

An Introduction to Jazz

Grade 8 | Lesson Plan 6: Bebop, Cool Jazz, and Hard Bop

Adapted from Jazz in America: The National Jazz Curriculum

TOPICS:

1. Bebop
2. Cool Jazz
3. Hard Bop

SESSION OBJECTIVES

The student will:

1. gain a fundamental understanding of:
 - a. bebop
 - b. cool jazz
 - c. hard bop
2. explore the cultural and societal context of bebop, cool jazz, and hard bop

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 bebop, cool jazz, and hard bop
2. discuss the historical and cultural bases of:
 - a. bebop
 - b. cool jazz
 - c. hard bop
3. play various jazz recordings, including examples of bebop, cool jazz, and hard bop

STUDENT ACTIVITIES:

The students will:

1. participate in a class discussion regarding bebop, cool jazz, and hard bop
2. participate in a class discussion regarding the cultural implications of bebop, cool jazz, and hard bop
3. listen to jazz recordings of bebop, cool jazz, and hard bop

Content Outline

I. Bebop

A. The Music

Bebop was at the forefront of jazz and went through its most concentrated growth and development from 1940 – 1955.

1. Bebop was primarily played by small groups (combos).
 - a. a typical bebop combo is comprised of two horns (e.g., trumpet and saxophone) and rhythm section (piano, bass, and drums).
 - b. Although usually a quintet, bebop combos can range in size from three pieces (e.g., piano, bass, and drums) to seven pieces (e.g., three horns, guitar, and three rhythm).
2. Whereas in Big Band Swing the focus is on the arrangement and the playing of the ensemble, in bebop the focus is on the soloist.
 - a. bebop combo arrangements were/are rarely written.
 - b. the basic format is simply the head played in unison by the horns for the first and last chorus with a lot of improvised solos in between. The head serves as a “frame” for the most important part: the improvised solos.
 - c. the combo is the perfect setting for featuring soloists, i.e., no elaborate arrangements, just good, solid improvised interplay between soloist and rhythm section surrounded by the head at the beginning and the end (very little rehearsal, if any, required).
3. Jam Sessions
 - a. Jam sessions are informal, non-rehearsed gatherings of musicians where they play together, challenge each other (who can “outplay” whom), and learn from each other.
 - b. bebop, in large part, developed through jam sessions.
 - c. jam sessions can be held anywhere, e.g., someone’s house, a bar, nightclub, etc.; some of the most famous jam sessions in jazz history occurred at a nightclub called Minton’s Playhouse in Harlem in the 1940s.
 - d. bebop was and still is the music most played at jazz jam sessions because all the musicians need to know are the *head* (the song's main melody) and *changes* (the song's chord progression).
4. Bebop is far more musically complex than its Big Band Swing forbearer.
 - a. bebop harmonies (chords) are more complex.
 - b. tempos are often much faster (although the bebop style can be played at any tempo).
 - c. bebop heads are more intricate and difficult to play than regular melodies.
 - d. bebop musicians improvise far more complex solos than those of the Swing Era.
 - e. bebop requires musical virtuosity and artistry to play it.
5. Whereas Big Band Swing was considered entertainment (i.e., dance music), bebop was considered art music (like classical music, bebop was for listening only). Bebop musicians considered themselves artists, not merely entertainers.
6. Bebop was primarily an African American invention.
7. The two most important bebop musicians were:
 - a. alto saxophonist Charlie Parker (his nickname was “Bird”)
 - b. trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie
8. Scat Singing
 - a. Scat singing (AKA “scatting”) is a type of singing whereby the vocalist imitates the style of bebop jazz solos (as played by instrumentalists) using nonsense syllables; scat solos, like their instrumental counterparts, are improvised.
 - b. One of the most important scat singers was Ella Fitzgerald.
9. Listen to examples of bebop:
 - a. Charlie Parker’s *Ko-Ko*
 - b. Dizzy Gillespie’s *Shaw ‘Nuff*
 - c. Thelonious Monk’s *Blue Monk*

- d. Ella Fitzgerald's *How High the Moon*

B. Cultural Implications

1. The demise of the Swing Era big bands was, in part, due to World War II:
 - a. the draft – many jazz musicians were called to war, leaving few at home to form big bands.
 - b. bands raided each other, that is, with so few musicians left at home, band leaders “stole” musicians from other bands, offering them a slightly better deal; bands that were intact before the war were depleted.
 - c. transportation to reach night spots outside city limits was difficult due to gas shortages (gas rationing), tire shortages (rubber rationing), and the dismantling of urban and interurban railways.
 - d. midnight curfews (“brown-outs”).
 - e. 20% amusement tax – customers would have to pay 20 cents tax on the dollar in any nightclub that included dancing.
2. Racism and segregation were rampant in America during the swing and bebop eras.
3. African American jazz musicians became increasingly disenchanted with swing music the more they watched European Americans capitalize on it; they wanted to create their “own” music, a music that was not for dancing but for listening: a true African American art form.
4. Bebop reflected the culture of the times; like the African American experience at the time, the music:
 - a. was difficult.
 - b. alluded to the blues.
 - c. explored new directions and uncharted territory.
 - d. was separate from the mainstream of America.
5. In the history of entertainment, many artists have been faced with alcohol and drug addiction. In the case of young jazz musicians, some, in their struggle to deal with racism, oppression, and related issues, became addicted to alcohol and drugs; some, in fact, met their demise due to alcohol abuse and drug abuse. Jazz greats who overcame their addictions have stated, contrary to popular belief, that alcohol and drugs never enhanced their musical performance.

II. 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.

1. Whereas bebop was “hot,” i.e., loud, exciting, and loose, cool jazz was “cool,” i.e., soft, more reserved, and controlled.
2. 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 size 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.
3. Cool jazz was a blending of jazz and classical music.
4. Cool jazz often included counterpoint, that is, two or more melodic lines occurring at the same time (counterpoint was a common musical device used by classical music composers such as J.S. Bach); this was different from bebop which had its focus on one melodic line at a time (i.e., each individual solo with chordal accompaniment).
5. Unlike bebop, much of cool jazz was arranged (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.
6. The first and most important cool jazz artist was trumpeter Miles Davis; the first important cool jazz album was his *Birth of the Cool*.
7. Other important cool jazz artists include:
 - a. pianist Dave Brubeck
 - b. trumpeter Chet Baker

- c. baritone saxophonist Gerry Mulligan
- d. the Modern Jazz Quartet
- 8. Listen to recordings of cool jazz:
 - a. The Miles Davis Nonet's *Boplicity*
 - b. The Gerry Mulligan Quartet's *Bernie's Tune*
 - c. The Dave Brubeck Quartet's *Take Five*

B. Cultural Implications

1. Cool jazz brought jazz music back to the mainstream; that is, it re-popularized jazz.
 - a. Swing Era big band jazz had been popular.
 - b. bebop, because of its intensity and complexity, did not have the mass appeal of the Swing (Big Band) Era.
 - c. 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).
2. Bebop was associated with the East Coast (e.g., New York); cool jazz was associated with the West Coast (e.g., California).
 - a. the California image of casual, laid back suburbia was the perfect backdrop and breeding ground for cool jazz.
 - b. cool jazz represented the increasing importance of California to American society and culture.
3. Post-World War II, American attitudes were shifting due to both a newfound affluence in the 1950s and a 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.
 - a. "keeping cool" was an expression of emotional self-control in times of crisis that was found in American street slang as well as in the language of army test pilots.
 - b. after many labor strikes, Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act, mandating a "cooling off period" in labor disputes.
 - c. fictional heroes like James Bond and Mike Hammer remained cool and calm while the world exploded around them.
 - d. America's top choice of entertainment had "cooled down" from the nightclubs, dance halls, amusement parks, vaudeville, etc. of prior generations to television featuring shows about simple suburban life (e.g., "Leave It To Beaver").
 - e. due to the newly developed weapon of mass destruction, the atomic bomb, cool thinking was required at this crucial point in history.

III. Hard Bop

A. The Music

Hard Bop was at the forefront of jazz and went through its most concentrated growth and development from 1951 – 1958.

1. Hard bop was, in part, a reaction to cool jazz.
 - a. many jazz musicians felt that with cool jazz, the music had become too "classical" in nature, that is, too European (not enough "blues").
 - b. hard bop was a return to music that was more Afro-centric, more blues based.
2. There were two factions of hard bop: *funky jazz* and *mainstream*.
 - a. *funky jazz* was relatively simple (simple melodies, simple chord progressions, simple forms); its essence was one of groove and feeling and was heavily influenced by blues and gospel music. (The term funky jazz in the 1950s should not be confused with funk, a style of popular music pioneered in the 1970s. Funky jazz is characterized by its earthy, "low down," soulful, bluesy, and gospel flavored qualities, e.g., *Moanin'* by Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers. While funk also combines elements of jazz, blues, and soul, it is characterized by syncopated rock rhythms and a heavy, repetitive bass line, e.g., *Chameleon* by Herbie Hancock
 - b. mainstream jazz was far more complex (more difficult melodies, improvisations, chord progressions, and forms); it was still about groove and feeling but added the complexities of

bebop; a bit of arranging was often included as well (worked out introductions, endings, harmonized heads, background lines, etc.).

3. The size and instrumentation of hard bop combos was similar to that of its bebop forbearer: usually two or three horns plus rhythm section.
4. One of the most important hard bop groups was the Miles Davis Quintet of the mid 1950s.
5. There are dozens of important hard bop musicians; in fact, hard bop is the main style and influence of most jazz played and heard today. In addition to Miles Davis, a few of the most important hard bop musicians in jazz history include:
 - a. alto saxophonist Cannonball Adderley
 - b. drummer Art Blakey
 - c. tenor saxophonist John Coltrane
 - d. tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins
 - e. pianist Horace Silver
6. Listen to examples of hard bop:
 - a. Art Blakey's *Moanin'* (funky jazz)
 - b. Horace Silver's *Nica's Dream* (mainstream)
 - c. Miles Davis' *Walkin'* (funky jazz)
 - d. Sonny Rollins' *St. Thomas* (a cross between funky jazz and mainstream)
 - e. John Coltrane's *Giant Steps* (mainstream)

B. Cultural Implications

One of the key features of hard bop was its African American identity.

1. Hard bop was heavily influenced by traditional and popular African American music.
 - a. hard bop's influences included bebop, blues, rhythm and blues (R&B), and black gospel music.
 - b. hard bop was undeniably Afro-centric.
2. Hard bop, in part, was a means of artistic expression by young African American men to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the social, political, and economic climate of America at that time, i.e., segregation and lack of economic equity; hard bop reflected and contributed to the beginnings of the 1950s-1960s civil rights movement.
3. Hard bop was mainly an East Coast (e.g., New York) phenomenon.
 - a. mainstream jazz reflected the fast-paced, driving, complex New York lifestyle.
 - b. as in all major northern cities, New York experienced an increasing African American population, making it an ideal backdrop and fertile breeding ground for hard bop.