

THE BEATLES Influencing Yesterday & Today

About This Program

These lessons will help students explore the influence The Beatles had on society during a period when significant historic and cultural events took place, such as JFK's assassination, the civil rights movement, the rise of the teenager, and more. The program complements the new documentary *The Beatles: Eight Days a Week—The Touring Years*, which explores the band's rise to fame and what life was like for these pop icons. Through lessons and videos, students will discover the power of the band as a musical and social force.



Each lesson includes supporting videos and handouts, which can be found at scholastic.com/thebeatles. Look for this symbol for these free online resources, as well as a list of skills that support learning standards for these lessons.

TARGET AUDIENCE: Middle and high school students. Lessons and supplemental videos may include mature language and content. **We recommend that teachers view all lessons and multimedia before sharing them with students.**



Read the quotes on the poster to get students started.

Presented by



TEACH ROCK is a free online educational resource presented by Steven Van Zandt's **Rock and Roll Forever Foundation**. Check out teachrock.org for the full program, which includes numerous lessons, videos, and images that can be used to teach social studies, language arts, and history through music. You will also find additional lessons about The Beatles' working years before success hit, the power of The Beatles' image, their retreat to the recording studio, and the team behind the band. Sign up for emails from **Teach Rock** for lesson updates!

PARTNERS



The Beatles and American Segregation

OVERVIEW In this lesson, students learn about The Beatles' active stance against segregation and consider what the band's example meant for an emerging youth culture.

BACKGROUND The members of The Beatles grew up in Liverpool in the north of England. From the time the band formed, they were students of African-American music, such as American Rhythm and Blues, Southern Soul, Motown, and more. The "covers" (songs not written but recorded by The Beatles) included on their early records were largely songs made famous by African-American artists. Likely because of this respect for African-American music and their opposition to segregation, when The Beatles toured America their contracts stated explicitly that they would not perform for segregated audiences. For those who saw the group as nothing more than a "teen phenomenon," it was a lesson in how artists can stand up for their beliefs and help to change the world they live in.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION How did The Beatles take a stand against segregation while touring America?



And what did it mean for what was to come in popular music culture and American society?

PRE-LESSON ACTIVITY Be sure students understand the basic concepts of race relations in American life in the early 1960s. Have students research and discuss the following questions in class: *What is segregation? What were Jim Crow laws? What was the Civil Rights Act of 1964? When Jim Crow laws were ruled unconstitutional and the Civil Rights Act was put into place, were changes immediate? What was the state of race relations in 1964?*

ACTIVITY

1  Ask students if they have ever heard of Beatlemania. Write their responses on the board. Show the clip from *Eight Days a Week* that captures The Beatles on their first American tour. **Ask students:**

- How did the fans feel about The Beatles during Beatlemania?
- Did this kind of celebrity give The Beatles a unique social power? If so, what could they do with it?

2  Play the clip from *Eight Days a Week* in which Paul McCartney discusses The Beatles' feelings about segregation. **Discuss:**

- What was the situation The Beatles faced in relation to their September 1964 appearance in Florida?
- What was The Beatles' position on segregation?
- What significance did The Beatles' actions have in relation to the civil rights movement in America? (Note: the Civil Rights Act was passed in July 1964.)

3  Explain to students that while The Beatles are considered among the 20th century's most important composers, they also played "covers," their own versions of other people's songs. Give students the handout with the chart that shows the covers

associated with African-American artists. **Ask students:**

- How do you think playing "black music" affected the group's feelings about African-Americans?
- What do you think The Beatles' respect for African-American music might have meant to a young fan at the time?

4  Play the clip of Dr. Kitty Oliver, an author and historian, describing her experience as a young African-American Beatles fan in the American South. **Ask students:**

- What do you think The Beatles represented to Dr. Oliver when she was a girl?
- How do you think The Beatles' stance against segregation affected Dr. Oliver's view of the pop act's unique power?

5  Play the clip of The Beatles on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, including Whoopi Goldberg's recollection in which she describes The Beatles as "colorless... everybody was welcome." **Ask students:**

- How would you describe the impact Beatlemania had on America?
- What have you learned about the power of pop music?