



Chicana Punk and the Chicano Movement

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What is Chicana Punk, how does it relate to the Chicano Movement and how did it transform the Punk music scene?

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will examine two Los Angeles Chicana Punk musicians—Alice Bag and Teresa Covarrubias. By examining Bag’s and Covarrubias’ words, music, and lyrics, students will connect their work to the particular issues facing Mexican American women.



Alice Bag Bags Hong Kong Café Los Angeles
1979 Louis Jacinto

Although the Punk music scene is often perceived as being male-dominated, Los Angeles Chicana *Punkeras* such as Alice Bag and Teresa Covarrubias redefined Punk culture in their own image. Bag and Covarrubias helped develop a different sense of social activism within the Punk scene, emphasizing race, gender, and class to advocate for social justice through music. While experiencing marginalization as Mexican American women, as Punkeras, Bag and Covarrubias created identities that drew from the sociopolitical Chicano Movement. In doing so, Punk became an avenue where Chicanas reimagined themselves as empowered beings with the authority to bring change and awareness to injustices within their community and beyond.

Alicia Armendariz, better known as Alice Bag, is a Punk cultural icon, musician, author, educator, and feminist activist. She is most well known for her pioneering work in the Los Angeles Punk music scene during the 1970s, both in her band The Bags and as a solo artist. Teresa Covarrubias is a notable figure in the history of Punk music as the frontwoman of the influential East Los Angeles Punk band, The Brat. Known for their energetic performances and unapologetic attitude, The Brat emerged in the late 1970s as one of the first female-fronted Punk bands, defying gender norms and breaking barriers.

An important topic for Chicana Punks in Los Angeles became educational justice. Although Los Angeles public schools were officially desegregated in 1945, many Los Angeles schools faced de facto segregation. Songs like The Brat’s “Pledge of Allegiance” and Alice Bag’s “Programmed” revealed the experiences Chicanas often experienced in an oppressive school system, while also highlighting the power of music as a tool of activism.

Both Bag and Covarrubias used Punk culture as a vehicle for social activism. They were influenced by the grassroots Chicano Movement (also known as El Movimiento) that began in the 1940s with a mission of “combating institutional racism, increasing cultural hegemony, and guaranteeing

equal labor and political rights.” The Movement reached its peak years of power during the 1960s and 1970s. Although a movement seeking equality and fairness, the Chicano Movement was still plagued by institutional patriarchy. This resulted in the marginalization of girls and women within the Movement’s ranks and in perpetuating patriarchy in the community it sought to empower.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):

- The careers, musical work, and activism of Chicana Punk musicians Alice Bag and Teresa Covarrubias
- The connections between Chicana Punk and the Chicano Movement
- Terms related to the sociopolitical activism promoted by Chicana Punk musicians Alice Bag and Teresa Covarrubias

2. MASTERY OBJECTIVE:

- Students will be able to explain the pioneering careers and influential work of Chicana Punk musicians Alice Bag and Teresa Covarrubias by viewing video clips, analyzing images and quotes, and investigating primary sources.

ACTIVITIES

ENTRY TICKET ACTIVITY

1. Distribute **Handout - Chicana Punk Overview and Vocabulary**. Explain to students that they will need to complete the handout in preparation for the lesson below. Review the handout and its instructions together as a class. (*Recommend to students that if they are able, they should consider playing music from <http://bit.ly/ChicanaPunkPlaylist> while completing the assignment.*)

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY

1. Ask student volunteers to briefly share about Alice Bag and Teresa Covarrubias from what they read in the overview and the terms they defined in the vocabulary table.
2. Play an excerpt from the YouTube video “The Very Latinx History of Punk” (2:26-4:30) (<https://youtu.be/PSyo1zd9jcw>). Instruct students to make notes while watching the video, including anything that expands their knowledge of Punk music or particularly stands out to them. Then ask students:
 - How does the video expand your knowledge of Punk music and the Latin history of Punk?
 - What does Alice Bag say about what is valued in Punk?
 - Why might Alice Bag have felt she needed to find a different space?

3. Play an excerpt from the YouTube video “Eastside Punks - A Screening and Conversation” (4:48-6:04) (https://youtu.be/D43YPUi_jsl). Instruct students to make notes while watching the video, including anything that expands their knowledge of Punk music or particularly stands out to them. Then ask students:
 - How does the video expand your knowledge of Punk music and the Latinx history of Punk?
 - What are some of the reasons Covarrubias might have been interested in the LA Punk scene?
 - What does Teresa Covarrubias say influenced and contributed to her lyric writing?

PROCEDURE

1. Inform students that in this lesson they will examine Bag’s and Covarrubias’ work as two Los Angeles Chicana Punk musicians, and connect their work to the particular issues facing Mexican American women.
 - What might Anzaldúa be referring to in this poem?
 - What might “me raja” mean? (*In English, “It cracks/rips me”*)
 - What do you think this poem is about?
 - What comparison is she making?
 - How might this poem reflect the ideas behind the Chicano Movement?
 - What might a “Third Space” be in the context of this poem?
2. Distribute **Handout - Chicanas and the Chicano Movement (Differentiation suggestion: use Handout - Chicanas and the Chicano Movement (Adapted))**. Read the handout together as a class, then ask students:
 - In your own words, what was the Chicano Movement?
 - What did the Chicano Movement advocate for?
 - What is a Chicana? What is their relationship with the Chicano Movement?
 - What might be meant by “Third Space”?
3. Display **Image 1, Poem by Gloria Anzaldúa**. Ask student volunteers to read the poem aloud or for all students to read it silently, then ask students:
 - Who was Gloria Anzaldúa? (*As referred to in the previous handout, she was a theorist on issues related to Mexican American identity and marginalization.*)
4. Place printed or digital versions of the **Chicana Punk Gallery Walk** images around the room. Inform students that next they will be reading quotes from Bag and Covarrubias on why Punk was appealing to them. **Distribute Handout - Gallery Walk Graphic Organizer** and ask students to take notes as they walk around the room and examine each image. (*consider playing music from <http://bit.ly/ChicanaPunkPlaylist> while completing the assignment while students are participating in the activity.*)
5. Review the **Gallery Walk Graphic Organizer** together as a class. Ask student volunteers to share their notes with the class, then ask students:
 - According to the quotes, how might

the Punk scene have been a liberating space for Chicana Punks?

- As described by Bag and Covarrubias, in what ways might have Punk been a “Third Space”?

6. Explain to students that they will be analyzing song lyrics by Covarrubias and Bag to identify how the two Chicana musicians used music as a tool for activism.

7. Distribute **Handout - Chicana Punk Primary**

Source Analysis. (*Links to official videos for each song are in the handout, see Teacher’s Guide for suggested answers to the questions*)

8. Split the class into two groups, and assign each group to either primary source document A or B in the handout. Once the groups have completed the questions in the handout, reconvene as a class and ask students:

- How did Punk music provide newfound freedom for Chicana punks?
- In what ways do you think people were affected by their music?
- What does Covarrubias’ and Bag’s lyrics and music tell us about how the past was different?
- How do their lyrics and music shed light on issues that affect us today?
- How do their lyrics and music shed light on the struggles of Mexican American youth today?

SUMMARY ACTIVITY

1. Explain to students that now that they have examined Chicana Punk history and identified the importance of using music as a form of self-expression, they will write lyrics in small groups to bring awareness to a current issue.
2. Organize students into small groups, or allow them to self-select groups.
3. Display **Image 2, Current Issue Lyrics Activity**. Instruct student groups to follow the instructions for the activity in the image.
4. Once student groups have completed the activity, ask each group to share with the class the song they chose and read aloud the new lyrics. Instruct the other student groups to take turns guessing what current issue the new lyrics are referring to.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Compose original music to accompany the “current issue” lyrics. Students can create a song with lyrics and music either using musical instruments or with a digital audio workstation (DAW) like GarageBand or FL Studio. If the opportunity is available, have students perform their song or play their recording of it.
2. Storyboard a music video for the song. The StoryboardThat website (<https://www.storyboardthat.com/storyboard-creator>) could be a beneficial tool for the activity. While creating a storyboard, consider how the visuals of a music video might also reflect the issue the lyrics address.
3. Listen to Chicana Punk music from this playlist: <http://bit.ly/ChicanaPunkPlaylist>



4. Read the *First Rule of Punk* by Celia C. Pérez.
5. Watch the YouTube video “Alice Bag on LA Punk, Politics and Resistance | Red Bull Music Academy”: <https://youtu.be/JQ25ZHfefs>
6. Watch the entirety of the YouTube video “Eastside Punks - A Screening and Conversation” featuring Teresa Covarrubias: https://youtu.be/D43YPUi_jsl

STANDARDS

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS*College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading (K-12)*

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.

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.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing (K-12)

Text Types and Purposes 1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

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 (K-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.

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 (K-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.



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, Distribution, and Consumption

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

Core Music Standard: Connecting

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

NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS

Connecting

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



RESOURCES

HANDOUTS

- Handout - Chicana Punk Overview and Vocabulary
- Handout - Chicana Punk Overview and Vocabulary (Adapted)
- Handout - Chicanas and the Chicano Movement
- Handout - Chicanas and the Chicano Movement (Adapted)
- Chicana Punk Gallery Walk
- Handout - Gallery Walk Graphic Organizer
- Handout - Chicana Punk Primary Source Analysis
- Handout - Chicana Punk Primary Source Analysis (Teacher's Guide)