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The objectives of this unit are to help students

- understand the role music plays in defining a culture
- recognise the ethnic and cultural roots of music
- explore the relationship between evolving technology and music
- anticipate future social and cultural trends

THIS UNIT HELPS students place music, a subject with which most students are familiar and comfortable, in a historical and social context. This unit allows students to assess the economic, cultural and technological factors that inform music. Students already understand the role of music in entertaining society. This unit encourages students to place music in a broader context, and see how music serves both as a source of reinforcement of traditional values and as an agent of change.

### **In this Unit ...**

**Should We Change the Australian National Anthem?** provides students with information on the history of “Advance Australia Fair” and has students evaluate the occasional calls to change the national anthem. The lyrics of several songs are included for students to consider.

**Hip Hop/Rap** has students investigate the socioeconomic influences of urban music on contemporary culture.

**MTV and Cool** introduces students to marketing firms’ efforts to anticipate and indulge teenagers’ desires and interests.

**Future Rock and Roll Hall of Famer?** requires students to assess the contributions of contemporary figures in music and write a persuasive argument in support of a particular musician.

**Music Technology: Good? Bad? Both?** has students evaluate the role technology plays in the evolution of labour.

**Your Personal History of Music** challenges students to write a descriptive summary of the popular music of today’s generation and compare it to the music of the previous generation.

REMEMBER, as we begin our exploration of music and media, that humans are not the only animals who use music. Some birds use music to attract each other, as do some fish and other animals. Some music historians say that humans enjoy music for biological reasons. Others say we enjoy music based on cultural and social reasons. Still others say human interest in music is based on both animal instincts and intellectual reasons.

**All human cultures have shown evidence of having music.**

Whatever the case, music has been around for as long as human beings have existed. The earliest types of music probably involved chanting and playing percussive instruments, such as sticks and bones. Certain types of horns and stringed instruments were invented more than 4000 years ago. All human cultures have shown evidence of having music. Australians, Asians, Americans and Africans, as well as people on small islands, all have long musical traditions. The European tradition of classical music is actually

relatively young, originating with the sacred music of the medieval Christian church. More simple styles of popular music have also endured.

### Technology and Music

The Industrial Revolution, which began in England in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, made it possible for many people to buy musical instruments. Factories could mass-produce instruments more quickly and less expensively than handcrafting.

This made musical instruments affordable for many people. For example, the middle class could purchase pianos, which had previously been available only to wealthy families. Sales of sheet music also increased as more and more people took up music as a hobby.

Music as a recorded medium began in 1877. That year, Thomas Edison (the inventor of the light bulb) invented an early phonograph, or record player. Edison later received patents for several different types of record players as he continued to improve on his original design. Other inventors also invented new types of machines to play prerecorded music throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s.

After 1915, recordings were commonly available on flat ten-inch (25-cm) wide discs that played at 78 revolutions per minute (rpm). These 78 rpm records could only hold about three minutes of music on each side. As a result, writers of popular songs, which had once averaged five to eight minutes, began to shorten their songs to around three minutes. This is still the usual length of songs played on the radio today.

In the 1930s, inventors began experimenting with electric guitars. One of the early experimenters was Les Paul, who invented the solid body guitar. Leo Fender was one of the first people to mass-produce electric guitars. The Gibson Company's Les Paul Guitar and various Fender models are still the favourites of many guitarists today.

During World War II, electronics companies devoted their efforts to producing items needed by the military. After the war ended in 1945, many of these companies began to focus on goods for civilian use. The commercial introduction of the transistor in 1954 allowed teenagers to buy inexpensive radios, which they could listen to away from home (and their parents). Stereo sound

### Hip Hop/Rap

HIP HOP MUSIC EMERGED from the Bronx, New York, USA in the mid 1970s, and soon spread to other large cities, including Los Angeles. Through much of the 1980s and early 1990s, most hip hop recordings were bought by young African-Americans living in large cities. However, the popularity of hip hop gradually spread, and more than half of the people today who regularly buy hip hop albums are white suburbanites. There is also an increasing number of white hip hop and rap musicians.

Australian hip hop began in the early 1980s and was influenced by American hip hop music and culture. Since the 1990s, a distinctive local style has developed. Where once Australian hip hop was an underground music scene, many hip hop artists are now nationally and internationally celebrated artists. Notable Australian hip hop artists include the Hilltop Hoods, Bliss n Eso, Funkoars and 1200 Techniques. Hip hop, which grew out of the experiences of African-Americans in the USA, has also gone on to be popular among Aboriginal Australians, and there is a thriving Aboriginal hip hop movement in Australia today.

Some observers believe that an important reason for the growth of hip hop and rap's popularity is the resistance that it has met among parents' groups and others. This resistance is based in part on the obscene and violent lyrics that are often (but not always) present in rap songs. Some parents do not realise that there are different types of rap and hip hop; they associate all rap with "gangsta" rap. The fact that some parents view hip hop as threatening may actually encourage teenagers to take more of an interest in this type of music.

Hip hop is of course more than just music; it is also a way of dressing and a way of talking. (Many people believe hip hop is also an attitude toward life and a way of thinking.)

Record your answers below. Use another sheet of paper, if necessary.

1. List at least three things that you believe are part of hip hop culture.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Why do you think middle class teenagers from the suburbs have taken an interest in hip hop culture – the music, the style, the attitude?

## Cash for Comment

IN 1999 many people were surprised to find out that 2UE's talk radio hosts Alan Jones and John Laws had been paid by numerous companies to advertise their products while making it sound like editorial commentary. Being paid to advertise in this way is widely considered a breach of journalistic integrity, and many members of the public were outraged at this deception.

The Australian Broadcasting Authority estimated arrangements with these companies came to a total of over \$18 million. The ABA found Laws, Jones and 2UE to have committed 90 breaches of the industry code and five breaches of 2UE's licence conditions. In response to this scandal, the Authority contacted a number of other countries to gauge their regulatory approaches taken regarding advertising and sponsorship on commercial radio. A number of new legislations were introduced to regulate commercial radio advertising. This legislation, amongst other things, requires the on-air disclosure during current affairs programs of commercial agreements between sponsors and presenters.

Record your answers below. Use another sheet of paper, if necessary.

1. As mentioned, \$18 million was paid to talk radio hosts to talk favourably about certain companies; effectively advertising them. Some people would say, "\$18 million is a lot of money today, and it was worth even more back in the 1990s." What do people mean when they say that money was worth more years ago? Give an example.
2. Why do you think companies were interested in paying these radio hosts to talk about their companies/products on the radio? Why not use traditional advertising? Explain your answer.
3. Think of your favourite radio station and the songs it plays. Would it bother you if you discovered that one of the reasons the station played a certain song was because the station (or one of its employees) was being paid to play that song by the record company? Why or why not?
4. If you were a radio station talk show host and a company offered you money to talk favourably about their products, would you take the money? Why or why not?