



Part 2: Riot or Rebellion? Asbury Park in the Summer of 1970

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What factors led up to the Asbury Park “Riots” in New Jersey in the summer of 1970?

OVERVIEW

*In this 3-part collection, students watch clips from the film *Asbury Park: Riot, Redemption, Rock & Roll* and primary documents in order to gain a deeper understanding of segregation the Northern United States. Students also consider the role music has played in segregated Asbury Park. In Part 2, students explore the conditions that led to violence between residents and police in Asbury Park in 1970. Then, they debate the distinction between a “riot” and a “rebellion,” and consider the role music might have played in possibly mitigating the violence that occurred.*



When Dr. Martin Luther King delivered his speech at Monmouth University in 1966, the nation was embroiled in the Civil Rights struggle. A year earlier, Alabama State troopers beat peaceful protesters as they attempted a march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama—an event known as “Bloody Sunday.” That same year, Congress passed the *Voting Rights Act of 1965*, enacting a wide swath of legislation to ensure Black citizens had equal access to voting.

But the battle for equal rights wasn’t just occurring in the Southern states. From the mid-1960s into the 1970s, so-called “race riots” erupted throughout the Northern and Western United States. In 1964, residents of Harlem in New York City took to the streets after an off-duty police officer shot and killed 15 year-old James Powell. One year later, the “Watts Riots” in Los Angeles ignited after police violently apprehended Marquette and Ronald Frye for driving while intoxicated, as well as their mother, Rena Frye (who arrived simply to assess the situation) before a crowd of onlookers.

Such events were certainly on Dr. King’s mind as he delivered his speech in New Jersey in 1966. His understanding was that uprisings occur not due to a single event, but are the result of years of oppression. This was made clear when he stated in the speech, “Criminal responses are environmental and not racial. . .there is nothing more dangerous than to build a society with a large segment of people in that society who feel that they have no stake in it.” While condemning the violence of the riots, Dr. King also condemned the decades of structural violence enacted upon poor communities. He asserted that affordable housing and jobs programs would greatly alleviate the dismal conditions people live under—conditions which can often lead to uprisings.

Dr. King's suggestions were tragically ignored just miles away from Monmouth University, in Asbury Park. Four years later the small town also erupted in violence. On the Fourth of July, 1970, a confrontation between police and teenagers accelerated into a 4-day uprising occurring in Asbury Park's neglected West Side. Much like Dr. King, community leaders such as Rev. Verner R. Matthews and Ermon K. Jones called for an end to the violence, while asserting the need for economic investment into the West Side community. They, along with other Black Leaders, presented the Asbury Park Mayor and City Council with a list of twenty one demands to improve the conditions of the West Side. The list included an expanded jobs program and an urban renewal program. Only one of the twenty one demands was approved.

In this lesson, students analyze the factors that led to the uprisings in Asbury Park in 1970, and debate the appropriateness of describing the event as a "riot." Then, they continue to consider the possible ways music could have played a role in preventing the violence that occurred in Asbury Park.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):

- The conditions leading up the Asbury Park "Riots" in 1970
- The distinction between a "riot" and a "rebellion"
- The importance of Asbury Park to the history of American Popular music
- The role music can play in bringing people together

2. MASTERY OBJECTIVE:

- Students will be able to understand the causes of the violence that occurred in Asbury Park in the summer of 1970, debate the differences between the concepts of "riot" and "rebellion," and consider the role music might play in preventing violence by analyzing primary source documents and watching clips from the film *Asbury Park: Riot, Redemption, Rock & Roll*

ACTIVITIES

ENTRY TICKET ACTIVITY

1. Before beginning this lesson, be sure to have taught Part 1 of the collection, and remind students to keep all their handouts, notes and projects from **Part 1** readily available for this lesson.
2. If necessary, review what was covered in Part 1 of the collection by asking students:
 - What is "*de facto*" segregation? How does it differ from "*de jure*" segregation?
 - What are some examples of practices associated with "*de facto*" segregation?

- In what ways did the city of Asbury Park enact “*de facto*” segregation?
- What role did music play in Asbury Park in relation to the city’s practices of segregation?

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY:

1. Tell students that in this lesson they will continue to be using the city of Asbury Park as a case study to examine practices of segregation in the United States.
2. Tell students that the speech by Dr. King they examined in the previous lesson was delivered around a year after uprisings in New York City and Los Angeles that the press often termed “race riots.”
3. Ask students to retrieve **Handout – Excerpts from Dr. Martin Luther King’s Speech at Monmouth University**, and read Excerpt 2 individually or together as a class. Ask students:
 - What might Dr. King mean when he says “Criminal responses are environmental and not racial.” What evidence does he provide to support his claim?
 - According to Dr. King, why do riots tend to occur?
 - What might Dr. King mean when he says “A riot in the final analysis is the language of the unheard”?

PROCEDURE

1. Show **Image 1, Garden State Parkway**. Tell students that between 1946 and 1957, the Garden State Parkway was developed in New Jersey. This major highway opened up much more of New Jersey to travelers, and by the 60s, began threatening Asbury Park’s status as one of the few resort towns along the New Jersey shoreline. Asbury Park subsequently lost tourist money, which made the economic divisions between the East Side and West Side even worse.
 - How might have The Upstage contributed to racial integration? Do you think the integration at The Upstage could have lead to a more integrated Asbury Park? Why or why not?
 - Despite The Upstage being an integrated space, like many music venues on the East Side, it was owned by a white man. How might this be its own form of segregation?
2. Tell students that despite economic troubles, Asbury Park developed a thriving and integrated local music scene that would have a strong impact on the history of American popular music. **Play Clip 1, The Upstage**, then ask students:
 - What, according to the video, was the value of The Upstage?
3. Tell students that despite places of integration such as The Upstage, uprisings related to the economic conditions of the city occurred in Asbury Park in 1970. These events are most commonly referred to as “The Asbury Park Riots,” but the use of the term “riot” is often contentious.

4. Show **Image 2, Junius Williams on the 1967 Newark Rebellions**. Tell students that three years before the events in Asbury Park, the city of Newark, New Jersey erupted due to similar issues of segregation and systemic racism. Explain that the quote featured in Image 2 comes from Junius Williams, a musician, lawyer, and official historian of the city of Newark. Ask students:
 - Why does Williams choose to refer to the events in Newark as a “rebellion” rather than a “riot”? What definition does he give for each term?
 - To you, what is the difference between a “riot” and a “rebellion”?
 - How might the use of the term “riot” elicit a different response than the term “rebellion”?
 - Who are Thomas Jefferson and Nat Turner? Why might he use these figures as examples of people that started “Rebellions.” (Nat Turner led a slave rebellion in Virginia in 1831. President Thomas Jefferson was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, which helped lead to the American Revolution.)
 - Despite William’s definition, the events in Newark in 1967 continue to be widely known as the “Newark Riots.” Why might this be?
5. Pass out **Handout – Asbury Park “Riots” Timeline**. Read the timeline together as a class, or individually. Ask students:
 - What was the cause of the Asbury Park Riots?
 - According to West Side leaders like Rev. Verner R. Matthews and Ermon K. Jones, what were the underlying issues that contributed to the riots?
 - How did the police force respond to the riots? Imagine that tourists on the East Side began breaking windows in anger after a concert was suddenly canceled. Do you think police would have responded in the same way? Why or why not?
 - Do you think a west side youth gathering place like The Upstage might have prevented the riots? Why or what not?
6. Pair up students. Ask them to review the handouts on Asbury Park and consider whether the events on July 4-8 are better described as a “riot” or “rebellion,” according to Junius William’s definition. Afterwards, ask student pairs to share their discussion with the rest of the class.

SUMMARY ACTIVITY

1. Tell students that to end this part of the lesson, the class will be discussing in more detail the potential music might have in addressing segregation.
2. Play **Clip 2, Bruce Springsteen – “The Band’s Role,”** and explain that Bruce Springsteen is a musician and activist who began his career in Asbury Park. Ask students:
 - In your own words, summarize Springsteen’s comments on the “job” a band plays.

- What might Springsteen mean when he says that music helps create an “us” that is “real”?
 - Can you think of another profession that might also fit Springsteen’s description?
3. Show **Image 3, Asbury Park Part 2 Summary Activity**. After student groups complete the activity, ask them to share the issue they chose, and the sentence they wrote on how music might address the issue. Tell students to save their sentence, as it will be used in Part 2 of the lesson.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Read the article “Portrayals of sports riots, current protests sharply differ” (<https://dailytrojan.com/2020/06/09/portrayals-of-sports-riots-current-protests-sharply-differ/>) and discuss in writing the possible political motivations behind defining something as a “riot.”
2. Read **Extension - Excerpt from *America On Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion Since the 1960s*** then write a short response summarizing the argument Hinton is making and whether you feel it is accurate or not.
3. Read **Handout - Excerpt from *Set the Night on Fire: L.A. in the Sixties*** on the Watts riots, which occurred in California five years before the Asbury Park riots. Then, write a short paper considering the similarities and differences between the two events.

STANDARDS

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS*College and Career Readiness Reading Anchor Standards for Grades 6-12 for English Language Arts*

Reading 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Reading 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Reading 3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure 4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Craft and Structure 6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity 10: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Presentation of Knowledge 4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing for Grades 6-12

Text Types and Purposes 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

Production and Distribution of Writing 4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge 7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge 9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening for Grades 6-12

Comprehension & Collaboration 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Comprehension & Collaboration 2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Comprehension & Collaboration 3: Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

Presentation of Knowledge 4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language for Grades 6-12

Language 1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Language 2: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use 4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use 6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

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

Theme 1: Culture

Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change

Theme 3: People, Place, and Environments

Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance

Theme 7: Production, Distributions, and Consumption

Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION – NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MUSIC EDUCATION (NAFME)

Core Music Standard: Responding

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

Responding

Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

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

Core Music Standard: 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.

RESOURCES

VIDEO RESOURCES

- *Asbury Park: Riot, Redemption, Rock & Roll- The Upstage*
- *Asbury Park: Riot, Redemption, Rock & Roll- Bruce Springsteen - "The Musician's Role"*

HANDOUTS

- Handout - Excerpts from Dr. Martin Luther King's Speech at Monmouth University
- Handout – Asbury Park "Riots" Timeline
- Extension - Excerpt from *America On Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion Since the 1960s*
- Handout - Excerpt from *Set the Night on Fire: L.A. in the Sixties*