



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1983 Volume IV: America in the Sixties: Culture and Counter-Culture

The Sixties: Notes of Discord

Guide for Curriculum Unit 83.04.04
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This unit was designed to explore the most vivid, accurate record of the people and events of the sixties: the music. History tells us that the sixties were a very unique time in the story of our country. It was a painful time when the very roots of our culture threatened to rip apart. It was a time when questioning rather than accepting things became the rule. It was a time when America grew from a nation of small town values to a nation of changing values. The music of the sixties offers us a vehicle for bringing to life the feelings, events, and spirit of that decade. It is a bridge that unifies those who were a part of those times, those who were but children during those times, and those who missed those times altogether. In the very oldest sense it provides us with records of history, a common history of uncommon times. This unit surveys the events that generated the critical issues for young people during the sixties, the feelings that were generated by those events, and the music that spoke to or about both the feelings and events.

It is divided into six basic parts, which flow from the rise of rock and roll in the fifties to the final rock event of the sixties, the festival at Altamont. The unit sub-topics are as follows:

Part One: "Rebels Without a Cause: Youth in the Fifties" Part Two: "The Folk Revival and the Civil Rights Movement" Part Three: "Origins of the Counterculture of Youth" Part Four: "The Anti-War Movement" Part Five: "The Counterculture and Drugs" Part Six: "Two Festivals: Woodstock and Altamont"

This unit is meant to "unearth the cave". As you and your students explore, you may expand the music, add to the issues or adjust the lessons to suit your needs and concerns. My hope is, that after considering my arguments for incorporating music into the teaching of this era, you'll agree that perhaps this material can provide us with an additional means for getting our students to relate to, enjoy, and understand that history is an all encompassing epic. It is not just a list of isolated dates highlighting wars and other events they find hard to imagine.

(Recommended for Grades 5 through 8 Social Studies, 9 through 12 U.S. History, Grade 12 Problems of Democracy, 7 through 12 Music Appreciation and 10 through 12 English)

Key Words

Adolescence American 1960-1970 History Civil Disorder Sixties Rights Popular Music

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