

Jimi Hendrix: Rock's Trailblazing Innovator and Influential Guitarist

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Who was Jimi Hendrix and how did he create his own innovative style in Rock music through the merger of different musical genres?

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students discuss the musical influences that helped to shape Jimi Hendrix's unique musical style. In particular, students will discuss the influence of Blues showmanship on Hendrix and how he was able to incorporate that influence into his stage performances. After exploring Hendrix's influences, students will create a podcast, presentation, or slideshow that details their own influences and how those influences have shaped their own musical style.

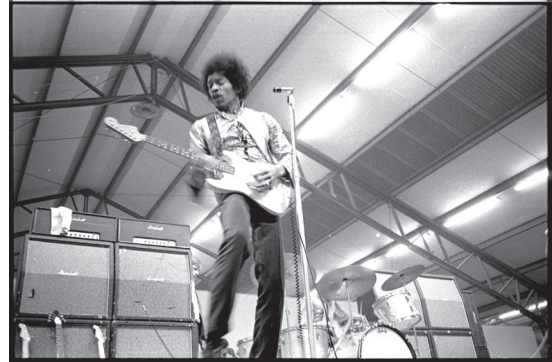


Photo by Ary Groeneveld

The 1960s marked a peak of musical innovation for Rock music. During the decade, musicians pushed creative boundaries, combining diverse musical genres in order to find their own unique sound and carve out their own identity. One of the most influential musicians to create their own sound and identity during this time was Jimi Hendrix.

Born in Seattle, Washington on November 27, 1942, James Marshall "Jimi" Hendrix was influenced by Blues music from a young age. At the age of 15, Hendrix began playing the guitar and learning songs solely by ear. He would enlist in the U.S. Army in May 1961 at the age of 18, serving as a paratrooper in the 101st Airborne Division. After being honorably discharged from the military in 1962, Hendrix began his music career as a hired "sideman" guitarist for various Rock and R&B groups, including Little Richard and the Isley Brothers.

Hendrix would move to London in 1966 on the recommendation of his British manager, Chas Chandler to engage in the vibrant music scene that was happening in the city. With his manager's guidance, a band was quickly organized to feature Hendrix's incredible musicianship. Hendrix, on guitar and lead vocals, was joined by bassist Noel Redding and drummer Mitch Mitchell to create the power trio, The Jimi Hendrix Experience.

With his new group, Hendrix would release his debut album *Are You Experienced* in May 1967. Until his tragic death in September 1970, Jimi Hendrix created music and presented a live performance unmatched by anyone in Rock music up until that point. In doing so, he set a new standard for future musicians. Hendrix combined his love of the Blues, Psychedelia, R&B, and Rock to create a sound so unique that over fifty years later musicians of all genres are still trying to



decode it. Widely regarded as the greatest guitarist in Rock history, Hendrix's influence is still unmatched today.

As Hendrix was creating his own unique style, advancements in music technology were inspiring artists to experiment with new sounds in uncommon ways. Specifically, the use of guitar effects pedals allowed the sound of the guitar to be altered. Hendrix embraced these new effects both on stage and in the studio, including using the fuzz (distortion) and wah (filter) pedals as both a sonic texture and a way to create a unique sound when soloing. With his creativity especially soaring when making records, Hendrix commissioned the building of his own independent recording studio. Located in Lower Manhattan's Greenwich Village neighborhood, an acclaimed arts district, Electric Lady Studios provided Hendrix with the freedom to experiment and produce without constraint. This allowed him to further his artistic vision and voice. Opened in August 1970, Hendrix recorded at Electric Lady Studios for several weeks prior to his death in September. The studio continues to be operational and has become one of the most revered recording studios in popular music history, a continuation of Hendrix's profound musical legacy.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):

- How Jimi Hendrix drew upon multiple music genres to develop his own unique voice in Rock music
- How utilizing showmanship from Blues musicians gave Jimi Hendrix a unique live performance
- How Jimi Hendrix's unique guitar sound influenced the evolution of Rock music
- How Jimi Hendrix's showmanship was influential to future Rock musicians

2. MASTERY OBJECTIVE:

- Students will be able to identify Jimi Hendrix's unique musical style by defining terms, analyzing images, viewing videos, and listening to music, resulting in them exploring their own musical identity through a podcast, presentation, or slideshow.

ACTIVITIES

MATERIALS NEEDED

- An internet accessible device for each student

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY

1. Ask students:

- Have you ever heard the term "innovator"? What does it mean to be an innovator?

- How does someone become or is considered to be an innovator?
2. Display **Image 1, Definition of Innovate** and have a student read the definition aloud. Ask students:
 - Can you name any people who are considered innovators in their field of work?
 - Where does innovation come from? Is it inspired by something?
 - If you could be considered an innovator, what would it be for?
 3. Inform students that in class they will be examining a musician who became known for their musical innovations.

PROCEDURE

1. Show **Image 2, Jimi Hendrix Memorial**. Ask students:
 - What do you notice about this photograph?
 - Based on your observations, what might this be a photograph of?
 - Who might this memorial have been built for? What might have they been famous for?
 - Why might the memorial be decorated as it is? Who might have placed these objects on the memorial?
2. Explain to students that the memorial is to Jimi Hendrix, a musician widely considered to be one of the most influential Rock guitarists of all time and an innovator of Rock music through his influence on Psychedelia, his stage showmanship, and his guitar playing.
3. Distribute to each student **Handout - Jimi Hendrix Graphic Organizer**. Play **Clip 1, Jimi Hendrix Live at the Isle of Wight**. Once the clip is finished, ask students to write in question 1 of the handout an adjective to describe either a sound or imagery they saw in the performance. Then ask students to complete the rest of the questions for Clip 1 in the Graphic Organizer, and discuss the questions in class:
 - Have you heard any music that sounds similar to this performance?
 - Can you name other musicians or bands that utilize showmanship as part of their performance?
 - How might have Hendrix developed the style of guitar playing you heard in the clip?
4. Inform students that they will be watching a video about Hendrix's upbringing and the influence music had on him. Play **Clip 2, Hendrix and the Blues, Part 1**. Then, ask students to complete the questions for Clip 2 of the Graphic Organizer handout, and discuss the questions in class:
 - Why is it important that Hendrix was exposed to his dad's music when he was growing up?
 - What might make the Blues interesting to Hendrix?
 - Why might it seem fascinating to those surrounded by him when growing up that he was able to figure out songs

by the use of his ear instead of sheet music? Do you know anyone who has that ability?

5. Distribute to students **Handout - “Before he was a headliner, Jimi Hendrix was a hired hand” Article** and ask students to read the article individually or in groups and fill out the questions for the handout in the Graphic Organizer, and discuss the questions in class:

- Before becoming famous, how did Hendrix support himself?
- How many bands did Hendrix put together before moving to the United Kingdom?
- How might have Hendrix’s experience as a “hired hand” helped his future career?

6. Show **Image 3, Are You Experienced album cover**. Explain to students that Hendrix released his first album *Are You Experienced* in 1967 with his group, The Jimi Hendrix Experience. Hendrix was residing in London at the time due to his manager’s belief that the vibrant music scene in London would be an optimal place to showcase his innovative music. At the time, many people had never heard music that sounded like this due to Hendrix’s innovative combination of various genres including Rock, Blues, Psychedelia, and R&B.

7. Play **Clip 3, Hendrix and the Blues, Part 2**. Then, ask students to complete the questions for the clip in the Graphic Organizer handout, and discuss the questions in class:
- Why do you feel that it was important for Hendrix to be able to combine these

musical influences together rather than to continue to progress in one particular genre?

- By combining these genres, Hendrix was able to create his own voice in Rock music. Can you think of a musician or band who has created their own unique voice in music? How do you think they were able to accomplish that?
 - Eddie Kramer, seen in the video during “Purple Haze,” describes Hendrix’s solo as a “combination of Psychedelia and the Blues.” When listening to his solo isolated, what elements do you hear that are influenced by the Blues? What elements do you hear that are influenced by Psychedelia?
8. Explain to students that part of what was unique about Hendrix’s playing was the effects he placed on his guitar. On their individual devices, ask students to go to: <https://nyumusedlab.github.io/hendrixpedals> (link in Graphic Organizer handout). Invite students to play with the tech tool and write down their favorite settings in the Graphic Organizer. If possible, ask student volunteers to share their favorite settings with the class. Then ask:
- How did the emerging music technology of the 1960s allow musicians to create an individualized sound for their music?
9. Show **Image 4, Monterey International Pop Festival Poster**. Explain to students that Hendrix’s first proper show in the United States is at the 1967 Monterey International Pop Festival. Hendrix’s performance is packed with jaw dropping showmanship, ending with him lighting his guitar on fire during a cover of The Troggs’

song, “Wild Thing.” Play **Clip 4, Hendrix at Monterey and His Showmanship**. Afterward, ask students to fill out the Clip 4 section of the Graphic Organizer and share answers to the following questions:

- Dweezil Zappa mentions that Hendrix’s showmanship at the festival is taken for granted now. Can you name a musician or band that has similar showmanship qualities today?
- For many people in the audience, that was the first time that something like that had been witnessed before. Billy Gibbons of the band ZZ Top mentions that these tricks have been around since the 1950s. Why do you feel that this is something that many people had not witnessed in Rock music until this point?
- Can you think of a current day performance you have seen on television or on social media that delivered the same response to you as it did with the Monterey festival audience?
- Do you think his showmanship was something that came naturally or was it something that he had to develop over time?

SUMMARY ACTIVITY

1. Display **Image 5, Activity: Your Musical Identity**. Follow the directions and give students time to complete the project.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Watch three different live performances of Hendrix and write a review that would potentially appear in a magazine or newspaper. In your review, be sure to reflect specifically on how Jimi Hendrix merges different musical styles and how his use of showmanship elevates his performance.
2. Select one of the following Jimi Hendrix’s songs: “Castles Made of Sand” or “Bold As Love” and dive into an in-depth analysis of the lyrics. After exploring the imagery and meanings, create a movie, music video, or comic book that visually represents the meaning or narrative of the song.



STANDARDS

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

Core Music Standard: Responding

Select: Choose music appropriate for a specific purpose or context.

Analyze: Analyze how the structure and context of varied musical works inform the response.

Interpret: Support interpretations of musical works that reflect creators' and/or performers' expressive intent.

Evaluate: Support evaluations of musical works and performances based on analysis, interpretation, and established criteria.

Core Music Standard: Connecting

Connecting 11: Relate musical ideas and works to varied contexts and daily life to deepen understanding.

NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS

Creating

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 3: Refine and complete artistic work.

Performing/Presenting/Producing

Anchor Standard 4: Select, analyze and interpret artistic work for presentation.

Responding

Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Connecting

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.



Anchor Standards 11: Relate artistic ideas and work with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

SOCIAL STUDIES – NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES (NCSS)

Theme 1: Culture

Theme 3: People, Place, and Environments

Theme 4: Individual Development and Identity

Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Theme 8: Science, Technology, and Society

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

College and Career Readiness Reading Information Text Standards for Grades 11-12

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.7 Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing for Grades 9-12

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.



CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening for Grades 9-12

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.



RESOURCES

VIDEO RESOURCES

- Jimi Hendrix Live at the Isle of Wight
- Hendrix and the Blues, Part 1
- Hendrix and the Blues, Part 2
- Hendrix at Monterey and His Showmanship

HANDOUTS

- Handout - Jimi Hendrix Graphic Organizer
- Handout - "Before he was a headliner, Jimi Hendrix was a hired hand" Article