

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



LESSON 2

The Beatles, Teen Culture, and the Birth of the “Rock Band”

OVERVIEW In this lesson, students learn about the effect of The Beatles on their teenage audience, particularly in relation to the group's image as a “rock band.”

BACKGROUND The “teenager” was a concept that changed the character of American life in the years following WWII. Years earlier, many people entered the workforce at a young age, but postwar prosperity increased teenage leisure time and spending. The teenagers of the 1950s and 1960s experienced a new independence. When The Beatles “arrived” in America, particularly through their launch on television’s *The Ed Sullivan Show*, young people saw something new: a pop act that didn’t seem like a distant, almost unreal entity, as Elvis Presley had been. Now they saw a group, a gang that seemed more like peers. The Beatles’ image allowed the band members’ distinct personalities to emerge just as much as it created a sense of the group as one. It appealed to young people, many of whom wanted to form their own such groups. It was a moment



Check 1, 2: The Beatles recording their first album, *Please Please Me*

of empowerment for teenagers. The Beatles were funny, smart, approachable, and capable of doing great things, particularly as a group. Following the *Ed Sullivan* performance, rock bands began to pop up everywhere across the country.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION How did The Beatles’ image as a “rock band” affect young people in America?

PRE-LESSON ACTIVITY Introduce the rise of the teenager through the teenager timeline handout and the *Life* article found at scholastic.com/thebeatles.

ACTIVITY

1 Ask students to define what a “teenager” is. Write their responses on the board, discussing how they define and identify teenagers. Review the handout from *Life* magazine about the 1950s teenager. **Ask students:**

- a)** In what way does this article consider the “teenager” a phenomenon?
- b)** Is a “teenager” simply an age category? (Explain that before WWII the primary categories were “child” and “adult,” with no significant category in between.)

2 Show the clip from *Eight Days a Week* that captures The Beatles and their teenage fans during the group’s first American tour. **Then ask students:**

- a)** How would you describe The Beatles’ young fans?
- b)** How are The Beatles like or unlike their fans?
- c)** Do the fans seem to have a favorite Beatle?
- d)** How is the group’s image different from the image of Elvis Presley? (Image available online. Help students to see that Elvis is alone, without an instrument, dressed in clothes that set him apart from everyday life.)

3 Play a montage of clips from *Eight Days a Week* in which various individuals describe what The Beatles meant to young people in the mid-1960s. **Ask students:**

a) What did The Beatles represent that was important to their fans?

b) Why do you think young people needed The Beatles?

c) Why was it important that The Beatles were a group?

4 Ask students what was going on in the United States just prior to The Beatles’ performance on *Ed Sullivan* in 1964. Follow this by playing the clip that describes the American temperament in the wake of John F. Kennedy’s assassination. **Ask students:**

- a)** Do you think young people were looking for an image of a small community that was separate from the parent generation? Why or why not?
- b)** If the 1960s marked the beginning of a “generation gap,” how would events such as JFK’s assassination and race riots cause young people to pull away from the worlds of their parents to find something new, such as The Beatles’ “rock band” image?

5 Ask students whether there is something or someone in their own lives or the current teenage generation that is a model for them. **Ask students:** Do teens today have a Beatles of their own? Or do you have a Beatles of your own? If so, why do teens/you need this model?