

Crooners to Cowboys

Lesson Plan – High School Social Studies

TEKS directives:

§113.32. United States History Studies since Reconstruction

(20) Culture. The student understands the relationship between the arts and the times during which they were created. The student is expected to:

(B) describe the impact of significant examples of cultural movements in art, music, and literature on American society.

(D) analyze the relationship between culture and the economy and identify examples such as the impact of the entertainment industry on the U.S. economy.

§113.37. Sociology

(12) Culture. The student understands how cultural socialization, norms, values, motivation, and communication influence relationships among groups. The student is expected to:

(B) describe stereotypes of the various U.S. subcultures

Objectives:

1. Evaluate the validity of the image of the Texas cowboy.
2. Summarize the development of the westernization trend in Texas music.
3. Comprehend how an image can be a commodity, and the impact image can have in economic terms

Description:

Gene Autry and Tex Ritter were two of the most iconic of the “Singing Cowboys” celebrated in Hollywood’s western musical films. Neither began their career utilizing a western image, and by tracing their early years and learning how they came to the image, students will understand the lasting impact of this cultural movement on American society.

Procedure:

1. Write the "COWBOY" on the board (or project it on the screen) and ask the student to list five words that spring to mind. This is free association – anything goes.
2. Ask the students to share their lists.
3. If no one has volunteered, ask if anyone has thought of the lonesome cowboy, singing around the camp fire on the cattle drive.
4. Ask if anyone has "New York City" on their list.
5. Show the video "Crooners to Cowboys."
6. Break the students into groups, and ask them to come up with a definition of the word "cowboy" that would include all the cowboy imagery we see in today's society. One person should be the "secretary," writing down ideas and eventually writing the definition that all students in the group agree upon.
7. Post the definitions on a board so the class can read the other responses.