

Music and Dance of Latin America

Description **This lesson is designed for:**

- 40 – 50 minutes
- 25-30 students
- Spanish, Music, or Social Studies class
- Grade 4-8
- Country of Origin: Argentina, Dominican Republic, and Mexico

Note: This lesson requires access to Latin American music and some knowledge of the subject matter.

Objectives **As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:**

- Identify three distinctive musical styles from Latin American.
 - Match pictures of musicians and dancers in their typical dress with the kind of music.
 - Describe elements of culture from the countries and relate them to the styles of music.
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Materials **Related Files Provided with this Lesson**

- Review worksheet

Teachers Need to Provide

- Map of Latin America
 - CD Player and music (See the reference section.)
 - Pictures of instruments, bands, and dancers. (See the web address in the reference section.)
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Activities

7 min. **Introduction**

- Identify the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Argentina on a map of Latin America.
- Ask the students what they know or what comes to mind when they think about Latin American music and dance. Write their answers on the chalk board for all the class to see. Keep these things on the board to compare with answers after the discussion.

25 min. **Music Identification**

- Play snippets of three kinds of songs: Bachata, Mariachi, and Tango. Students guess which country each is from.
- Playing each kind of music again, show pictures and explain about the instruments, costumes, and traditions of the country. See the resource section for details. Also, visit the web sites at the end of the lesson to find pictures and samples of music.
- Complete the review sheet. Go over the sheet to make sure students have the correct answers.

10 min. **Create your own dance!**

- Listening to one kind of music (students can vote to decide which one or the teacher can choose), in pairs or small groups, students develop some steps that match the music.
- Share the steps with the others in the class.

2 min. **Wrap Up**

- Discuss what the students learned about Latin American music and dance and write them on the board in a different color chalk, Make sure to correct any misconceptions students listed at the beginning of the lesson.
 - Allow for any final questions students have.
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Argentina

- Argentina is known for the tango. While there are many styles of music there, like in any other country, the most famous is the tango.
- The tango actually started as a dance and the special music developed later.
- Around 1900, many immigrants came from Europe to make fortunes on farms in the countryside. When this didn't work, the immigrants moved to the cities.
- They danced in the streets to imitate the Africans in the country and to compete with them. However, a major problem was the lack of women to dance with in the streets. As a result, people went to brothels and bars. The tango became famous there.
- As the rich Europeans came, they brought the dance to better parts of the city because they did not like to hang out in the poorer parts of the city. The dance began to move up the social scale.
- These rich Europeans eventually took the dance to Paris, the cultural and entertainment center of the world, and it became an international phenomenon.
- The typical tango orchestra includes a bandoneon (a type of accordion), violin, piano, and contrabass (similar to a cello, but bigger). Guitars are sometimes used.
- The singer is another important tango musician.
- Originally, tango singers and players were called bandoneonistas because of the bandoneon.
- Much of the traditional tango interprets folk traditions and is a form of folk music. One folk singer is Mercedes Sosa. A well-known folk band is Argentina Canta Asi.
- Carlos Gardel brought the tango to the world's attention in the 1930s.
- A new form of tango was introduced by Astor Piazzolla, a famous bandoneonista. The new form, Nuevo Tango (new tango), has a jazz influence and a modern style. Traditionalists resisted this new style.
- The tango is just as much a dance as it is music.
- The dance is a partner dance in which the dancers move together across the floor in a romantic way. The dance was seen at times as risqué because of its sensuality.

- There are basic steps and movements to the dance while it also leaves room for the dancers to interpret the music in their own way.
- The Argentine tango is the most popular style of this dance. Also popular is the ballroom tango, which is more prevalent in Europe and the United States.

Dominican Republic

- La Bachata originates from the Dominican Republic. It is a form of music and dance that is mixture of bolero, son, with a little influence from meringue, which is also from the Dominican Republic.
- It is compared to the blues from the United States because many of the songs are about love, especially broken hearts.
- Early bachata featured a guitar, which was sometimes accompanied by a few brass instruments.
- Later bachata, which was typically faster paced, was played with two guitars, bass, a bongo, a guira or maracas, and often included some wind and brass instruments, along with a piano and a violin.
- La bachata started with the lower class and was not accepted by many people. While other music could be heard in clubs and on the radio, la bachata had to gain popularity in other ways. During the 1940s, la bachata was played in bars, brothels, and the shadows.
- José Manuel Caderón is considered the father of the bachata. He sang the first solo song, “Borracho de Amor” in 1961.
- This type of music is a reflection of the life of “los bachateros”: love, prostitution, jealousy, and fights.
- Many of the songs have double meanings: one regarding some aspect of life and the other a sexual meaning.
- The bachata became known internationally when Juan Luis Guerra won a Grammy for his album “Bachata Rosa” in 1992.
- Today, the most popular group is Aventura from the Dominican Republic.
- Songs today are less sexual, but most are still about love.
- The bachata dance is very sensual, as are many Latin American dances. The basic steps are: 3 steps to the left with a pause, followed by a hip bump and a leg lift. Then the steps are repeated to the right. It is made more complicated with turns, but the most important characteristic is the movement of the hips.

Mexico

- Mariachi music originated in Mexico in the town of Jalisco. It was originally used for religious ceremonies and festivals.
- Original instruments in mariachi bands were violins, vihuelas (Mexican guitar with five strings), and guitars. Sometimes a harp was added. More recently, groups have added trumpets.
- There is much debate on where the word mariachi comes from. One theory is that it comes from the French word mariage, which means marriage. Others believe that it comes from a native word with roots that have to do with the wood that makes up the instruments and stage.
- Mariachi bands were hired to perform for special occasions, festivals, and religious ceremonies.
- There were no famous early mariachi bands; in fact, most mariachi bands were only known in their respective towns. This changed in 1934 when Silvestre Vargas took his band, Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, from Jalisco to Mexico City to play for the inauguration of President Lázaro Cárdenas. Cárdenas, who had great interests in supporting the native culture of Mexico, was very enthusiastic about the band. People then became more interested in this traditional style of music, which led to today's popularity of mariachi bands.
- Mariachi bands today are very popular, inside and outside of Mexico, and are still used for special occasions and ceremonies.
- The most popular use of mariachi bands is for serenatas (serenades) where the bands are sent to sing a special love message outside the window of a loved one.
- They are also used for birthdays, religious holidays, festivals, and even burials. In some areas of Mexico, it is fairly common for a person to leave a list of songs to be played by a mariachi band at their burial.
- The attire for band members is the charro suit, which is the traditional folk costume from Jalisco.
- The traditional dance associated with the mariachi is the zapateado, in which dancers drive their heels into the floor, pounding out rhythms that complement the music.
- Different regions of Mexico have many variations to this style of dance. In one variation dancers do very rapid intricate maneuvers with their feet while balancing a glass of water on their heads to show their muscular control.
- Another typical mariachi dance is the Jarabe tapatío, which is better known as the Mexican hat dance. A man flirts with a woman and tries to woo her with his tapping and stomping. He ultimately succeeds and throws his hat to the ground.

Websites

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Nombre _____ Fecha _____

Latin American Music and Dance



True or Make True

Mark the statements that are true. If any is false, correct it.

1. Most Latin American dances started in the upper classes.	True False Correction:
2. The music and dance called the Mariachi started in Jalisco, Mexico.	True False Correction:
3. Lou Vega is considered the father of the bachata.	True False Correction:

Fill in the Blank

- _____ is a form of music that is compared to the United States' blues.
- The bandoneon is an instrument closely related to the _____.
- Some people think the word *mariachi* comes from is the French word for _____.

Matching

Match the style of music to its place of origin.

- | | | |
|-------------|-------|-----------------------|
| 1. Tango | _____ | a. Dominican Republic |
| 2. Bachata | _____ | b. Argentina |
| 3. Mariachi | _____ | c. Costa Rica |
| | | d. Canada |
| | | e. Mexico |

