



Freshman Women's Choir

Listening Lesson

May 13, 2020



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Objective/Learning Target:
Students will learn about Men's A Cappella music



Warm Up

1. On a separate piece of paper, write what the following word means to you: A Cappella
If you are having trouble, use this link to help:
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/>
2. What is the first thing you think of when you hear the term A Cappella?
3. Have you ever wanted to be in an A Cappella group?



The Renaissance Era- Now

In the early eras of music history, people were singing a cappella. In this time period, instruments were scarce and there wasn't an easy means of production for them like we have now, so if people were going to make music, they were going to do it through singing unaccompanied. The time period also had a rule that the only people allowed to sing were men. This relaxed eventually and led to the creation of a lot more music. Here is an excerpt of a piece with music that we would hear in this era:

<https://youtu.be/cilvhB-zTfc>

Over time, the technology increased and instruments were made more easily accessible which decreased the production of a cappella music.



The Late 1800's

Time passed and by the 1800's people of all genders were able to sing. They began to form what are known as Barbershop groups. Their main focus was singing in small groups with tight harmonies. There are traditionally only 4 voices, one singing the lead melody and the other three making the harmonies. Though they started with mainly male groups, eventually female groups began to form. Today, barbershop music is still sung and there is an international competition every year for groups. Here is a clip of the most recent winners:

https://youtu.be/LLx_7lTbFc



Present Day A Cappella

Over time, the barbershop groups have turned into a capella groups. People have taken to making vocal arrangements of popular songs that fit their group and perform them for people without instrumental accompaniment like the barbershop groups of old. With the rise of shows like “American Idol” and “The Voice” came a show called “The Sing Off”. The show was about multiple a cappella groups going head to head for a recording contract and prize money. Every week they needed to have an arrangement ready to go. This show is where Pentatonix gained their fame! There is also a collegiate a cappella group competition every year like the one from the movie Pitch Perfect. They have extended it to the high school level.



A Cappella Anatomy

The music for current a cappella groups is predominantly covers of existing songs. A cover is when a song previously written, is re-done to fit a different group. For instance, Dolly Parton wrote and performed the song “I Will Always Love You”, but Whitney Houston is more widely known for her version of that song. There are groups that have made original songs, but the songs are more often than not covers. The parts that are sung depends on the group. Normally you have SATB, SSAA, or TTBB with a soloist and a vocal percussionist/beatboxer. The groups often choreograph dances to the songs they sing. Normally the arrangers of the songs are in the group. This helps make the arrangements stronger because they truly know what the group sounds like.



Individual Practice

Knowing what you have learned from this lesson, listen to these following recordings and try to identify:

1. 4-part Harmony
2. The artist the song is a cover of
3. The syllable that the non soloists are singing

Clip 1- <https://youtu.be/eNjgxX9z-ms>

Clip 2- <https://youtu.be/tybvp6-u9yA>

Clip 3- <https://youtu.be/l1Xe15-Ayf4>



Additional Practice

For extra practice, find two other clips of men's a cappella groups and practice finding the elements of a cappella music from the previous slide.