

Creative Movement with Keith Haring and Hip-Hop, Dr. Martina Vasil

Explore creative movement inspired by the public art of Keith Haring and 1980s hip-hop music.

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https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NSw_PRLulsE4SndQ12oUYV2G45aRuYYY/view?usp=sharing

The Problem

- Elementary classrooms are growing more diverse (Clayton, 2011).
- High stakes tests “limit and constrict the curriculum” and reduce recess time (Beni, 2013; Moses & Nanna, 2007, p. 56).
- There is a need for lessons that can reach all students and be easily adapted (Clayton, 2011).
- Students want learning to connect to their everyday lives, to be engaging, and to encourage social interaction (Abel, 2015).

Why Keith Haring and Hip-Hop?

- Infusing popular culture into lesson plans can help teachers make connections to children’s lives outside of school (Güven & Kelesoglu, 2014).
- Collaborative, interdisciplinary projects are a great way to make connections between various subject areas as well as actively involve all students in social interactions.
- Elements of early hip-hop music and dance form the basis of much of the music children listen to today (Bruner, 2018).
- Hip-hop music and dance (i.e., break dancing) ties directly into many artworks Keith Haring created.
- Taking into account the current nostalgia for 1980s culture today (e.g., *Stranger Things*, *The Goldbergs*, *Ready Player One*) (Toto, 2018), now may be the perfect time to delve into the artwork and music of the 1980s—specifically, Keith Haring and 1980s hip-hop music.

1980s Hip-Hop

- Hip-hop is an African American style of music and a culture that encompasses rap, turntablism, break dancing, and graffiti (Ewell, 2013; Schüler, 2013; Woldu, 2013).
- Hip-hop music emerged from New York City block parties in the 1970s as a blend of funk music, disco, and Jamaican deejaying (Schüler, 2013).
- Block parties would be held outside, in gymnasiums, people’s homes, or cultural centers and were a place for youths attempting to escape a gang lifestyle (Ewell, 2013; Schüler, 2013).
- Breakdancing originated from the instrumental breaks that the deejay would elongate to encourage more dancing. People loved it when the extended instrumental break would occur and went wild with their dancing. Hence, “break dancing” (Woldu, 2013, para.11).

Keith Haring

- Haring was born in Kutztown, Pennsylvania in 1958 (Keith Haring Foundation, 2015).
- He moved to New York City to attend the School of Visual Arts when he was 20. This was at the height of graffiti culture, and graffiti art in the subway stations inspired Haring more than the art galleries (Keith Haring Foundation, 2015).
- He began drawing his iconic figures—standing figure, barking dog, and crawling baby—and used radiating lines to show movement as well as other symbols. Many of his drawings were inspired from the movements of break dancers (Keith Haring Foundation, 2015).
- Haring created hundreds of drawings on the walls of subway stations; he did this by sketching with chalk on the black matte surfaces used to cover old advertisements (Keith Haring Foundation, 2015).
- As the cost of his work rose, Haring was determined to keep it affordable to the public. “Haring maintained...that his intention was to make his art more accessible” (Keith Haring, 2004, p. 155).
- In 1988, Haring was diagnosed with AIDS and died two years later due to an AIDS-related illness. In the end, Haring strongly believed that everyone should make art and have access to art; his legacy lives on today (Keith Haring, 2004; Keith Haring Foundation, 2015).

Lesson Plans for K–5

Music Lesson 1: Overview

- Discussion of Keith Haring’s biography
 - Show video clips and pictures
- Explain how breakdancing influenced how Haring drew his figures
 - Show clips of the New York City Breakers, try some moves out <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDMv3IHGpnA>

Music Lesson 2: Imitate/Explore/Create Movement

- Bringing Haring’s art to life
 - Prepare pictures to show students that they can then imitate.
 - First, they will try to imitate drawings with a single figure (be a statue) then bring it to life (make it move to the beat of the music).
- Challenge
 - Next, try artwork that shows two or more figures.
- Guided Composition
 - Teacher models a four-artwork movement composition.
 - Decide in the group how many times to do the motion before moving on.
 - Think about contrasting motions.
- Independent Composition
 - Students get into groups and do a movement composition on their own.
 - Share.

Music Lesson 3: Dance and Draw

- Prepare multi-colored paper and sharpie markers.
- Review what was learned in the last class.
- Warmup
 - Students move through space when music is on. When music stops, freeze.
 - Review some Haring artwork and break dancing videos. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDMv3IHGpnA>

- Challenge students to move in hip-hop style and freeze in an interesting way that mimics Haring's artwork.
- Teacher Model
 - Class is seated and teacher asks for volunteer.
 - Volunteer's job is to dance only when the music plays. When the music stops...freeze.
 - Once the student freezes, teacher's job is to quickly draw an outline of the student's figure.
 - Teacher gets to draw three times (three times the music is played and stopped).
 - Teacher and volunteer swap. Volunteer now draws and teacher dances.
- Class partners up and tries activity as modeled.
- Class shares their drawing at the end. What expression or mood does the figure portray?

Art Lesson 1

- Overview of Haring public work.

Art Lesson 2

- Teacher discusses the symbolism Haring used in his work; shows examples.
- Students add symbols to the sketches done in music class.

Art Lesson 3

- The drawings from music class are cut out and pasted onto large white sheets.

Resources

Music:

- Rapper's Delight (1980) by the Sugarhill Gang (instrumental version)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9QIH2N-hnE>
- The Breaks by Kurtis Blow (1980) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzl-2g5HhaI>

Materials:

Art Class

- White drawing paper, sharpies, black poster board, white chalk, scissors, and glue

Music Class

- Black sharpies and packs of Astrobright paper

Tips for Using Popular Music for Arts-Integrated Lessons

- Take note of music and art YOU LIKE. Students will feed off of your passion and energy.
- Is it relevant to your students? Is the artist or music from your area?
- Would it appeal to parents, too? Is the music or artist from their era of growing up?

Other Lesson Ideas

- http://www.haringkids.com/lesson_plans/
- Dr. Vasil drew inspiration from this lesson plan in particular for the music lessons in this session: http://www.haringkids.com/lesson_plans/learn/dance-party
- Patterns and layering in hip-hop music (which can be related to the patterning and layering found in Haring's murals) (Karvelis, 2016).
- Elements of social justice and use of language in hip-hop, which can be tied to Haring's more social and political statements in his art pieces (maybe for middle school general music).
- Teachers may consider making ties to graffiti art, poetry and rhythm, and even fashion design. "Presently, hip-hop is far vaster than these original four components, and now encompasses

other artistic forms, including fashion, graphic arts, literature, poetry, painting, sculpture, as well as other musical forms” (Ewell, 2013).

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