



Music Virtual Learning

Music Appreciation/The Birth of Rock n Roll

May 6, 2020



Lesson: May 6, 2020

Objective/Learning Target: Students will learn about the social and political aspects of the 1950's that contributed to the birth of Rock n Roll.

Bell Work:

1. What are the 5 genres of music that existed prior to Rock n Roll that we talked about yesterday?
2. What are some aspects of these genres that contributed to Rock n Roll music?
3. What do you think the topics of Rock n Roll music will be?



**WHAT DO YOU
THINK?**

Did you remember?

The 5 types of music that existed prior to 1950/Rock n Roll.

- Folk
- Blues
- Country & Western
- Jazz
- Pop

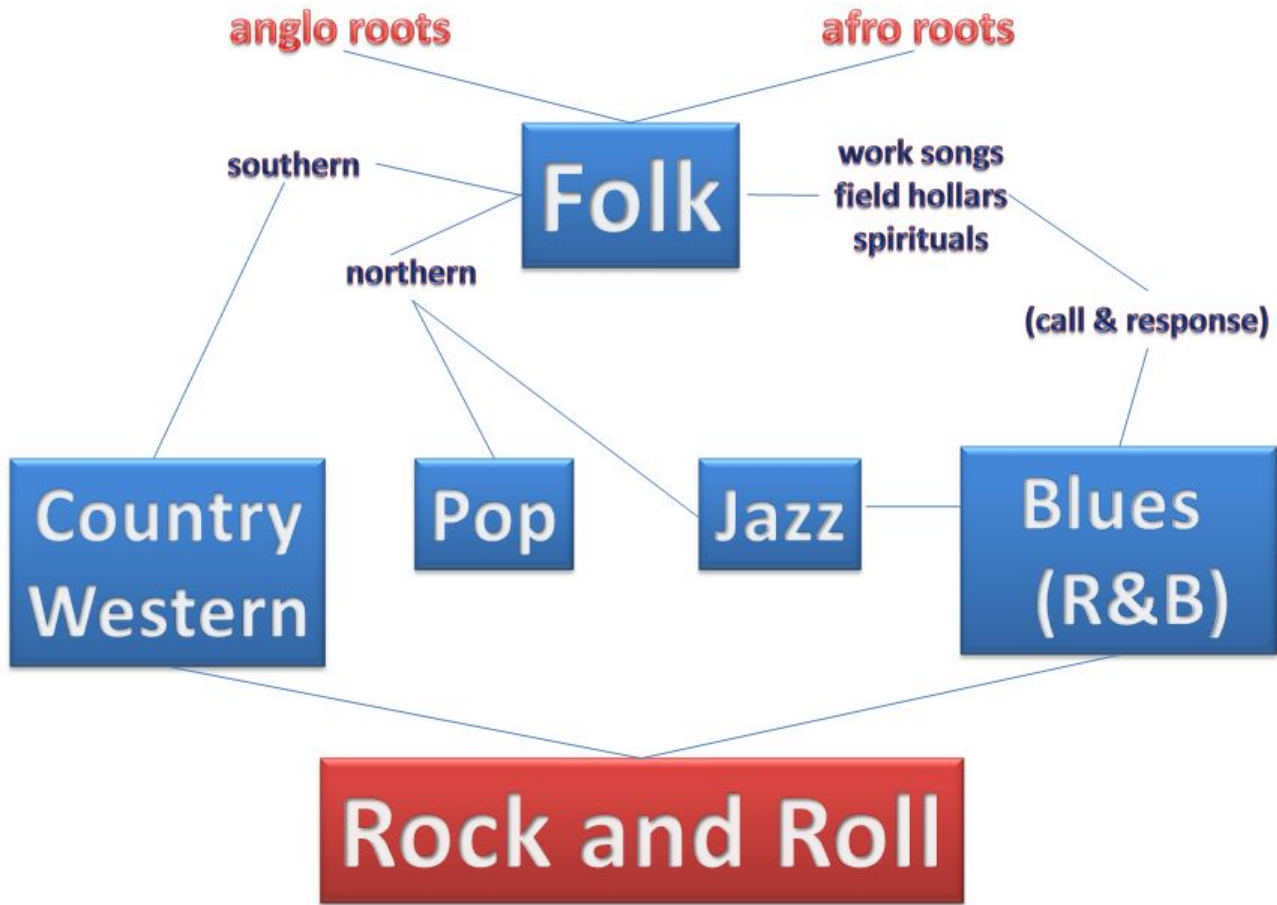


What makes up Rock n Roll?

Rock and Roll was a combination of

- White Country Western
- Black Rhythm and Blues





1950's Time Capsule-What was going on?

- Peace, Prosperity and Patriotism
- Fresh off winning World War II-1945
- Standard of living rising
- Home ownership up
- Baby boom



View of the 1950's cont.

- Strong patriotism
- Nationalism-We are the strongest / best country
- Dwight D. Eisenhower was seen as a symbol of strength, prosperity and heroism (WWII general / hero / elected President 1953-1961)
- Anti communist feelings replaced hatred of the Axis powers (Germany, Italy, Japan).



Not all “rosy” in the U.S. society

Due to a rise in nationalism and worries that other countries, particularly Russia, were going to gain secrets about our country and become stronger than the U.S., HUAC was formed and people were investigated for taking part in activities that were considered “un-American.”

HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee)

Sen. Joe McCarthy (McCarthyism) “you’re a communist”



Cold War with Russia (USSR)- “Cold” referring to the idea that no bombs or missiles would be used, nor boots on the ground fighting. 1947-1991.

Nuclear arms race / threat- America was in a nuclear arms race with Russia to build the first nuclear weapon. People all over the U.S. took part in drills to prepare for a nuclear attack.



Racial Segregation

White and Black people were segregated in all aspects of social life. Each race had their own bathrooms, water fountains, schools, seats on public transportation and other facets of public life.



Some groups left out of the prosperity!

- Blacks – segregation, prejudice, unemployment
- Lower class – unemployment, low standard of living
- Teens- Not really expected to be in the workforce at this time



Teenage life is born!

“Young people occupied a distinctive place in postwar American life. The children of the postwar baby boom were becoming adolescents during the 1950’s, and in the process, a distinctive ‘teen’ subculture began to emerge. Living amid such a prosperous era, teenagers had more money and free time than any previous generation.”

“Seems to me that white teenagers of the 40’s and 50’s helped launch black artists nationally” – Chuck Berry



American Youth in the 50's

- New class of “teenagers”
- New labor laws; mandatory school-This is why you are required to go to school today!
- Free time
- Money to spend
- Dads had good jobs; allowances
- Developing own values - rebellious
- Drawn to black rhythm and blues



This combination of factors opened the door for rock and roll to happen

People and Events

Race records- Record labels operated by blacks and for black artists

- Black artists not allowed at major labels
- Not allowed in white studios
- Not allowed on white radio stations
- Aimed at black audiences
- Found market with white teens



Alan Freed

He was a white DJ in Cleveland who began playing black R&B. He refused to play white music/covers of any kind. He only played race records.

Many times white artists would cover “black songs” because they were the most popular songs. Because of segregation, it was not popular to listen to music recorded by black artists. It was more socially acceptable to listen to white people singing black music.

- Freed coined the term “rock and roll”
- He separated from racial links
- Some thought it was a communist plot
- Some thought it was just junk
- He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1986



Bill Haley and the Comets

- Combined white CW with black R&B
- 1st to do this completely
- Softened the often sexual lyrics of R&B (more acceptable with white audiences)
- Elaborate stage routines (common with R&B but not white groups)
- Rock-a-billy – music of early white rockers that came from C&W



Key songs from the Comets

- “Shake, Rattle and Roll” - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8B7xr_EjbzE
- “Rock Around the Clock” - 1st rock and roll song in a movie - Blackboard Jungle (movie title - 1955) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgdufzXvjgw>
- Shortly after, Bill did a movie called “Rock Around the Clock” about his rise to fame. It featured he and the Comets with several songs. The movie is available on YouTube.
- Minor figure by late 50's
- Remained popular in England



Lesson Reflection

Politically, the U.S. was celebrating the victory of WWII, experiencing significant economic growth, leery of Russia and their intentions to interfere with American life, and racing with Russia to build the first nuclear weapon leading to the Cold War.

Socially, blacks and whites were segregated in all aspects of life. The post-war baby boom lends a new demographic in the form of teenagers, whose free thinking as well as their free time and access to more money ushered in Rock n Roll music.

Musically, black artists are creating race records and white artists were making covers of that music. Alan Freed was the father of Rock n Roll and put black artists on the map. Without Alan Freed and black artists, there would be no Rock n Roll.

Practice

Go to YouTube. Locate and listen to 3 Rock n Roll songs from the 1950's.

You will be exposed in detail to artists and music of the era in the next two lessons.

The image shows the words "Rock n Roll" in a stylized, red, cursive font with a white outline and a slight shadow effect, set against a solid black background. The letters are bold and have a classic, retro feel.

Thank You! Keep Rocking!

