
Viewing Guide for *The 1619 Project* Docuseries Episode 3: “Music”

The 1619 Project is a Hulu documentary series expanding on The 1619 Project initiative created by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones for The New York Times Magazine. The six-part series seeks to reframe the country’s history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of Black Americans at the very center of our national narrative. You can view the documentary series at [hulu.com/series/the-1619-project](https://www.hulu.com/series/the-1619-project).

About this Guide

Each episode of the series calls on historians, journalists, and community leaders to share their insight and expertise on the enduring legacy of slavery and its impact on our current society. Each episode contains information that could be useful for a variety of classroom contexts and weaves together multiple related themes and plotlines. It is possible for students to engage with these key themes without viewing the hour-length episodes in full, particularly if they are utilizing other *1619 Project* materials as supplemental texts.

As such, we’ve created a guide that allows for both thematic and linear viewing of each episode:

- In the [About the Episode](#) section of this guide, you will find a summary of the key themes, the relevant time stamps for those themes, and some supplemental texts from *The 1619 Project* to help deepen student understanding.
- In the following [Linear Viewing Guide](#) section, you will find a table that splits the episode into sections from start to finish with time stamps and discussion questions.
- At the end of the guide, you will find a [Topic Index](#) for the episode listing the key people, events, concepts, terms, and more to assist with lesson planning and standards alignment.

Some parts of this episode include depictions of blackface minstrel shows and other racist images. We’ve marked these sections and included content warnings for teachers to review and consider. We also suggest having a classroom social-emotional learning protocol for engaging with hard histories and inviting students to think through how they can care for themselves when things are both important to know and difficult to listen to.

The intro to this episode includes a reference to alcohol consumption, and there is one section with some explicit language.

About Episode 3: Music

“Music” explores the role of Black American music as foundational to American pop culture and reflects on the Black American struggle for freedom and liberation throughout American history. It spotlights different eras and genres of Black American music while contextualizing the social and cultural realities that influenced the music of the time period. The episode also discusses the legacies of racism in American music and pop culture, tracing their origins back to blackface minstrel shows that began during slavery.

Themes in this episode include:

- Innovation and Cultural Memory in Black Music
- Racism in American Music and Pop Culture

Theme: Innovation and Cultural Memory in Black Music

Summary of Theme	This theme explores the ways in which Black American music has been innovative in its creation of new sounds and genres while maintaining reference and homage to the music that came before. It illustrates the difficulty of separating Black American music from Black American identity because of the cultural influences and iterative nature.
Relevant Time Stamps	00:00-09:44 (Introduction; Thesis; Significance; and Impact of Motown)* 11:14-13:28 (Spirituals of Enslaved Black People) 16:52-21:08 (Fisk Jubilee Singers and the Concert Spiritual) 21:08-22:44 (Interlude: Blues to Jazz) 26:41-34:13 (Funk and Disco) 38:40-51:31 (Hip-Hop; Black Music That Defies Genre) 54:43-58:18 (Closing/Freedom in Black Music)
Supplemental Reading	<u>From The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story</u> “The New Negro” by A. Van Jordan “Progress Report” by Sonia Sanchez Chapter 1: “Democracy” by Nikole Hannah-Jones Chapter 14: “Music” by Wesley Morris

Theme: Racism in American Music and Pop Culture

Summary of Theme	This theme highlights the complicated history of racism in American music and pop culture and the desire to engage with Black music and art while continuing to dehumanize and devalue Black people. It explores minstrelsy, cultural appropriation, and institutional racism in the music industry.
Relevant Time Stamps	03:00-05:06 (Thesis/Black Music as Foundational) 09:45-11:13 (Music as an Argument for Humanity) 13:29-16:51 (Origins and Impact of Blackface Minstrelsy)* 22:45-26:40 (White Responses to Jazz and Motown)*

These materials were created by Pulitzer Center Education staff to support utilizing *The 1619 Project* as an instructional tool. You can find our full *1619 Project* Education Materials Collection at <https://1619education.org/>.

	34:13-38:39 (White Backlash to Funk and Disco) 51:32-54:42 (Interlude: Racism in the Recording Industry)
Supplemental Reading	From <i>The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story</i> “From Behind the Counter” by Terry McMillan “no car for colored [+] ladies (or, miss wells goes off [on] the rails)” by Evie Shockley Chapter 2: “Race” by Dorothy Roberts Chapter 14: “Music” by Wesley Morris Chapter 17: “Progress” by Ibram X. Kendi

Linear Viewing Guide: Music

Some questions to consider before viewing:

1. What is culture? How do you define your culture? How important is culture to you?
2. What is the relationship between politics and culture? How can societal norms be reflected in culture? How can culture be used as a tool for resistance?
3. Some of the history and personal stories told in this episode are hard to listen to because they describe painful events. What can we do to take care of ourselves when something is both important to hear and difficult to listen to?

Time Stamp	Main Topic	Questions To Consider
00:00-02:59	Introduction/Role of Black Music in Community *mention of alcohol & alcohol consumption at 01:39	How does the opening scene set the tone for the rest of the episode? What feelings do the images evoke for you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (if relevant) How is it similar to or different from the intros we see in other episodes? How important is music in your family, culture, and/or community? What are the occasions for playing different types of music?
03:00-05:06	Thesis/Black Music as Foundational	Are any of the images of Black music artists depicted in this section familiar to you? If so, have you previously considered them a part of a long cultural tradition? If not, what is an image that stands out to you? How can you learn more about the artists and their place in Black cultural tradition? Nikole Hannah-Jones constitutes that the ingenuity, invention, intuition, and improvisation recognizable in Black American music have become core parts of broader American culture. What do these words mean, and where have you seen examples of them in the media and pop culture you engage with?
05:07-09:44	Significance and Impact of Motown	Wesley Morris describes “Just My Imagination” by the Temptations as soft like cashmere. Listen to this and some of the other songs played in this section. How would you describe them? Are any of the songs familiar to you? According to Morris, what was the cultural impact of Motown in both Black and white communities?

These materials were created by Pulitzer Center Education staff to support utilizing *The 1619 Project* as an instructional tool. You can find our full *1619 Project* Education Materials Collection at <https://1619education.org/>.

<p>09:45-11:13</p>	<p>Music as an Argument for Humanity</p>	<p>Hannah-Jones and Morris make a distinction between Black artists making music that is “unmistakably Black” and Black artists making music or performing “in white face.” How do you understand the difference they’re naming? Why is it important that music can be “unmistakably Black” and still attractive to non-Black audiences?</p> <p>Do you agree with Morris’ sentiment that music can be an argument for humanity? What other tools and mediums have you seen Black artists utilize as a representation of their humanity?</p>
<p>11:14-13:28</p>	<p>Spirituals of Enslaved Black People</p>	<p>Nikole Hannah-Jones and Fredara Hadley introduce the idea that the Negro spirituals of enslaved Black people were the first American folk music. How does this inform or challenge your understanding of folk music in America?</p> <p>What are the elements of folk spiritual music that Hadley identifies? How did these elements differentiate the Negro spirituals from European hymns?</p>
<p>13:29-16:51</p>	<p>Origins and Impact of Blackface Minstrelsy</p> <p>*multiple depictions of blackface and minstrel shows</p>	<p>How did seeing the footage of white performers in blackface make you feel? What does the popularity of these types of performances tell us about race and racism during that period of American history?</p> <p>Hadley provides a framework for answering some of the moral and ethical questions around blackface and appropriation. She suggests we ask who the music is for, who got to craft it, and who benefits financially from it. Are you able to answer these questions for most of the music you consume? Are there any questions you would add to this list?</p> <p>What are some of the lasting legacies of blackface minstrelsy Morris identifies? Do you recognize them in any of the media you consume?</p>
<p>16:52-21:08</p>	<p>Fisk Jubilee Singers and the Concert Spiritual</p>	<p>How did the Fisk Jubilee Singers reimagine the sound of the Negro spiritual? What was the impact of this innovation?</p> <p>How did current Fisk University students celebrate the 150th anniversary of the group? What do you imagine the experience was like for them?</p>

<p>21:08- 22:44</p>	<p>Interlude: Blues to Jazz</p>	<p>Hannah-Jones tells us that the Blues emerged from songs sung by Black people picking cotton and led to the development of Jazz, which Hadley describes as the sound of collective liberation. What can we infer about the role Blues music played for Black American communities during this time period? What themes do you think Blues music may have focused on?</p>
<p>22:45- 26:40</p>	<p>White Responses to Jazz and Motown *some depictions of Black performers engaging in minstrelsy for white audiences</p>	<p>What concerns and fears did some white people have about Jazz music when it was first developing? In what ways did some artists, like Louis Armstrong, feel the need to respond to these concerns? What argument does Wesley Morris make about Motown and minstrelsy? How does his reflection relate to Otis Williams’ statement that Motown music was like a “soothing ointment?”</p>
<p>26:41- 34:13</p>	<p>Funk and Disco *some profanity in Nile Rodgers’ discussion about writing “Freak Out”</p>	<p>What are some of the themes Black artists in the late 1960s and the 1970s included in their songs? How did they differ from the previous Motown sounds? Have you heard the term “respectability politics” before? How would you explain it? What was the proof for Black people in this era that respectability politics was not working as a strategy for liberation? What are some of the things Nile Rodgers loves about Funk and Disco music? How does his continued work and impact in the music industry speak to the legacy of Funk and Disco in American popular music?</p>
<p>34:13- 38:39</p>	<p>White Backlash to Funk and Disco</p>	<p>What pushback occurred to the rising popularity and inclusivity of Funk and Disco music? In what ways was it similar or different to the pushback to Jazz music described earlier on? How did the anti-disco wave impact Rodgers’ band Chic? What is your response to the point Hannah-Jones and Rodgers surface about audiences loving Rodgers’ writing and music but wanting to see it delivered through white artists? Have you seen other examples of this in pop culture?</p>

38:40-47:07	Hip-Hop	<p>What role did Rodgers play in shaping Hip-Hop?</p> <p>Why were Hip-Hop and Rap accessible forms of music for Black youth to engage in? How did the genre build on generations of Black music and culture?</p> <p>What does Hadley’s anecdote about the song “Motherless Child” illustrate about the role of music sampling in cultural memory? How does Rapsody infuse cultural memory into her music?</p>
47:08-51:31	Black Music That Defies Genre	<p>“Feeling Good” is one of Nina Simone’s most sampled and covered songs. Why do you think it resonates with so many people? How does it defy genre?</p> <p>How does Brittany Howard describe the music she makes? How does her work challenge our understanding of which genres of American music qualify as Black?</p>
51:32-54:42	Interlude: Racism in the Recording Industry	<p>How did the music recording industry reflect the racist norms of society at its founding? In what ways does the industry still have barriers for Black artists?</p> <p>How does this section inform your understanding of the distinction between collaboration and appropriation or minstrelsy?</p>
54:43-58:18	Closing/Freedom in Black Music	<p>What does freedom mean to you? Why do you think freedom is significant to artists in general and Black artists especially?</p> <p>Do you know what freedom looks and sounds like for you in your everyday life? What is a place or activity that helps you feel free?</p>

Some questions to consider after viewing:

1. How did this episode impact your understanding of the relationship between politics and culture? How have race and racism impacted American music? In what ways have African Americans utilized music in their struggles for liberation?
2. How are imagery and audio used to help with storytelling in this episode? How is the experience of viewing the docuseries similar to or different from reading the text?
3. What additional research do you want to do about U.S. history after learning about the ways in which research can expand your understanding of a topic?

Topic Index

Concepts and Terms

- Black face
- Block party
- Blues
- Boombox
- Breakdancing
- Cabaret
- Call and response
- Concert spirituals
- Coon songs*
- Cultural appropriation
- Cultural appreciation
- Dance music
- Disco
- Emcee
- Field hollers
- Folk music
- Folk spirituals
- Freedom
- Funk
- Funkadelic
- Gospel music
- Hip-Hop
- Hymns
- Improvisation
- Integration
- Jazz
- Jim Crow
- Juke joint
- Militancy
- Poverty
- Protest song
- Psychedelic
- Race music
- Race record
- Racism
- Rap
- Respectability politics (politics of respectability)
- Rock 'n'roll
- Rhyme
- Rhythm and Blues (R&B)
- Sampling
- Scratching
- Sellout
- Social music
- Sorrow songs
- Soul
- Spirituals
- Minstrelsy
- Work songs

Historical Events

- The Black Power Movement
- The Civil Rights Movement
- Disco Demolition Night
- The Environmental Consciousness Movement
- Reconstruction
- The Vietnam War
- [Woodstock \(Festival\)](#)

Subject Matter Experts

- [Dr. Fredara Hadley](#)
- [Nile Rodgers](#)
- Dr. Paul Kwami
- [Wesley Morris](#)

Historical and Political Figures

- Berry Gordy
- The Black Panther Party
- Thomas Rice

Film and Television

- *American Bandstand*
- *Coming to America*
- *Soul Train*

Places

- Brooklyn, New York
- Detroit, Michigan
- [The Fox Theatre \(Atlanta, GA\)](#)
- Leviticus (Club)
- Nashville, Tennessee
 - [Fanny's House of Music](#)
 - [Fisk University](#)
- New Orleans, Louisiana
- Snow Hill, North Carolina
- South Bronx, New York
- Tryon, North Carolina
 - Nina Simone's Childhood Home
- Studio 54 (Club)

Record Labels

- [Atlantic Records](#)
- [Motown Records](#)

Artists and Groups

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| ● 2Pac | ● Clarence Powell | ● Gladys Knight |
| ● Al Green | ● David Bowie | ● Grace Jones |
| ● Al Jolson | ● De La Soul | ● Grandmaster Flash |
| ● Aretha Franklin | ● Diana Ross | ● James Brown |
| ● A Tribe Called Quest | ● DMX | ● Juvenile |
| ● Baby Keem | ● Doja Cat | ● Kendrick Lamar |
| ● Bernard Edwards | ● Donna Summer | ● Lauryn Hill |
| ● Bessie Smith | ● Dreamville | ● Lil' Kim |
| ● Betty Davis | ● Duke Ellington | ● Lil' Yachty |
| ● Big Apple Band | ● Duran Duran | ● Little Richard |
| ● Biz Markie | ● EPMD | ● Lizz Wright |
| ● Bobby Shmurda | ● Eric B. & Rakim | ● Louis Armstrong |
| ● Boogie Down Productions | ● Etta James | ● Luther Vandross |
| ● Brittany Howard | ● Fivio Foreign | ● Madonna |
| ● Chic | ● Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers | ● Mamie Smith |
| ● Childish Gambino | ● Fugees | ● Martha and the Vandellas |
| ● Chuck Berry | ● George Clinton | ● Marvin Gaye |
| | ● Ghostface Killah | ● Mary J. Blige |

-
- Mase
 - MC Hammer
 - MC Lyte
 - Megan Thee Stallion
 - Method Man
 - Migos
 - Monaleo and Flo Milli
 - Mos Def
 - Mtume
 - Nas
 - Nina Simone
 - Ol' Dirty Bastard
 - Otis Williams
 - O. V. Wright
 - Parliament
 - Puff Daddy
 - Queen Latifah
 - Rapsody
 - Richie Havens
 - Rick James
 - Roberta Flack
 - Rufus Thomas
 - Run-DMC
 - Sarah Vaughan
 - Saucy Santana
 - Sharon Jones
 - Sister Sledge
 - Sly and the Family Stone
 - Smokey Robinson
 - Stevie Wonder
 - Teena Marie
 - The Alabama Shakes
 - The Cadillacs
 - The Fisk Jubilee Singers
 - The Isley Brothers
 - The Jackson 5
 - The Notorious B.I.G.
 - The Soul Searchers
 - The Staple Singers
 - The Sugarhill Gang
 - The Supremes
 - The Temptations
 - Three 6 Mafia
 - Troy Ramey
 - Whistler's Jug Band
 - Williams' Jubilee Singers
 - Will Smith
 - Wu-Tang Clan

Songs and Music Videos

- "The Way You Do the Things You Do" by the Temptations
- "Just My Imagination" by the Temptations
- "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child"
- "Steal Away"
- "Da Gospel Train"
- "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot"
- "St. Louis Blues"
- "Foldin' Bed" by Whistler's Jug Band
- "Lord, I Love That Man" by Mamie Smith
- "Rhapsody in Black and Blue" by Louis Armstrong
- "What's Going On" by Marvin Gaye
- "You Haven't Done Nothing" by Stevie Wonder
- "Ball of Confusion" by the Temptations
- "Give Up the Funk (Tear the Roof Off the Sucker)" by Parliament
- "Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud" by James Brown
- "I'm Coming Out" by Diana Ross
- "We Are Family" by Sister Sledge
- "Le Freak" by Chic
- "Let's Dance" by David Bowie
- "Everybody Dance" by Chic
- "I've Seen That Face Before" by Grace Jones
- "Lucky Star" by Madonna
- "Got To Give It Up" by Marvin Gaye
- "Stars/Feelings" by Nina Simone
- "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood" by Nina Simone
- "Revolution" and "Strange Fruit" by Nina Simone
- "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free" by Nina Simone
- "Nina" by Rapsody

-
- “Rapper’s Delight” by The Sugarhill Gang
 - “He’s the Greatest Dancer” by Sister Sledge
 - “Gettin’ Jiggy Wit It” by Will Smith
 - “Sippin’ on Some Syrup” by Three 6 Mafia
 - “Papa Was a Rolling Stone” by the Temptations
 - “Avalanche” by Migos
 - “Motherless Child” by O. V. Wright
 - “Freedom” by Richie Havens
 - “Motherless Child” by Ghostface Killah
 - “Got To Give It Up” by Marvin Gaye
 - “Been Around the World” by Puff Daddy (feat. Mase and the Notorious B.I.G.)
 - “Knocks Me Off My Feet” by Stevie Wonder
 - “I Can’t Get Next to You” by the Temptations
 - “Square Biz” by Teena Marie
 - “Sweet Little Sixteen” by Chuck Berry
 - “If You Call” by Sharon Jones
 - “Shimmy Shimmy Ya” by Ol’ Dirty Bastard
 - “One Step Ahead” by Aretha Franklin
 - “Ms. Fat Booty” by Mos Def
 - “Payback” by James Brown
 - “The Big Payback” by EPMD
 - “Everything” by Mary J. Blige
 - “King Kunta” by Kendrick Lamar
 - “Juicy Fruit” by Mtume
 - “Juicy” by the Notorious B.I.G.
 - “I Ain’t No Joke” by Eric B. & Rakim
 - “U Can’t Touch This” by MC Hammer
 - “Just A Friend” by Biz Markie
 - “Wildstyle” by Grandmaster Flash
 - “My Philosophy” by Boogie Down Productions
 - “Ladies First” by Queen Latifah (feat. Monie Love)
 - “Coffin” by Lil Yachty
 - “Scenario” by A Tribe Called Quest
 - “Mooo!” by Doja Cat
 - “Thot Shit” by Megan Thee Stallion
 - “Run’s House” by Run-DMC
 - “Me, Myself, and I” by De La Soul
 - “Crush on You” by Lil’ Kim (ft. Lil’ Cease)
 - “If I Ruled the World (Imagine That)” by Nas (feat. Lauryn Hill)
 - “Big Poppa” by the Notorious B.I.G.
 - “Hit ‘Em Up” by 2Pac
 - “Ha” by Juvenile
 - “Protect Ya Neck” by the Wu-Tang Clan
 - “Fu-Gee-La” by the Fugees
 - “What’s My Name” by DMX
 - “This is America” by Childish Gambino
 - “Under the Sun” by Dreamville (feat. J. Cole, DaBaby, Lute)
 - “Lord Is Coming” by H.E.R
 - “N95” by Kendrick Lamar
 - “Walk” by Saucy Santana
 - “Big Drip” by Fivio Foreign
 - “We Not Humping” by Monaleo and Flo Milli
 - “Family Ties” by Baby Keem ft. Kendrick Lamar