



## FEATURE

### How Reggae Got Its Groove

Meets National Core Arts Anchor Standards 4, 6-9, and 11

#### OBJECTIVES

- Analyze, interpret, and select artistic work for presentation (*Pr4*)
- Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work (*Pr6*)
- Perceive and analyze artistic work (*Re7*)
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work (*Re8*)
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work (*Re9*)
- Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding (*Cn11*)

#### MATERIALS

- *Music Alive!* magazines (January 2017)
- Computer or mobile device with Internet access
- Classroom instruments
- A globe or map of the world

#### START

1. **Have students** read “How Reggae Got Its Groove” on pages 6-9 either silently, in pairs, or as a class. Show students where Jamaica is located on the map.
2. **Go over** the following vocabulary words highlighted in the article. [This reinforces comprehension and vocabulary.]

**DISENFRANCHISEMENT** – the state of being deprived of rights or power in a society, usually the right to vote

**VARIANT** – a variation; an alternate version of

**INVERTED** – upside-down or reversed

**TRAVAILS** – hardships; difficult challenges

**MINIMALIST** – created using the smallest possible number of elements

#### ASK

- **Look at Jamaica on the map. Note its proximity to the southern United States. It was actually close enough to pick up New Orleans radio stations during the years in which reggae developed. Aside from African-American pop music, where did other influences on reggae come from?** (Africa and Europe.)
- **What are sound systems, and what is their importance in Jamaican music?** (Amplification equipment for presenting pre-recorded music to a live audience. They allowed many Jamaicans to be introduced to African-American pop, and they heightened the role and status of DJs.)
- **Name three Jamaican music styles that led up to the creation of reggae.** (Mento, ska, and rocksteady.)
- **How did “rude boys” and Rastafarians shape the development of reggae?** (The “rude boy” persona gave voice to the life on the streets, where people face poverty and violence, and toughness and criminality become tools of survival. The Rastafarian religion provided a unique spiritual protection from the hardships of life. Both of these

thematic realms found expression in the lyrics to reggae songs.)

#### DEVELOP

- ▶ **1. Play** “Simmer Down” by the Wailers (Hear the Music playlist **track 2** on [musicalive.com](http://musicalive.com)). This was the vocal trio’s first big hit, and is a good example of ska. The tempo is quite fast. Notice the way the brass section defines the rhythm. A trombone plays the main melody, and a saxophone lays out the harmony with short, offbeat accents. These offbeat accents will later become the guitar “chops” that characterize roots reggae. The lyrics also refer to fighting as the song urges the listener to, in effect, cool out.
- ▶ **2. Play** “2000 Years” by Burning Spear (Hear the Music playlist **track 3** on [musicalive.com](http://musicalive.com)). This is an excellent example of dub music. Listen to the remixing techniques used in the dub version. Identify the elements of the essential reggae sound. Notice how the lyrics are de-emphasized. This is a step toward less message-oriented reggae to come.
- ▶ **3. Play** “My Love Is True” by Sugar Minott (Hear the Music playlist **track 4** on [musicalive.com](http://musicalive.com)). Notice how the rhythm has been simplified, sped up a little, and oriented more towards dancing rather than delivering social messages. Dancehall and its many variants has managed to appeal to a generation that grew up on hip-hop. No wonder it is currently the most successful form of reggae.

#### CLOSE

Use available voices and instruments to reproduce the essential structure of reggae rhythm. Have students count out a slow 4/4: 1, 2, 3, 4. Then have them clap on beats two and four, where the guitar/keyboard chops would be. If guitars or keyboards are available, have individual students practice playing short, sharp chords on those beats. They should not ring or sustain. Now use a drum, the deepest sounding one available, to sound strongly on beat 3.

#### ASSESS

- **Did the students read the article?**
- **Did the students answer the questions?**
- **Did the students notice the musical elements in the Hear the Music tracks?**
- **Did the students reproduce the basic structure of reggae rhythm?**