

# Study Guide For Teachers

## RockRoots *in* ***A History of American Pop Music***

presented by  
**Young Audiences**  
(866) 500-9265  
[www.yanjep.org](http://www.yanjep.org)



### ABOUT THE PROGRAM

RockRoots has been bringing the rich history of American roots music and rock 'n roll (and the great experience of live music) to thousands of kids and teachers for 25 years. From rockabilly to rap, RockRoots uses song to trace the evolution of American pop music and rock 'n' roll. The four talented musicians of RockRoots take students on an historical and political tour of one of the most influential and celebrated musical forms in the world. The combination of audience participation and great music make this program thoroughly entertaining and educational for audiences of all ages.

### LEARNING GOALS

- To present the diverse elements of rock 'n' roll history from its rural beginning to the latest in technology, and to show how social, historical and political events have shaped popular music in America.
- To stimulate interest in the many forms of music that contributed to rock.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

It's much more informative than a rock concert or an MTV program —but it's much more colorful than your average history lesson! Rock Roots takes you on a historical, geographic, and political tour of the United States as it traces the evolution of American pop music and rock 'n' roll from its early days to the music we hear today.

After a spirited rendition of Chuck Berry's classic, "Rock 'n' Roll Music," the musical journey begins with the ethnic music early immigrants brought to America. It continues through Delta blues, ragtime, Dixieland, jazz, big band music, rhythm and blues, country, and rockabilly — and finally to rock 'n' roll and the current musical scene. The journey ends with an original RockRoots Rap!

Ensemble members demonstrate each instrument, explaining how it evolved and how all the instruments work in an ensemble. Children learn that they can make music just for their own enjoyment!

RockRoots' program appeals to all age groups: from the younger student who is just learning what a live rock performance is all about; to the older student who may know all about what appears on MTV but little about the musical, social and political history of rock; to the teacher ... for whom this program will stir plenty of memories!

## BEFORE THE PROGRAM

1) Discuss the following musical styles:

**Folk** — strong dance beat, instrumental and acoustic music, community oriented.

**Blues** — simple and repetitive story/song, with roots in early African-American, southern life. Dixieland — New Orleans ragtime music, featuring brass instruments and improvisation.

**Swing** — dance music with large orchestral arrangements, often with a leader and a singer.

**Rhythm & Blues** (often abbreviated to R & B) — combines the African American blues with the drive of a big band sound.

**Country Music** — simple melodies and harmonies of white rural Americans in the 1930's.

**Rockabilly** — Music of the 1950's that combined the R & B sound with the sound of country music.

**British Invasion** — Mid-1960's English rock: Beatles, Rolling Stones, The Who.

**Motown** — Detroit ("Motor Town") based pop sound featuring vocal groups and dance steps.

2) Discuss the elements of being a good audience of a rock and roll performance: listening, participating when asked or when appropriate, dancing, singing along, etc. Brainstorm on what behaviors might not be okay during the performance.

## VOCABULARY WORDS

**arrangement** — the organization of instruments in a song.

**improvisation** — making up melodies which fit the existing music "as you go along."

**back beat** — emphasis on the second and fourth beats in a measure of music; also referred to as "off beat."

**riff** — an instrumental theme occurring many times, resulting in instant recognition.

**hook** — the repetitive musical portion of a song, usually containing the title.

**lead** — the featured instrument in a solo portion of the song.

**acoustic instruments** — those designed to be played without amplification.

## AFTER THE PROGRAM

1) Have your class ask their parents about the kinds of music they listened to as young children and as teenagers. Perhaps they may still have recordings that children might share with the class. If children in your class can talk to grandparents or other older friends and family, so much the better!

2) With younger children, discuss the differences between live and televised performances. Talk about the responsibilities of being a good audience.

3) With older children, discuss how the social, political and even economic climate can influence popular music. How did the music of the various decades of the twentieth century reflect our history? How does today's music continue to reflect current events in our country?

4) After the performance, have individual students or groups of students research one of the various musical styles that have contributed to rock today such as blues or ragtime. Dixieland, big band, R & B, country, rockabilly, etc. Ask them to bring in music samples that illustrate the style they are studying.

## RESOURCES

Eriich, Lillian. What Jazz is All About. New York: J. Messner, 1975. Excellent for early history, especially of blues.

Gillette, Charlie. The Sound of the City: The Rise of Rock and Roll. New York: Pantheon Books, 1983.

Discusses the urban, African American influences on rock music.

Rock Music. Music Matters Series. London: Dryad Press, Ltd. 1987. An informative reference on the origins of the various types of rock, and the social conditions that influenced them.

[www.history-of-rock.com](http://www.history-of-rock.com) The History of Rock and Roll, a comprehensive history of the evolution of rock music. Includes biographies of major figures who influenced and contributed to rock music, as well as selected song lyrics.

## ARTIST INFORMATION

The band members of RockRoots have toured the world, performed on the national stage, radio and television, and have recorded on countless albums, in many different styles. Led by professional folk musician, Dave Fry, Rock Roots has been teaching the history of rock and roll for twenty five years. Band members have performed across the globe, in various styles of music.

**Dave Fry**, a veteran folk and family/children's musician (mandolin and acoustic guitar) leads the band in this highly interactive and educational workshop: music styles, instruments, sing- and dance-alongs and some great musical and social history. He has many awards for his children's CDs and his work as a performing artist in the Lehigh Valley.

**Kevin Soffera** is a drummer/percussionist and is in constant demand as a performing and recording artist. He now produces the work other artists in his Hybrid Studios in Nazareth, PA. He is an amazing drummer and performer on stage.

**Nick Franclik** on bass, has been a mainstay in the RockRoots band. Nick also tours with many folk and alternative bands, and accompanies solo songwriters. He is a standout sound technician as well.

**Steve Placotar** on electric lead guitar and vocals, is a regular recording session player and performer, adept at rock, pop and country.

