



# *Ragtime*

## **The History of Ragtime: Listening and Creating**

By Jennie Berman Eng, Lead Teaching Artist

Grades 7-12, (1) 50-minute class period

### **Introduction:**

After listening to “The History of Ragtime” podcast with jazz expert Rob Bamberger, students will analyze primary source recordings and find connections with contemporary genres and social history.

### **Learning Objectives:**

Understand how the history of American art forms like ragtime influenced culture, politics, and social hierarchies.

### **Guiding Questions:**

- What are the origins of ragtime?
- How was ragtime experienced?
- In what ways did ragtime affect American society?

### **Common Core Standards:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.2

Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

### **Materials:**

- *The History of Ragtime* podcast
- *Listen and Create* worksheet
- *Gallery of Ragtime Images and Videos*

## Classroom Activities:

- **Lesson Activity One: The History of Ragtime Music**
    - Listen to “The History of Ragtime” podcast
  - **Lesson Activity Two: Draw Connections**
    - Discuss how ragtime is relevant today
  - **Lesson Activity Three: Listen & Create**
    - Use ragtime music as inspiration for original writing
  - **Lesson Activity Four: Post-writing Discussion**
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### **Lesson Activity One: The History of Ragtime Music (Estimated time: 10 minutes)**

- Play the podcast, and ask students to write down one key point about ragtime music or the era.

### **Lesson Activity Two: Post Podcast Discussion, 15 minutes**

Lead your students in an open discussion of what they’ve just heard.

Ask:

1. What was something surprising to you about ragtime music?
2. How differently is music experienced today than in turn-of-the-century America?
3. What can we learn about America through music history?
4. Ragtime was as much a social movement as a musical one. Can you see any similarities between ragtime and current music movements? Rock? Jazz? Hip hop? How do these movements begin?
5. How does race figure in to the history of music in America? How have minority cultural traditions been co-opted by dominant populations?

*\*Optional:* Project the Accompanying images from our **Additional Resources**.

### **Lesson Activity Three: Music-inspired Free Writing, 10 min**

Play the Audio files, Maple Leaf Rag, and Frog Legs Rag.

Ask students to listen to the music and to write freely. They should write whatever comes to mind, without constraint and without a desired outcome. Suggest they keep their pens moving throughout the whole song(s). They can continue through to the next song, or you can stop and discuss.

*\*Optional:* Suggest students take what they’ve written and “rag it”, meaning play with writing a story out of order, changing the perspective or creating some other disruption to a regular narrative.

## **Lesson Activity Four: Post-Writing Discussion, 5 minutes**

Ask Students:

- How did the music influence your thoughts and what you wrote?
- What feeling states did you feel while writing?
- How did the varying melodies shape your writing?

*\*Optional:* Have students read aloud a portion of what they wrote during the free-write.

### **Additional Resources**

Ford's Theatre Gallery of Images:

[Ragtime Sheet Music](#)

[Ragtime History](#)

Cake walk images and further explanation: <https://www.amoeba.com/blog/2009/08/eric-s-blog/the-roots-of-jazz-cakewalk-amoeba-s-jazz-week.html>

Scott Joplin: <https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200035815/>  
<http://www.scottjoplin.org/aboutbio.html>