

## **An Introduction to Jazz**

### **Grade 5 | Lesson Plan 6: Cool Jazz**

*Adapted from Jazz in America: The National Jazz Curriculum*

#### **TOPICS:**

1. Cool Jazz
2. Cultural Implications of Cool Jazz

#### **SESSION OBJECTIVES:**

The student will:

1. gain a fundamental understanding of cool jazz
2. explore how cool jazz reflected the historical context of the 1940's and 1950's

#### **MATERIALS**

1. Computer with internet connection
2. Speaker system

*Note: This lesson plan includes prompts to play selections from a variety of jazz recordings. Many of the suggested recordings can be found on the Instrumental History of Jazz, which is available as a YouTube playlist, as well as a variety of streaming and/or download outlets including iTunes, Apple Music and Spotify.*

#### **INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES:**

The instructor will:

1. discuss the fundamentals of cool jazz
2. discuss the historical and cultural context surrounding cool jazz
3. play various recordings, including examples of cool jazz

#### **STUDENT ACTIVITIES:**

The students will:

1. participate in a class discussion regarding cool jazz
2. participate in a class discussion regarding jazz history in the context of the 1940's and 1950's
3. listen to jazz recordings of cool jazz

## Content Outline

### I. California's Cool Jazz

#### A. The Music

Cool Jazz was at the forefront of jazz and went through its most concentrated growth and development from 1949 – 1955.

#### B. Bebop vs. Cool

1. Whereas Bebop was "hot"—that is, loud, exciting, and loose—Cool Jazz was "cool"—that is, soft, more reserved, and controlled.
2. Unlike Bebop, much of Cool Jazz was arranged, or written, ahead of time. In Bebop the emphasis was on the improvised solos; in Cool Jazz both the arrangement and the improvised solos were important.
3. Cool Jazz was a blending of jazz and classical music. Whereas Bebop bands were usually a quartet or quintet and were comprised of saxophone and/or trumpet and rhythm section, Cool Jazz groups had a wider variety of sizes and instrumentation.
  - a. they ranged in size from trios to nonets (nine-piece band)
  - b. "classical" instruments such as flute, French horn, tuba, and vibraphone (vibes) were often found in Cool Jazz groups

#### C. Miles Davis

One of the first and most important Cool Jazz artists was trumpeter Miles Davis; the first important Cool Jazz album was his *Birth of the Cool*.

#### D. Important Figures

Other important Cool Jazz artists include:

1. pianist Dave Brubeck
2. trumpeter Chet Baker
3. baritone saxophonist Gerry Mulligan
4. the Modern Jazz Quartet

#### E. Listening Examples

1. The Miles Davis Nonet's *Boplicity*
2. The Gerry Mulligan Quartet's *Bernie's Tune*
3. The Dave Brubeck Quartet's *Take Five*

### II. Cultural Implications of Cool Jazz

#### A. Revitalization of Jazz

Cool Jazz brought jazz music back to the mainstream; that is, it re-popularized jazz.

1. Swing Era big band jazz had been popular.
2. Because of its intensity and complexity, Bebop did not have the mass appeal of the Big Band Era.
3. Dave Brubeck and other Cool Jazz artists brought jazz to college campuses in the 1950s, finding a new audience for jazz (before this, jazz was mostly played in nightclubs and dance halls).

#### B. East Coast vs. West Coast

Bebop was associated with the East Coast (e.g., New York) while Cool Jazz was associated with the West Coast (e.g., California).

1. The California image of casual, laid back suburbia was the perfect backdrop and breeding ground for Cool Jazz.
2. Cool Jazz represented the increasing importance of California to American society and culture.

#### C. Postwar Culture

Post-World War II, American attitudes were shifting, due both to the newfound affluence of the 1950s and growing uncertainty of the future. Cool Jazz reflected, and contributed to, a subdued emotion and quiet intellectual control that had become valued in American society.

1. "Keeping cool" was an expression of emotional self-control in times of crisis, found in American street slang as well as in the language of army test pilots.
2. Fictional heroes like James Bond and Mike Hammer remained cool and calm while the world exploded around them.
3. America's top choice of entertainment had "cooled down" from the nightclubs, dance halls, amusement parks and vaudeville of prior generations to television featuring shows about simple suburban life (e.g., *Leave It To Beaver*).
4. The recent development of the atomic bomb, and the accompanying threat of mass destruction, necessitated cool thinking at this crucial point in history.