usually good choices, and their music/videos are available from other sources.)
6. Have students identify the *chorus/verse* structure of this song. If present in the song, identify the *bridge* as a section that “bridges” two sections together with new melodic material and lyrics.
7. If students are unfamiliar with the term *Coda*, take this time to identify.
8. Summarize by leading students to discover that music has a formula—a template that helps composers organize the melody into sections.

9.

The American Songbook

Lesson Plan Series

Learning Activity

1. If done on a different day, review *chorus/verse* structure.
2. Play *Luck Be a Lady Tonight* performance by the composer Frank Loesser (http://s0.ilike.com/play#Frank+Sinatra:Luck+Be+A+Lady:17194:s2014854.9048429.12492569.0.2.44%2Cstd_d0bc8dc98254413e9c42af02fab90e45).
3. Ask students if they noticed anything different about the *chorus/verse* structure
 - 3.1. There are two sections that have the same melody and repeat, but they almost sound like two different songs.
4. Outline the basic structure of songs from this era: *verse/chorus/bridge/chorus*. Explain that, just as musical styles change, the structure of music changes as well—this is the general structure of songs from this era. Not all were composed with this structure, but many were, especially those in Broadway musicals. Just like in the songs sung during the previous lessons, *choruses* and *verses* are repeated to build the song. The same is true for this era's structure
5. Distribute *Luck be a Lady Tonight* jigsaw puzzle
 - 5.1. Have students complete the assignment independently or in small group.
 - 5.2. The jigsaw puzzle consists of a puzzle “board,” strips with the words, *Chorus*, *Verse*, and *Bridge*, and strips of paper containing the lyrics
 - 5.3. While listening to the song, students reconstruct it by listening to the lyrics, matching them in the proper position with *Chorus*, *Verse*, and *Bridge*.

Reinforcing Activity

1. Divide students into four groups.
2. Explain to students that many performers ignore the *verse* of the song, and go right to the chorus. That is what they will be doing.
3. Assign each group either the first, second or third chorus, or the bridge
4. Play through “Sing Along” version of *Luck be a Lady* (chorus and bridge only), instructing students to sing along with their section.
5. Play through again, having students clap the beat/downbeat as they sing.
6. Distribute similar instruments to each group.
7. Give them time to come up with an improvised accompaniment to go with their section.
8. Play through the “Sing Along” version again, allowing them to perform and sing.

Measurement

Luck be a Lady Jigsaw puzzle

Lesson Four: First Episode

Segment Title

Putting on the Tail Fins: 1950s–1960s

Lesson Title

Croon a Tune or Sing to the Moon: Vocal Artists of the American Songbook

Lesson Focus

Research lesson: Artist biographies

The American Songbook

Lesson Plan Series

Purpose

To hone research skills through gathering data in the creation of a *First Person Monologue*

Objective

Students will be able to:

- Gather research on a specific individual from a variety of on-line sources.
- Gather a minimum of five song recordings of their given artist.
- Construct an “Autobiography” from mined data.
- Perform a *First Person Monologue*.

MENC Standard

- Content Standard #6: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
- Content Standard #7: Evaluate music and music performances.
- Content Standard #9: Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

NET (National Educational Technology) Standard

- Content Standard #3: Research and information fluency.
- Content Standard #4: Critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making.

Cross-Curricular Tags

- History—American culture
- Drama—First person monologue
- Technology—Research skills
- Language Arts—Speech writing

Materials

- Who Do You Know?* group activity
- Artists of *The American Songbook* list
- First Person Monologue Grading Rubric*—handout
- Classroom computers or access to the computer lab with Internet

Lesson Introduction

1. *Three Minute Roundtable* or *Class Wiki*
 - 1.1. What does it mean to croon? (to sing in a soft, sentimental, intimate manner)
 - 1.2. Discuss answers as a class.
2. Explain to students the style of singing that was called “crooning,” because of the soft vocal quality, usually performed to a song with a relatively slow tempo.
3. Lead students in a discussion as to why they think this style became popular in the 1930s-1940s.
 - 3.1. There were big improvements being made in microphones and amplification in the 1930s-40s—could this have an effect on the crooning style, and if so, how?
 - 3.2. What quality does the music have that would be appealing—especially to young girls (“bobby-soxers”).
 - 3.3. Are there any current performers that you think could be classified as a crooner?
4. *Who Do You Know?* Brainstorm Activity
 - 4.1. Have students work in small group to come up with as many artists that they can think of that come from *The American Songbook* era
5. Collect them and read them out loud, noting duplications. Do not discuss the artists as a class; merely comment on whether or not they were correct for the era.

Learning Activity

1. Present *First Person Monologue*, explaining that not everyone of the era was a “crooner”; there were jazz artists, big band performers, and singers who “belted out

The American Songbook

Lesson Plan Series

- songs.”
2. Go through the research requirements, performances requirements and grading rubric.
3. Have the names from *Performers of The American Songbook* list cut up, divided between male and female, and put in a “hat” for the students to select.
4. Allow students class time to research or coordinate with Technology Instructor for guided research time.
5. Provide feedback for students as they rehearse their performances.

Performance Activity

1. Before starting performances, review the *First Person Monologue Grading Rubric* to remind students that they are also being assessed on their audience performance.
 - 1.1. Review proper audience behavior.
 - 1.2. Have students establish criteria.
2. Present monologues over a couple lessons, depending on class size.

Measurement

First Person Monologue Grading Rubric

NAME _____

Bonus or Bogus

What did people do for fun in the 1950s? They didn't have computers, and cell phones and portable entertainment devices weren't around. Many people didn't even have televisions, and cable hadn't been invented yet! How did they survive?

On this page are a number of different activities that were done with peers of the same age (like your friends), by older adults (like parents), or by multi-generational groups (families). Not all of these activities are real, though. Your job is to read through the activities and decide which are real and which are fake. Circle the activities that you think are real and cross out the activities that you think are fake. We'll compare answers as a class.

Be a soda jerk

Invite friends over and dance

Play with Pop Beads

Have Hoola Hoop contests

Play with Silly Putty

Brush your Davy Crockett Hat

Play some Back Seat Bingo

Go to Submarine Races

Play tag with the family

Invite friends and family to play Monopoly

Play Olly Olly Oxen Free

Watch your ant farm

Watch Saturday morning cartoons at the movies

Make a doll out of a potato

Play Pinochle with the "girls"

Get a job as a carhop

Watch for flying saucers

Eat cardboard cereal boxes

Participate in an air raid drill

Get stuffed into a telephone booth

Chew Blackjack chewing gum to freak out your parents

Build a spud gun

Go to the art museum and look at the new abstract art

Get together with friends for an "Easter Egg" Hair Dying party

Put crepe paper streamers on your bike

Bonus OR Bogus Teacher's Key

Be a soda jerk

People who worked behind the counter at a soda counter were given this name

Invite friends over and dance

Both adults and children would get together and dance to music on the record player or radio

Play with Pop Beads

These were large beads made of plastic that locked together.

Have Hoola Hoop contests

Hoola Hoops were "new" in the fifties

Play with Silly Putty

Silly Putty was a new product that you could shape, bounce, press onto newsprint to transfer the image, plus many other "amazing" things.

Brush your Davy Crockett Hat

Fess Parker played this role on television and always wore a raccoon cap

Play some Back Seat Bingo

This was a "code" phrase for making out in the back of a car

Go to the Submarine Races

This was a "code" phrase for making out in a park.

Play tag with the family

Families frequently played games outside together.

Invite friends and family to play Monopoly

Board game parties were popular, as was playing board games with the family

Play Olly Olly Oxen Free

This is a Hide-n-Seek game

Watch your ant farm

Many children had "pet ants"

Watch Saturday morning cartoons at the movies

Going to the Saturday movies wasn't just done to see a movie; there was a newsreel, cartoon, a live performance (sometimes by big stars) and then a movie, usually a double feature

Make a doll out of a potato

Mr. Potato head started out as just a kit of facial features that were put into an ordinary potato.

Play Pinochle with the girls

Housewives frequently got together to play cards in the afternoons

Get a job as a carhop

Drive-in restaurants didn't have drive-in windows—waitresses, sometimes on roller skates, would come out to your car and take your order, then bring it to you on a tray that attached to the side of your car.

Watch for flying saucers

This was at its height after the Roswell sightings

~~Eat cardboard cereal boxes~~

BOGUS

Participate in an air raid drill

After the Cuban Missile Crisis, people got ready for bomb attacks

Get stuffed into a telephone booth

This was a popular event on college campuses

Chew Blackjack chewing gum to freak out your parents

This particular type of gum would turn your teeth black

Build a spud gun

Instructions for this rocket were easy to find in Boy's Life and other magazines

Go to the art museum and look at the "new" abstract art

Abstract artists like Jackson Pollock and Andy Warhol were introducing new pieces

~~Get together with friends for an "Easter Egg" Hair Dying party~~

BOGUS

Put crepe paper streamers on your bike

Decorating bikes was a typical activity.

Chorus versus Verse Grading Rubric

(Teacher's Note: As the grading system for the performing arts varies greatly between schools, the following rubric merely establishes the measurable criteria. Additions and subtractions should be made to fit the individual situation.)

Student _____

Measurable Criteria	Points/Grade
The student successfully clapped the downbeat while singing the appropriate chorus or bridge.	
The student improvised a rhythmic accompaniment appropriate with the music.	
The student maintained a steady beat and rhythmic integrity throughout the improvised accompaniment.	
The student demonstrated proper use of percussion instruments.	
The student sang the appropriate chorus or bridge with accuracy and proper vocal placement.	
The student actively participated with the group, contributing to the improvised rhythm.	
Comments:	
FINAL GRADE	

First Person Monologue

You are going to be researching a performer from the *American Popular Song* era and doing a brief presentation *as* the performer.

Your presentation must have the following criteria:

- Biographical History

- When born _____
- Where born _____
- If deceased, when _____

- Musical History

- Other musical skills (play/played an instrument?) _____
- First big hit _____
- Two other successful songs _____

- Personal History

- Any personal tragedies? _____
- Married with children? _____
- How “famous” was he or she? _____

- Anything else interesting?

First Person Monologue Grading Rubric

(Teacher's Note: As the grading system for the performing arts varies greatly between schools, the following rubric merely establishes the measurable criteria. Additions and subtractions should be made to fit the individual situation.)

Student _____

Measurable Criteria	Points/Grade
The student completed the Biographical History.	
The student completed the Musical History.	
The student completed the Personal History.	
The student successfully wrote a brief first-person monologue based on his or her character.	
The student successfully performed the first-person monologue.	
The student successfully lip-synced 30 seconds of one of the artist's popular songs.	
Comment:	
FINAL GRADE	

Life in the Fifties Observation Grading Rubric

(Teacher's Note: As the grading system for the performing arts varies greatly between schools, the following rubric merely establishes the measurable criteria. Additions and subtractions should be made to fit the individual situation.)

Student _____

Measurable Criteria	Points/Grade
The student participated in classroom discussion, contributing new ideas to the conversation, and was respectful of the ideas of peers.	
The student thoughtfully completed <i>Bonus or Bogus</i> .	
The student thoughtfully completed <i>Mother 'n' Father or Brothe 'n' Sister</i> with an understanding of the difference in sound between Rock-n-Roll and standards from <i>The American Songbook</i> .	
Comment:	
FINAL GRADE	

Name _____

Luck Be a Lady
Jigsaw Puzzle Board

<u>Structure</u>	<u>Lyrics</u>

Luck Be a Lady Jigsaw Puzzle

Lyrics

to be copied and distributed to students as puzzle pieces

<http://www.sing365.com/music/lyric.nsf/Luck-Be-a-Lady-lyrics-Frank-Sinatra/BEB4374D051C65DD4825691F000C41F0>

Bridge

Luck be a lady tonight.
Luck be a lady tonight.
Luck if you've ever been a lady to begin with.
Luck be a lady tonight.

Bridge

So let's keep the party polite.
Never get out of my sight.
Stick with me baby, I'm the fellow you came in with.

Chorus

They call you "Lady Luck".
But there is room for doubt.
At times you have a very unladylike way of running out.

Chorus

You're on this date with me
The pickings have been lush
And yet before this evening is over you might give me the brush

Chorus

Luck be a lady
Luck be a lady
Luck be a lady tonight

Coda

A lady doesn't leave her escort
It isn't fair; it isn't nice
A lady doesn't wander all over the room
And blow on some other guy's dice

Verse

You might forget your manners
You might refuse to stay and
So the best that I can to is pray

Verse

Luck let a gentleman see
How nice a dame you can be
I've seen the way you've treated other guys you've been with
Luck be a lady with me

Luck Be a Lady Jigsaw Puzzle

Teacher's Key

<http://www.sing365.com/music/lyric.nsf/Luck-Be-a-Lady-lyrics-Frank-Sinatra/BEB4374D051C65DD4825691F000C41F0>

Verse

They call you "Lady Luck"
But there is room for doubt
At times you have a very unladylike way of running out

Verse

You're on this date with me
The pickings have been lush
And yet before this evening is over you might give me the brush

Bridge

You might forget your manners
You might refuse to stay
And so the best that I can to is pray

Chorus

Luck be a lady tonight
Luck be a lady tonight
Luck if you've ever been a lady to begin with
Luck be a lady tonight

Chorus

Luck let a gentleman see
How nice a dame you can be
I've seen the way you've treated other guys you've been with
Luck be a lady with me

Bridge

A lady doesn't leave her escort
It isn't fair; it isn't nice
A lady doesn't wander all over the room
And blow on some other guy's dice

Chorus

So let's keep the party polite
Never get out of my sight
Stick with me baby, I'm the fellow you came in with

Coda

Luck be a lady
Luck be a lady.
Luck be a lady tonight

Mother 'n' Father or Brother 'n' Sister?

You will be listening to nine songs from the 1950s. This was an era when *new* music for *two* generations was being played on the radio and sold as records.

You have been given cards with the song titles on them. As you listen to the music, place each card in either the Mother-n-Father column, if you think it was something older adults listened to, or the Brother-n-Sister column, if you think it was something appealing to the younger generation.

You may glue the titles cards down when you think you have them in the correct columns.

MOTHER 'N' FATHER'S MUSIC <i>American Popular Song</i>	BROTHER 'N' SISTER'S MUSIC <i>Rock-n-Roll</i>

Mother 'n' Father or Brother 'n' Sister?

Copy and cut cards to distribute to the students. This page also functions as the answer key.

MOTHER 'N' FATHER'S MUSIC	BROTHER 'N' SISTER'S MUSIC
<p><i>Rags to Riches</i> Tony Bennett http://lyrics.wikia.com/Tony_Bennett:Rags_To_Riches</p>	<p><i>Sha-Boom</i> <i>Life Could Be a Dream</i> The Crew Cuts http://www.stlyrics.com/lyrics/heartsinatlantis/sh-boomlifecouldbeadream.htm</p>
<p><i>Mambo Italiano</i> Rosemary Clooney http://www.lyricsdepot.com/rosemary-clooney/mambo-italiano.html</p>	<p><i>Shake Rattle and Roll</i> Bill Haley and the Comets http://www.lyricsprovider.com/song.php?id=92479</p>
<p><i>That's Amore</i> Dean Martin http://www.stlyrics.com/lyrics/whitechicks/thatsamore.htm</p>	<p><i>You Send Me</i> Sam Cooke http://www.aldielyrics.com/lyrics/sam_cooke/you_send_me.html</p>
<p><i>You Belong to Me</i> Jo Stafford http://www.aldielyrics.com/lyrics/jo_stafford/you_belong_to_me.html</p>	<p><i>Lonely Boy</i> Paul Anka http://www.aldielyrics.com/lyrics/paul_anka/lonely_boy.html</p>
	<p><i>Venus</i> Frankie Avalon http://www.aldielyrics.com/lyrics/frankie_avalon/venus.html</p>

Performers of The American Songbook

MALE	FEMALE
Anita O'Day	Andy Williams
Billie Holiday	Bobby Darin
Dinah Shore	Al Jolson
Dinah Washington	Frank Sinatra
Doris Day	Tony Bennett
Ella Fitzgerald	Nat King Cole
Ertha Kitt	Cliff Edwards
Ethel Merman	Vic Damone
Ethel Waters	Mel Torme
Jo Stafford	Dean Martin
Judy Garland	Bing Crosby
Lena Horne	Billy Eckstine
Mabel Mercer	Dick Haymes
Patty Andrews	Cab Calloway
Peggy Lee	Sammy Davis Jr.
Rosemary Clooney	Louis Armstrong
Ruth Etting	Perry Como
Sarah Vaughan	Johnny Mathis
Sophie Tucker	Fats Waller