



## Intersectionality and Punk Music in the 2020s

### OVERVIEW

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What is intersectionality, and how do musicians in the Punk music scene navigate life at different intersections?

#### OVERVIEW

*In this lesson, students will explore the concept of intersectionality. To examine how intersectionality operates in real life, students will be introduced to members of the band The Loneliest and to Erik Garlington, frontman and guitarist for the band Proper. By listening to the music and hearing interviews from these two groups, students will discover the challenges and opportunities these bands have encountered as women, BIPOC and queer participants in the Punk Rock scene. Students will then have the opportunity to reflect on their own intersections, and the challenges and opportunities those intersections present.*



Photograph of the band The Loneliest. Photo credit: Kate Hoos.

Intersectionality: a word that has taken on increasing significance in the last few years.

The concept was coined in 1989 by Black scholar and activist Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw. In its simplest terms, intersectionality speaks to the unique ways race, class, gender, ability, and sexual orientation might intersect in a person's social position, and how those intersections uniquely contribute to their lived experience.

To make the concept of intersectionality more concrete, students will be examining the lives of Punk Rock musicians operating in New York City. They will be introduced to the band The Loneliest, an all-women, Queer “twee girl punk band” from Queens, and to Erik Garlington the frontman, and guitarist for the all Black, queer, Brooklyn punk trio Proper. By listening to these artist's music and hearing interviews with them, students will consider the challenges, opportunities, joys, and sorrows of being a BIPOC, Woman, and Queer person working in a Punk Rock scene that remains primarily white, straight, and male.

## OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

### 1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):

- The concept of intersectionality
- What an intersection is
- How all intersections bring unique challenges and opportunities, though some intersections may be more challenging in American society than others
- The Punk bands Proper. and The Loneliers, and how each member's intersections as Queer and BIPOC musicians affected their lives as Punk musicians
- How musicians can be involved in the music scene without making it a full-time career

### 2. MASTERY OBJECTIVE:

- Students will be able to define intersectionality and recognize their own intersections by analyzing lyrics and watching interviews from musicians in contemporary Punk bands.

## ACTIVITIES

### PREPARATION

1. Set up 6 viewing stations, using devices that can access the internet, around the classroom. Prepare the following videos for each station:
  - Station 1: Navigating the (Mostly) Straight White Punk Scene
  - Station 2: Finding Your Tribe/Community
  - Station 3: The Effects of the COVID Pandemic
  - Station 4: Advice for People Interested in Performing Music
  - Station 5: On the Meaning of "Huerta" (include **Handout - Excerpts of Proper. and The Loneliers Lyrics**)
  - Station 6: On the Meaning of "No" and "The Rights Song" (include **Handout - Excerpts of Proper. and The Loneliers Lyrics**)

## MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY

1. Inform students that in class they will be discussing the notion of intersectionality. Ask students:
  - Have you ever heard the term “intersectionality” before? If so, where?
  - What might “intersectionality” mean?
2. Play the introduction portion of the video “Intersectionality 101” (0:00-1:01) by Learning for Justice: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6dnj2lyYjE>. Then ask students:
  - How does the video define “intersectionality”? (*“Intersectionality refers to the reality that we all have multiple identities that intersect to make us who we are.”*)
  - Who coined the term “Intersectionality,” and why? (*Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, because she felt there wasn’t a way to describe how the experiences of Black women differed from white women and Black men.*)
  - In what ways can Intersectionality be used as a lens to look at oppression and privilege in American society? (*Intersectionality offers a vantage point into how historic forms of discrimination [based on Race, Gender, etc.] may converge and uniquely affect a person’s life in accordance with their intersections.*)

## PROCEDURE

1. Explain to students that they will be reflecting on how intersectionality might operate in real life by looking at the experiences of two Punk Bands: Proper. and The Loneliars. Distribute **Handout: Intersectionality Hills and Valleys**, and as a class go over the directions and example on the first page.
 

*like us to feel they can do this [be in a Rock band] too.”*
2. Play **Clip 1, “Introducing Proper.”** Then ask students:
  - Why did Erik move to New York? (*His goal was to create an all-Black Rock band.*)
  - How does Erik describe the band’s intersections? (*Erik describes the intersections being “Black and Queer.”*) What does Erik say is the “driving force” behind the band? (*They “want other kids*
3. After answering the questions, ask students to note Erik’s intersections on page 2 of the handout.
4. Play **Clip 2, “Introducing The Loneliars,”** Then ask students:
  - How do the various members of the Loneliars describe their intersections? Please write down the intersections on the handout. (*Jessie describes herself as a “loud, gay, Mexican American musician”; Debbie describes herself as a “First generation Mexican American Bi-, Cis-gender woman”; Caitlin describes herself as a “white, Irish American, masculine, lesbian woman.”*)

- How did the Loneliers form? (*Sisters Jessie and Debbie formed a band. Caitlin joined later after meeting them at a show.*)
5. After answering the questions, ask students to note Jessie's, Debbie's, and Caitlyn's intersections on page 3 of the handout.
  6. Inform students that they will now be learning a bit more about each band's experiences operating in the Punk scene by visiting the 6 viewing stations around the classroom. Ask students to watch as many videos as time allows, and take notes on each band's "high points" and "low points" along the curved "hills and valleys" line on the handout. Remind them to take notes on Proper. on page 2, and The Loneliers on page 3. Allow students to rotate between stations for the time allotted (students are not required to visit every station).
- Station 1: Navigating the (Mostly) Straight White Punk Scene
  - Station 2: Finding Your Tribe/Community
  - Station 3: The Effects of the COVID Pandemic
  - Station 4: Advice for People Interested in Performing Music
  - Station 5: On the Meaning of "Huerta" (include **Handout - Excerpts of Proper. and The Loneliers Lyrics**)
  - Station 6: On the Meaning of "No" and "The Rights Song" (include **Handout - Excerpts of Proper. and The Loneliers Lyrics**)
6. After completing the viewing stations, ask volunteer students to share the notes they took on the handout. On the board, write out some of the low-points, mid-points, and high-points for each band based on student responses.

## SUMMARY ACTIVITY

1. Ask students to turn to the fourth page of the handout. Encourage them to reflect on their own intersections, and the challenges and opportunities those intersections brought them. Then, ask students to fill out the sheet in a similar way to how they filled out the sheet for Proper. and the Loneliers.
2. **Optional:** Ask students to share their own intersections, and the challenges and opportunities those intersections might have brought to their life, either together as a class or in a group. Assure students that they can share as much or as little as they want.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Create a playlist of the following bands for students to listen to:
  - Action/Adventure
  - Alliteration
  - Choked Up
  - Crowd the Airwaves
  - Honeychild Coleman
  - In the Mourning
  - Magnolia Park
  - Meet Me at The Altar
  - Pinkshift

## STANDARDS

### COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

#### *College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading (K-12)*

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 2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

#### *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.

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 (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.

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.

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

Theme 1: Culture

Theme 3: People, Place, and Environments

Theme 4: Individual Development and Identity

Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Theme 8: Science, Technology, and Society

## **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

### VIDEOS

- Introducing Proper.
- Introducing The Loneliers
- Navigating the (Mostly) Straight White Punk Scene
- Finding Your Tribe/Community
- The Effects of the COVID Pandemic
- Advice for People Interested in Performing Music
- On the Meaning of “Huerta”
- On the Meaning of “No” and “The Rights Song”

### HANDOUTS

- Handout - Intersectionality Hills and Valleys
- Handout - Excerpts of Proper. and The Loneliers Lyrics