

## Beatlemania! An Oral History Project

“Other than the birth of my children, [Beatlemania] was the single most important highlight of my life.”

(Millard, Andre. *Beatlemania: Technology, Business, and Teen Culture in Cold War America*  
The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Md. 2012)

### Rationale:

Many people who lived in the United States during the 1960s can tell you where they were on November 22, 1963 – the day President Kennedy was assassinated. Many of those same people, and many others, also remember where they were when Beatlemania arrived in the United States just three months later in February, 1964.

### Standards: Activities in this lesson can be used to address –

- Common Core Anchor Standards: Speaking and Listening
  - o **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2** Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
  - o **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.3** Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.
  - o **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.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.
  - o **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.5** Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations
  
- Common Core Anchor Standards: Writing
  - o **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.1** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.



**Focus Question:**

- What was Beatlemania?

**Materials:**

- Handout 1: Oral History Question Brainstorm
- Digital recording device

**Procedures:**

**1. Warm Up/Brain storm**

Ask students to describe the most important event they remember during their life time.

What do they remember about the event?

Where were they when the event happened?

How did they respond at the time? To whom did they speak about the event?

How is that event remembered today, if at all? Why?

Have students share their memories with a partner. Partners should ask follow up questions, getting the presenter to explain their memory in greater detail.

Debrief as a class:

What events do people remember?

Describe what you remember about the day of the event.

How did that event impact your life thus far?

**2. Overview/Framing (can be shared with class)**

We are going to investigate how people remember one of the most important musical events of the 1960s – the arrival of The Beatles in America. Beatlemania is described as only being fully comprehensible to those who experienced it first-hand. Your job is to find those people and hear what they have to say!

**3. Show students “Kids React to The Beatles” (YouTube video)**

To give students a sense of how people react to The Beatles, and how The Beatles impacted people's lives, show them a short episode of “Kids React To...” - an internet video series where students watch and respond to a variety of topics; their reactions



*Ladies and Gentlemen...The Beatles!*

are recorded.

Assign each student a different person in the “Kids React” video to follow:

Troy, age 12  
Morgan, 8  
Olivia, 12  
Maxim, 6  
Emma, 7  
Elle, 11  
Sydney, 13  
Paris, 12  
Seth, 14  
Darius, 13  
Bryson, 14  
Mikaela, 13

- a. As they watch the film, students should keep track of how their “character” reacts to The Beatles. What emotions are shown? Do they like The Beatles? Where did they first learn about The Beatles? What other reactions do the “characters” have?
- i. VIDEO: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9US-cXJMo>
- Have students share out the range of responses in the video.
  - Do your students find the reactions surprising?
  - How do your students feel about The Beatles?

#### 4. Transition *(to be shared with students)*

“Beatlemania has assumed heroic significance in the memories of the hundreds of thousands of Americans who experienced it. As one of them said, “Other than the birth of my children, it was the single most important highlight of my life.” Fifty years later the fans have not forgotten the exhilaration of Beatlemania: “It’s like it happened yesterday,” and “I’ll never forget that as long as I live.” As with the other monumental events of the 1960s, a person who lived through Beatlemania can say, “[I remember] exactly where I was the first time I heard “I want to hold your hand.”...For the people who experienced Beatlemania, it remains a treasured memory.” (Millard, 1999)

Who do you know who experienced Beatlemania? What do they remember? How did it affect them at the time? How does it impact their lives today?

Possible resources to support student oral history interviews:



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- <http://www.parkcityhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Oral-History-Lesson-Handouts.pdf> (graphic organizer)
- <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/oral-history/> (explanation of oral history as a tool of the historian) – can be used for a mini lesson on evaluating source reliability

## 5. Interview Brainstorm

Students should complete the interview brainstorm sheet, preparing questions for their interviews.

Have students sit in groups, rotating their completed brainstorm sheets to solicit feedback: Do the questions make sense? What questions would their peers add? What questions would you delete? Other peer feedback?



**The “Ladies and Gentlemen...The Beatles” exhibit will feature a booth where visitors can share and record their own memories of Beatlemania. They will be prompted to answer the following questions:**

1. Describe the first time you heard The Beatles. When was it?
2. How old were you? Where were you? What was the circumstance? Be as specific as possible.
3. If you are old enough to recall Beatlemania, describe how the phenomenon personally affected you in the 1960s. Please be specific.
4. If you were fortunate enough to have seen The Beatles in concert, please describe the experience. What concert did you attend, and when? Be specific.
5. What do you consider to be the greatest Beatles recording, and why?
6. If you are under thirty years of age, describe what The Beatles mean to you and your generation.

**You should feel free to use some/all of these questions in your own interviews.**

## 6. The Interviews

Once students have finalized their question list and determined their interviewees, have students record their interviews using a digital recorder.

*Be sure to have students complete release forms from interviewees, granting permission to use the interviews in a school project and, if applicable, sending them to the GRAMMY Museum as part of the digital archive (see note below).*

**NOTE: The “Ladies and Gentlemen...The Beatles” exhibit will feature a booth where visitors can share and record their own memories of Beatlemania.** Final interview recording can be emailed to [education@grammymuseum.org](mailto:education@grammymuseum.org) to be included in the digital archive of the GRAMMY museum exhibit.



## 6. Assessments Suggestions

### **Essay Writing:**

Using evidence from the oral histories, and outside research as necessary, have students write an essay explaining the impact of Beatlemania on the fans. How do these interviews prove or disprove the sentiments in the quote at the start of this lesson write up (that Beatlemania was the most important event of the person's life)

### **Publishing**

Using your preferred publishing tool, have students create a visual representation of the interview, pairing segments of the interview with images and footage. Students should share their presentations with peers. How do the reactions from the interviews compare to the reactions in “Kids React to The Beatles?”

## Handout 1: ORAL HISTORY: BRAINSTORM HANDOUT

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person you are interviewing: \_\_\_\_\_

How do you know this person?

Why do you think this is a good person to interview about Beatlemania?

### Categories of question (with samples)

#### 1. Demographic questions

- a. How old was the person?
- b. Where did they live?
- c. Where did they go to school? What grade were they in?

#### 2. Experience questions

- a. What is his or her earliest memory of The Beatles?
- b. Who introduced them to The Beatles?
- c. What records did they buy? Other Beatles merchandise?
- d. Personal stories about listening to their music, film, TV appearances, concerts, etc.
- e. How did their family/friends react to The Beatles?

#### 3. Impact Questions

- a. How did The Beatles impact their lives at school/work/home?



*Ladies and Gentlemen...The Beatles!*

- b. What impact does the music have on their lives today?
- c. How did they react to The Beatles' changing style and ultimate breakup?

**Handout 1: ORAL HISTORY: BRAINSTORM HANDOUT**

**Interview Question Brainstorm**

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**PEER FEEDBACK**

