

STUDY GUIDE: Damien Sneed, Idania Valencia, and Thai Long Ly

This study guide is to support virtual classes for students and teachers based on the new movie *Respect* about the life of Aretha Franklin. This discussion guide is intended for grades 6-12.

Overview and Learning Objectives

In this Masterclass, Damien Sneed, multi-genre artist and arts educator, re-counts the pathways he took to enter the music industry. Sneed not only shares his success story but also highlights specific skills that contribute to his success. Sneed stresses the importance of education when trying to build and sustain a career.

Idania Valencia (mastering engineer) and Thai Long Ly (mixing engineer) discuss how music expertise extends beyond songwriting. The two will explain the difference between mixing and mastering a sound recording and the technical and creative processes applied in each.

Learning Objectives

Although this Masterclass is rich with multiple themes, the lessons focus on three specific areas:

- 21st Century Skills: written and oral communication, problem-solving, collaboration, critical thinking, teamwork, financial literacy, goal-setting, effective use of technology, adaptability, and resilience.
- Diversity: language, culture, customs, kinds of music, communication, and sense of belonging.
- Self-awareness: knowledge of beliefs, biases, dealing with discomfort, motivation, self-determination, self-confidence, and self-discipline.

Essential Questions for Reflection Critical Thinking

Damien Sneed offers a simple roadmap that highlights the importance of communication, collaboration, community, and a sense of belonging, regardless of different locations, languages, music genres, performers, settings, or responsibilities.

- How does one respond to differences, and what are our personal beliefs surrounding diversity? Predict how beliefs impact future success.
- In what ways does music build community regardless of difference?

Suggested Student Activities

Student expectations related to diversity. The student will

- A. Identify ways in which the school or classes are diverse.
- B. Examine ways to communicate and collaborate with students and adults with diverse backgrounds.

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- C. Looking ahead, what skills do best prepare one for success in a diverse society? Refer to examples in Mr. Sneed's interview, if needed.
- D. In what ways does participation in music (in and out of school) prepare one for success?

Student expectations related to self-awareness: The student will

- A. Write a self-reflection paper about your beliefs and knowledge about diversity and community. Include one new thing you learned about yourself. (Journal writing)
- B. Explain the importance of goal-setting and persistence as life-long skills. (MS-HS)
- C. Reflect upon ways to strengthen your career skills (MS)
- D. In your own words, what can you do to collaborate, communicate, and build community in diverse learning and potential work settings?

Student expectations related to careers in music: The students will

- A. Discuss and explore the essential elements of songwriting. (central idea, structure/form, melodic idea, supporting harmony, lyrics)
- B. Analyze the differences and similarities in jazz, bebop, and gospel piano.
- C. Explain how and why cultural and social expression influences musical performance and audience response.
- D. Explain how language and culture inform sound and rhythm.

Collaborative Projects

Research Project

Students may include oral, written, and visual presentation. In addition, students should primary and secondary sources. This project may include guest artists, interviews, podcasts, and student-created films.

- Jazz pianist/gospel pianist
- Classical pianist/ accompanist
- Gospel music vocalist
- Classical vocal artist/Background vocalist
- Composer (instrumental)/songwriter (vocalist)
- Music arranger
- Music conductor
- Music producer
- Music/artistic consultant
- Music business manager
- University music teacher
- Rhythm and Blues/Gospel Music
- Jazz and Bebop

Listening Lab

Highly recommend that the instructor preview all samples, websites, etc. for grade appropriateness prior to assigning this activity.

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- In small groups, students listen to various before and after mastering samples and discuss the differences between the original and master recordings.

Songwriting

- Compose an 8-16-32 bar melody.
- Record melody using a notation software. (i.e., Sibelius, Finale, Audacity)
- Explore ways to build upon the melody. (i.e., adding harmony, rhythm beats, loops, instrumentation, and tempo)

Jingle Writing

- Choose a product/store or other major idea concepts.
- Create a storyboard to outline the sequence of components in the commercial.
- Write a melodic idea to accompany the storyboard. Duration: 5 to 25 seconds
- Explain the creative process to peers or experienced mentors for feedback.

Improvisation

- Given a familiar melody, improvise the melody using a pentatonic scale. Use an instrument of your choice.
- Record the finished product for peer feedback.

Independent Projects

Diversity in Music

Students may use recordings, art, and film presentations.

- Using a musical collage, demonstrate how culture and social expression influence musical performance.
- Using a soundscape (sampler), demonstrate how language, rhythm, and tone connect.
- Discuss how an audio engineer relies on culture and social expression to inform their creative decisions.

Self-awareness

Students may use journals, storyboards, posters, structured interviews, podcasts, and blogs.

- Write a personal narrative about your talents and interests. Please describe what you were doing when you recognized your talent. Discuss challenges related to your talent and how you address them. Share how to continue to hone your skills.
- How do you see yourself using your talent in the future?

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Resources

[Careers in music](#) (2021)

[College & Career Readiness & Success Center @ American Institutes for Research](#) (2014)

[21st Century Skills](#) (2019)

[National Association of Colleges and Employers](#) (2019)

[Trade Schools Colleges and Universities](#) (2021)

[Audio mastering](#)

- <https://www.sageaudio.com/samples.php#jazz>
- <https://www.sageaudio.com/samples.php#soundtrack>
- [Audio mixing and mastering](#)

Key Terms

music genre, diversity, culture, self-awareness, improvisation, pentatonic scale, rhythm, tone, rhythm and blues, compression, EQ, mixer, jingle, and storyboard

Key Takeaway:

“Everything I learn prepares me for the future and opportunities for success.”

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