

Goodbye, Beatlemania. Hello, Recording Studio

"In just three short years, The Beatles had gone from long-haired rebels to international idols, cutting across age groups and cultures. Fans and critics wondered where they could go from here. Would they rock harder, louder, or perhaps looser? It was anyone's guess. No one imagined the actual outcome. Because in time, The Beatles got weird – very weird."

(Spitz, Bob. *Yeah! yeah! yeah! The Beatles, Beatlemania, and the Music That Changed the World* - Little, Brown, and Company, NY, NY - 2007)

Rationale: The Beatles' final American tour came in 1966. They had all grown up and so had their vision of the music they wanted to create. Tired of maintaining the persona of mop-topped, teenaged heartthrobs, frustrated that the screaming fans prevented anyone – including the band members themselves – from hearing the music, and dogged with controversy from international appearances, John's comment about Jesus and fallout from the infamous "Butcher cover," The Beatles left the road and moved into the recording studio. And while this change brought an end to Beatlemania, it started a whole new era of more mature, more innovative, more exploratory, more experimental Beatles music.

Standards: Activities in the lesson can be used to address –

- Common Core Anchor Statements for Reading

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7](#) Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9](#) Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

- Common Core Anchor Statements for Writing

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2](#) Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.3](#) Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.



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- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.7](#) Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8](#) Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

Framing Questions:

- How did Beatlemania end?
- What milestones did The Beatles accomplish in the recording studio?

Handouts

Handout 1: The Final Tour

Handout 2: The Final Years

Handout 3: Bigger Than Jesus

Handout 4: The Butcher Cover

Procedures

Opener / Brainstorm

- a. Imagine you were one of The Beatles during Beatlemania. Write a journal entry expressing how you feel about this time of your life (Remember, The Beatles were between the ages of 20 and 23 when *Meet the Beatles* was released in America.) What aspects of Beatlemania might you have enjoyed? What might you have found difficult? What do you think the next step would be for you and the other Beatles? Use evidence from past lessons to support your predictions.
- b. Share responses as a class – What next steps do students foresee for The Beatles? What reasons do they provide?

Framing (to be shared with students)

The Beatles' touring days may have come to an end in August 1966, but John



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Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr were at their creative peak as they retreated into the recording studio to produce their most innovative work to date.

But why did The Beatles leave the road?

And what were they able to accomplish from inside the recording studio?

Why did The Beatles leave the road?

Distribute the handout readings (#1-4) to the class. Based on their reading, have students respond to the following prompts:

- Why did The Beatles stop touring in 1966?
- To what extent does this reason confirm your thoughts from the opener, change your thoughts, or add to your thoughts?

Handout 1: The Final Tour

Handout 2: The Final Years

Handout 3: Bigger Than Jesus

Handout 4: The Butcher Cover

(Note: Teachers should add additional readings to these topics, and encourage students to further explore each topic. The readings provided are meant to serve as an introduction.)

Research / Extension opportunity: The decision to stop touring was not only a result of The Beatles' experience in America. How did their experiences in Japan and the Philippines impact The Beatles' decision to stop touring? What happened in those two countries? How did it impact The Beatles?

Beatles Milestones

The Beatles produced a myriad of milestones from inside the recording studio. New sounds, new musical innovations and new art defined the years after Beatlemania (as did increased drug use, tension within the band, and legal and financial dilemmas.) Below are four types of Beatles innovations. Give



students one type of innovation to investigate. Have students create their own museum exhibit explaining their innovation. The exhibit should include images, "artifacts," background music and corresponding text. Students should assume the roles of curator (finds the artifacts), copy writer (writes corresponding text), and docent (gives tour of the exhibit.) *Note: Some of the groups are given framing text – use this framing as a form of differentiation.*

Group 1: The Concept Album – Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band

According to the liner notes from the 1987 CD release of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, the album took approximately 700 hours to record over 129 days (as compared to the 585 minutes it took to record The Beatles' first album.)

- What is a concept album?
- What made this album an innovation? How is it different from a record produced before 1966? What made this album unique and a trendsetter?
- What inspired the creation of this album?
- Lyrics analysis -- What do the lyrics to the song *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* tell us about the theme of the album? Choose specific lines/features from the song to support your analysis.

Group 2: Album cover art – Revolver

The Beatles set new artistic standards for themselves and for rock in general with the album *Revolver*. Released in August 1966, *Revolver* revealed The Beatles' increasing fascination with strings, new sonic textures, tape loops, and the use of the recording studio as almost an instrument itself. A masterpiece by any measure, everything about the album seemed at the time fresh and remarkably original, even the psychedelic-inspired, photo-collage cover, which was created by Klaus Voormann, an artist friend of The Beatles from their Hamburg days.

Revolver also demonstrated George Harrison's growing stature as a songwriter in the band. Although most music historians point to John Lennon's "Tomorrow Never Knows" as the album's flagship track, Harrison contributed three seminal songs to *Revolver*: the delightfully acidic opener "Taxman," "Love You Too" with its Indian music inspiration and sitar, and "I Want To Tell You."

Revolver was the precursor to *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, an even more wildly imaginative recording effort that many consider the greatest rock album of all time. Together, these two albums mark the pinnacle of The Beatles' artistic achievements in the recording studio.

- Find a copy of the *Revolver* album cover. What is on it?
- What made the album an innovation? How is it different from albums and their covers made before 1966?
- How did critics respond to this album?



Group 3: Promotion videos – “Paperback Writer”

“Paperback Writer” was released as a single – but The Beatles had already stopped touring. How would the band announce their new release? How could they capitalize on their international fame?

What made the release of “Paperback Writer” an innovation? How is it different from how songs released before 1966?

Group 4: Mythical proportions – *Abbey Road*

This was The Beatles' last recorded album (not the last released; *Let It Be* was released after *Abbey Road*, but *Abbey Road* was the last recorded.) Its cover is considered one of the most iconic, and most imitated, images from The Beatles' history.

- What is the story behind the cover?
- What myths did the album ignite? What “evidence” from the cover contributed to the myths?
- How did The Beatles respond to the myths?

LESSON EXTENSIONS: The legacies of Beatlemania

These are free-standing activities that speak to the legacy that The Beatles and Beatlemania left on music and popular culture.

Legacy Scavenger Hunt

Conduct a legacy scavenger hunt with your students. Ask students to find as many legacies of The Beatles in modern culture as possible. This might be parodies of songs or album cover art, guest appearances, Beatles music for a new generation, references -- or even well-defended explanations for how modern music was inspired by The Beatles (students might discover that George Harrison played with Eric Clapton, or that Ringo Starr's son became the drummer for The Who...or that Michael Jackson purchased the publishing rights to The Beatles music in the 1980s...)

A,B,C Scavenger Hunt

Provide students with Internet access and ask them to find an example of Beatles legacies corresponding to each letter of the Alphabet (for example, **A**: Abbey Road album cover art parody; **B**: Beatles on *Sesame Street*; etc.) Award students points for each letter where they find a unique example of Beatles legacy. If more than one student gives the same example, no points are awarded.

The Charts

How many Beatles songs placed on the music charts? And for how long, combined, did these songs stay on the charts? Compare the difference in popularity between the British charts and the American charts. Which song reached the highest position on the charts? Which was the most covered?

More than Music

While it is true that The Beatles did not invent Rock and Roll, they certainly redefined it. The legacy left by The Beatles is greater than the sum of their



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songs. How did their style, their artistic innovations, and their stardom change the course of music history?

- Use interviews from musicians, critics, historians, and from The Beatles themselves to answer these questions.



Songs with a story.

Some of the songs on The Beatles' first albums were actually covers of other bands. Listen to the original version and The Beatles' cover. What seems to be different? Why did The Beatles' choose to cover these songs? What did The Beatles' adding to these old favorites?

RECOMMENDED SONG LIST

- "Roll Over Beethoven"
- "Till There Was You"
- "Twist and Shout"
- "Long Tall Sally"
- "Please Mr. Postman"

While The Beatles' music began with teenage, Rock and Roll lyrics – with fans believing at times that the band was sending directly to them – some of the songs hold deeper meanings, and their lyrics tell us a little about specific events, feelings and moments from Beatles history.

- Find the lyrics to one of the following songs.
- Based on the lyrics, what do you think this song is about? Use specific lines to support your analysis.
- Find an explanation of the song. Choose a line(s) from the lyrics that best supports the "real" story behind the music.

- *EXAMPLE:* "The Ballad of John and Yoko"
 - o This video is a great example of lyrics analysis. Use it as a model for how to find the meaning behind the song of your choice: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obEtgWkksU4>

POTENTIAL SONG LIST

- "Taxman"
- "Blackbird"
- "Hey, Jude"
- "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds"
- "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band"
- "Magical Mystery Tour"
- Students/teachers – add your own!



READING #1: The Beatles: Final Tour

The Beatles' third tour of the U.S. was their last. The shows across America sold out and the fans still screamed. But in the summer of 1966, the rock concert was being transformed into a colorful counterculture statement, and The Beatles' shows that summer were not really a part of it.

In San Francisco, where The Beatles would do their final performance at Candlestick Park, acid rock hippie bands like the Grateful Dead, Quicksilver Messenger Service, and Jefferson Airplane were performing for free in the city's parks and played music that encouraged people to experience the music cerebrally, as much as physically.

The Beatles had also grown tired of the tour grind. Playing stadiums and large halls were a far cry from the Cavern (in England) or Hamburg (in Germany) clubs where they began and intimately connected to their audiences. Finally, the group felt far more at home in the recording studio than on the stage. In the studio, The Beatles could actually hear themselves play and could spend the time experimenting with new sounds and sonic ideas that were impossible to reproduce onstage.



READING #2: The Beatles: Final Years

In the twelve months after their final show in San Francisco, The Beatles released their most influential and, arguably, greatest album, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, and perhaps the greatest two-sided rock single of all time: "Strawberry Fields Forever/"Penny Lane." Together, these memorable works demonstrated The Beatles' unprecedented evolution as songwriters and recording artists.

Other Beatles albums followed *Sgt. Pepper*, and other bands, both British and American, created their own masterworks, deeply inspired by what they heard from The Beatles. Many music historians credit the late '60s as rock's creative apex. Pink Floyd, Cream, the Rolling Stones, the Who, and Led Zeppelin prompted a second British Invasion of America, once again, with The Beatles at the vanguard. American bands and artists responded with their own brand of Beatles-influenced rock.

The Beatles continued to make great music and profoundly influence international pop sounds and culture until the band announced its break-up in April 1970. Citing "Beatles burn-out" and unresolvable creative differences, The Beatles, like the 1960s, the decade they so dramatically affected, were no more, causing a chasm in rock music that was never truly filled.



READING #3: The Beatles: Bigger Than Jesus?

Beatlemania's biggest smear occurred in America in July 1966. That month *Datebook* magazine published an excerpt of an interview John Lennon had given to London's *Evening Standard* newspaper the previous March. In it, Lennon talked about religion and how big The Beatles had become.

"Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink," remarked Lennon. "I needn't argue about that; I'm right and will be proved right. We're more popular than Jesus now. I don't know which will go first, Rock & Roll or Christianity. Jesus was alright, but his disciples were thick and ordinary. It's them that ruin it for me."

Lennon's observation caused a major uproar, especially in the American South. Bonfires burned with Beatles records. Conservative radio stations called for Beatle boycotts. The Ku Klux Klan spewed anti-Beatles venom. With The Beatles' tour of America starting the next day, John Lennon explained his statement at a Chicago press conference and indirectly apologized. "I just said what I said and it was wrong, or it was taken wrong, and now it's all this."



READING #4: The Beatles: *Yesterday and Today*, the “Butcher” Album Cover

The Beatles released their album *Yesterday and Today* in June 1966, less than two months prior to the start of the group’s final U.S. tour. While the music was eagerly embraced, the album cover wasn’t. The photo showed The Beatles dressed in butcher smocks draped with pieces of raw meat and body parts from plastic baby dolls. The photo was taken by Robert Whitaker and was one of a series of photographs done for a conceptual art piece called *Somnambulant Adventure*. The Beatles liked the idea of using it as their new album cover because it was such a drastic departure from their previous album covers.

Some 750,000 copies of *Yesterday and Today* were printed with the “butcher” cover and sent to distributors for Capitol Records. Advance copies were sent to disc jockeys and record reviewers. The album was available for sale for only one day before the backlash began. Those who found fault with Whitaker’s cover shot called it “shocking” and “disturbing.”

Yesterday and Today was immediately recalled and shipped back to Capitol Records. While some of the jackets were destroyed, Capitol decided as a cost-cutting move to salvage the remaining covers by pasting a new, less offensive image on top of the controversial photo. Still, some original “butcher” cover versions of *Yesterday and Today* had gotten into the hands of fans. It soon became one of the most collectible and desired pieces of Beatles memorabilia.

