

1950 – 1990's Album Cover Analysis

Lesson Plan Summary

In this review activity, small groups will examine album cover art from the 1950s, 60s 70s, and 80s looking for clues to the time period. Once the cover art has been analyzed, the students will attempt to place the albums in chronological order providing historical and cultural events as evidence to support their placement. Then, the class will look at each group's decisions and reasoning and try to reach consensus about the correct placement of the albums. Finally, the teacher will reveal the true order (if there are mistakes) and discuss the events of the time period.

Objectives

Curriculum Map Topic: The Cold War Period, the Vietnam Era, Age of Limits, and Contemporary History

Lesson's Essential Question: What events defined the decades from 1950 – 1980?

SS.A.5.4.6 understand the political events that shaped the development of United States foreign policy since World War II and know the characteristics of that policy.

SS.C.1.4.4 understand the role of special interest groups, political parties, the media, public opinion, and majority/minority conflicts on the development of public policy and the political process.

SS.A.1.4.3 evaluate conflicting sources and materials in the interpretation of a historical event or episode.

SS.A.1.4.4 use chronology, sequencing, patterns, and periodization to examine interpretations of an event.

U.S. History Event

Cold War, Kennedy, Vietnam, conservation movement, Collapse of the Soviet Union, AIDS, economic boom & materialism

Grade Levels

Advanced Middle School through High School

Materials Needed

- Laminated copies of album covers, one set per group
I pulled photographs of albums from e-bay, however many can be found at yard sales and flea markets in your local community
- Overhead pens, one per group. If you are concerned about what people will write, assign a different color of pen to each group
- Decade signs (print and post around the room)
- Double sided tape
- Copies of Album Cover Analysis sheet (Handout One), 4 per group
- Butcher paper or poster paper, 4 per class

Lesson time

The primary lesson can be completed in one 90-minute or two 45-minute lessons. Extension activities would require additional class time.

Lesson Procedures/Activities

1. Preview Activity – Brainstorming. Have students divide their paper into quadrants (fold paper in half, then half it again.) Label each section respectively “1950s”, “1960s”, “1970s”, and “1980s”. Provide a few minutes of time for the students to write down as many things as possible that they think identifies the time period. If needed, prompt the class with generic suggestions such as “consider clothes... think about world events... what were the latest inventions...name some popular movies or television shows” etc. Designate one corner of the room for each of the decades and ask students to move to the decade they fell like they know the most about. If students say they are clueless about all of the decades, they should stay in their seats. Try to form groups of four, picking one person from each corner to joint each group. If any decades are underrepresented, use those students still seated to even out the group numbers.

2. Review the Activity – Project Overhead Master One and walk the class through the assignment.

3. Pass out roles – Either assign each student a specific role or allow teams to determine their own divisions. If this is the first time your class has completed a team activity with this type of role assignment, carefully review the expectations of each individual member of the team. Four roles in the group could be: one person leads the small group discussion, one person records the information on the analysis sheet, one person uses the text and/or internet to check facts, and one person is the designated spokesperson presenting and defending their ideas to the class.

4. Research and Investigation – Allow time for the class to analyze their album covers. If possible, provide other information sources for further investigation. Stress that the students should be carefully considering all information provided and need to be able to justify their final selections.

5. Justify their choices – Using double sided sticky tape, have each team arrange their album covers around the room under the correct decade sign. Take turns having team members present their arguments defending their placement or discrediting the decisions of others. Allow team members to use the overhead pens to mark on the covers to highlight specific pieces of evidence.

6. Reaching consensus – Lead the class in a discussion to determine the final placement of the record albums. Using poster paper, move from decade to decade writing down the 3 strongest arguments for each placement and post it next to the record album. Also list the strongest “dissenting opinion” and the facts supporting that argument. Allow teams to regroup and change their placement until a general consensus is reached.

7. Reveal the true order – State the correct placement of album covers and, if there were mistakes, discuss the arguments in light of the new information provided.

8. Wrap-up – Ask the class

- Is album cover art a primary source?
- How did the covers change over time?
- Were there any elements of the covers that surprised the students?
- Is album cover art a good reflection of the time period? Why or why not?
- Are there other sources of information that could better capture the time period?

Assessment

For homework, have students create an album cover entitled “The Best of (the current year)”.

1. Analyze the Record Albums

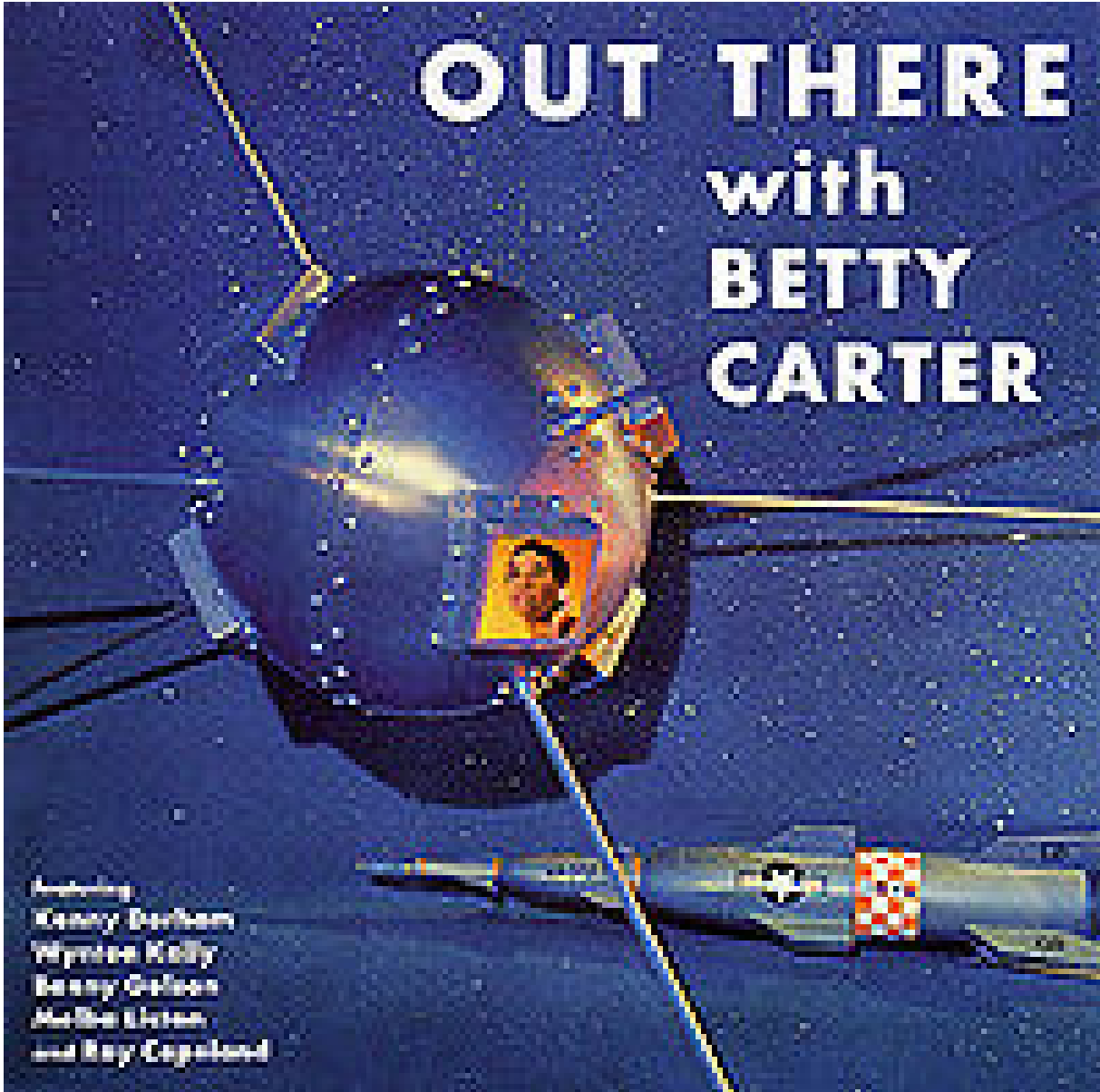
- a. Spend a few minutes reading over the analysis sheet. Examine each photograph completing an analysis sheet as you look at the album.
- b. After analyzing all of the albums, try to determine which album was produced in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Cite specific evidence from the album and connect that to events occurring in each of the decades. Use your brainstorming sheets to help you.

2. Display your decision

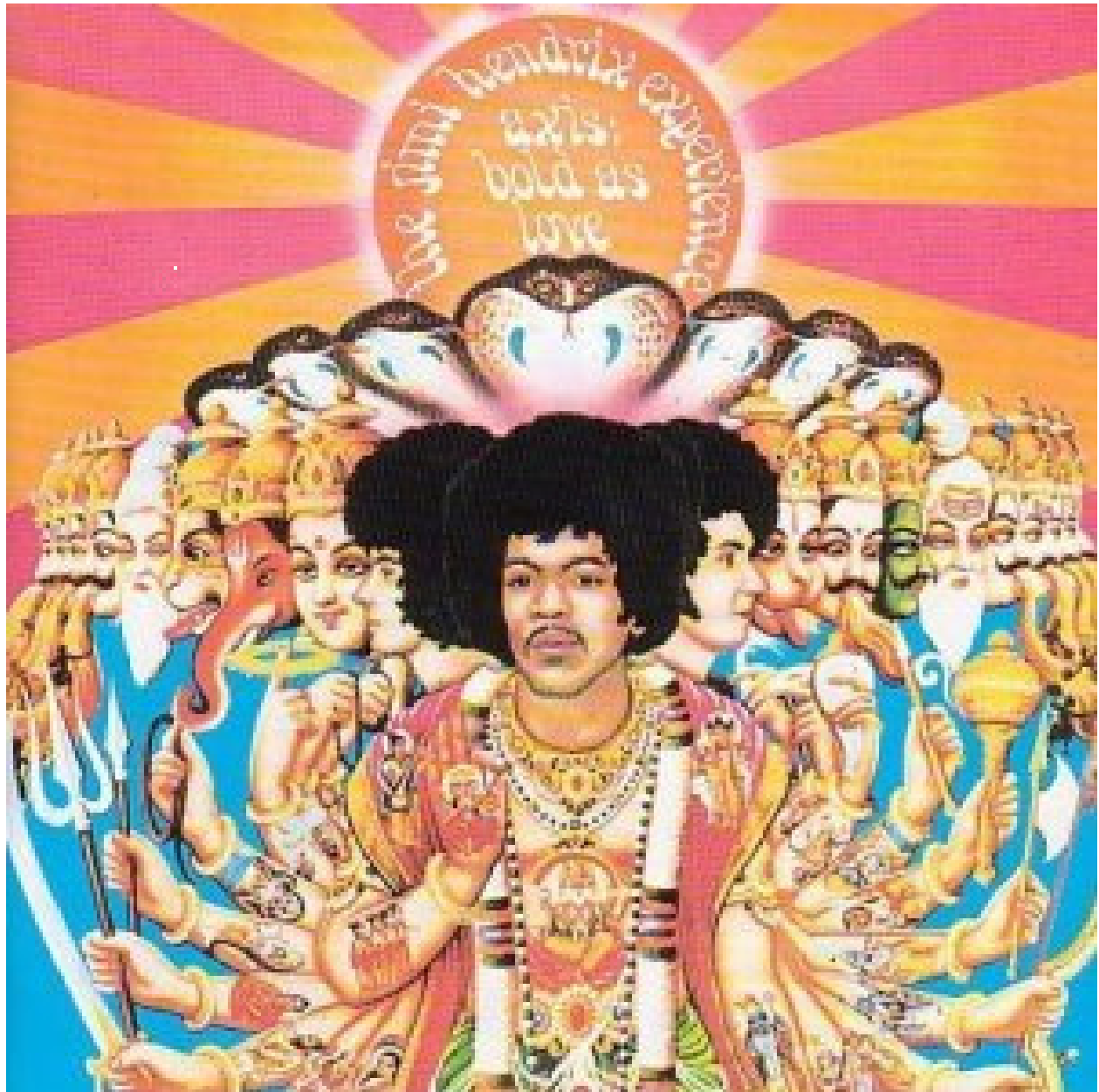
- a. Write your names on the back of the album cover and, using double sided sticky tape, place your albums under the correct decade sign around the room.
- b. Have your spokesperson defend your placement.
- c. Be prepared to question other group's decisions using facts from the time period.

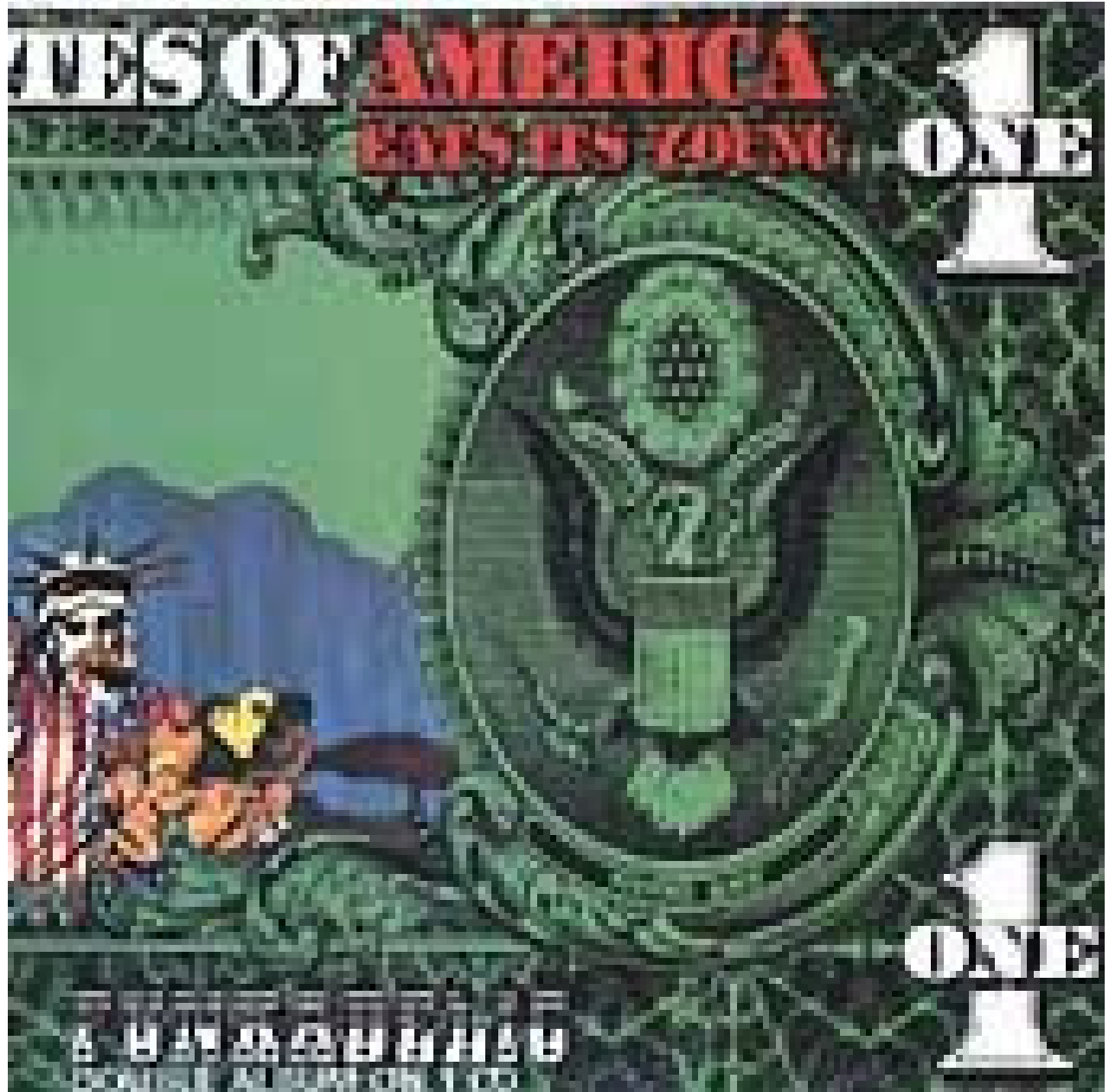
3. Regroup

- a. After listening to all of the group's arguments, you may decide to change your order.
- b. If you move any albums, your spokesperson should state to the class the logic behind the switch.



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Teacher Guide to the Album Art

- Betty Carter, *Out there with Betty Carter* 1958, page 5
- Jimi Hendrix, *Bold as Love* 1967, page 6
- Funkadelic, *America Eats its Young* 1972, page 7
- Jackson Browne, *Lawyers in Love* 1983, page 8

1950s

1960s

1970s

1980s