

Destination: America Activity 2 Stories in Music

Teaching Objective Through listening to music, the students will discover story elements such as setting, conflict and character that are reflected in the Overture to *West Side Story*.

Vocabulary

Overture – an introduction to a musical work

Materials

Pencil or pen, copy of rubric, Accompanying Youth Concert CD, Track 5

Pre Assessment

- Ask students if they know what a Broadway musical is.
- Ask students to list the components of a story such as setting, characters, action or conflict and resolution.
- Discuss how those components might sound in music.

Teaching Sequence

1. Define a Broadway musical as a piece of music that introduces songs that will be heard in the musical. It often sets the mood for what is to follow.
2. Tell students that they will hear the Overture to a musical called *West Side Story*, which was written by an American composer, Leonard Bernstein, and is set in New York City. After listening to the music, the students should use their imaginations to make up a story. Emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers.
3. Play the music several times, giving several possibilities for a story.
4. Using the ideas in their notes, ask students to write their own story based on the music.

Culminating Activity

- Allow students to share their stories either orally or post them around the room.
- Read the story of *West Side Story* to the students and listen to the Overture again. Tell them that the music includes the Jets music, the songs “Maria” and “Tonight” and the music for the rumble (fight.)
- Compare the similarities and differences between the story and those imagined by the students. While they are imagining their stories and characters, discuss how the music prompted their thoughts. Was it the driving rhythms, beautiful, smooth melodies, use of instruments, etc?

Evaluation

Did the students use the elements of a story in writing a story based on the music of *West Side Story*?

Extension Activity

Read a synopsis of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. Tell the students that *West Side Story* was based on Shakespeare’s play.

***West Side Story* Synopsis**

West Side Story is loosely based on Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. Instead of two families that do not get along, the modern version has two groups of teens who are very protective of the areas in which they live. The two groups often argue and have a history of fighting. A boy from one group, Tony, and a girl from the other, Maria, meet and fall in love. They know that their respective groups will not approve of their relationship. Tension rises between the groups and a terrible fight begins. The fight escalates and Tony and Maria find that they will never be able to be together again.

TEKS Connections

English Language Arts: 110.14b(5,7,8,10,17,18,22,23,29,30); 110.15b(3,4,6,8,10,16,17,20, 27-29)
110.16b(3,5,6,8,10,16,17,20,27-29); 110.18b(3,5,9,15,16,27,28)
Music: 117.12b(1,5); 117.15b(1,5); 117.18b(1,5); 117.33b(1,5)