

Lesson Plan 2 - Umm Kulthum's Style and Artistic Excellence



Essential Questions:

- What habits and attributes make a person, especially an artist, successful?
- How can a figure from a different time and place be relevant to our lives today?
- What are major similarities and differences between Arab culture and “western” culture?

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Compare and contrast Umm Kulthum's style to that of a contemporary musical artist
- Analyze primary sources to identify the qualities that made Umm Kulthum a famous musical artist

Standards Alignment:

- Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading
 - RL 3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
- Common Core Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies
 - RH 1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
 - RH 2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
 - RH 6. Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose
 - RH 7. Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Materials:

- “Visual Inquiry” handout (or projector with image)
- Source Analysis handout
- “Baeed Anak” / “Away from Me” video clip:
 - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjziPpZG_cw

Procedure (suggested time):

Opening/Hook/Activate Prior Knowledge/Do Now: (7)

As students come in, they should write their answer in a journal or on other paper to the prompt you have written on the board:

Who is one of your favorite musical artists? Why? Why do you think this person was able to become famous?

After students have written for five minutes, ask volunteers to share. Probe for further answers about why they became famous: do you think they have more talent than others? What kind of talent do they have? Is it about luck and connections, or do you think they are really better than any others? Are people attracted to their style or their voice or their lyrics or some other attribute?

Visual Inquiry Activity: Introduction to Umm Kulthum (10)

Introduce Umm Kulthum, explaining that she was a famous musician from Egypt. After reviewing the objectives, present students with two images of Umm Kulthum, showing her performing at different time periods. Either project the images or provide them as handouts. In pairs, ask students to examine the images and complete Part I on their handout (see below). After about seven minutes, ask pairs to share adjectives and comparisons.

Inquiry Activity: Introduction to Umm Kulthum, audio (optional) (10)

Based on these images, ask students to predict what she sounds like. How will her voice sound? Will it be low or high? Will she sing fast or slow, heavy or light?

Tell students they will now listen and watch a clip of Kulthum performing: As they listen, they should write down five adjectives that describe her voice. As or after students listen, they should complete Part II on their handout (see below).

Inquiry Activity: Introduction to Umm Kulthum, fans and contemporaries (20)

Option #1: Give pairs of students one of the sources below. Have them complete the chart provided for their one source. When students are done, ask them to circulate and ask students with other sources to describe them, using what they learn to complete the chart for each other source.

Option #2: Give pairs all six sources and have them work together to read each and complete the chart.

Closing: Synthesis through writing (10)

Ask students to respond to the following prompt, based on what they have learned so far about Umm Kulthum:

Imagine you have to describe Umm Kulthum to a person from the United States who has never heard of her before. Explain why she was an accomplished and famous musician. Also explain what makes her both different from and similar to modern musical artists from the United States. Use details from all the sources you examined to support your explanation.

Visual Inquiry



Source Analysis Handout

Source #1:

Youssef Kassab, a Syrian American vocalist, remembers seeing Umm Kulthum when she gave a concert in Damascus, Syria.

She was maybe 50. I was 16 at the time. My father took me, and I listened to Umm Kulthum. I saw her outside, with her chauffeur. He opened the door for her, I looked and she [was] wearing red. Even her socks were red. Shoes red, purse red. Like a queen! Umm Kulthum, she's number one to me.

Wharton, N. (2008) Umm Kulthum: The Voice of Egypt. *NPR Weekend Edition*. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=90326836&ps=rs>

Source #2:

Suheir Hammad, a Palestinian-American poet who grew up in Brooklyn, says she remains awed by Umm Kulthum's ability to juice lines and embellish language. She notes that while Umm Kulthum's songs were usually not religious, they all reflected a childhood spent praising God.

She was the original diva for us . . . There's something about the fact that, even when she's not saying Allah, she has said it so many times in her life that everything is inflected with the notion of Allah of the most high," Hammad says. "And so, whether she was talking about secular love, there was something there. It's like Sam Cooke's music for me: something about church and fellowship and Juma, Friday prayer.

Hammad, S. (2010) Umm Kulthum: 'The Lady' Of Cairo. *NPR Music*. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124612595>

Source #3:

Habeeb Salloum lives in Canada and writes about Arab culture and arts:

Tall, with pitch black hair, Umm Kalthum was striking and with her words and voice she could create a magical atmosphere and enchant her listeners as no other Arab singer in the past or at present has been able to do. She had a uniquely expressive tone which could make her listeners laugh or even bring them to tears. Standing a few feet away from the microphone in an evening gown studded with diamonds, she twisted and crumpled a flowing scarf in her hands, as her voice, sometimes husky and strained or leaping with pangs of love, would hit some impossible tones. At other times, her alto voice which stretched to soprano or tenor and was punctuated, decorated and echoed by her orchestra, touched cosmic depths and brought on a mixture of longing, wistfulness and unfulfilled dreams.

Salloum, H. (1995) Umm Kalthum: Legendary Songstress of the Arabs. *Al Mashriq*. Retrieved from <http://almashriq.hiof.no/egypt/700/780/umKoulthoum/aljadid-uk.html>

Source #4:

Zakariyya Ahmad, an Egyptian musician and composer, contemporary of Umm Kulthum:

By virtue of her memorization and reading of the Qur'an, she acquired experience that made her capable of giving to each word or each letter what was appropriate to correct pronunciation. From habit over the years, it became part of her nature, and her delivery of the letters was perfected to the point where her listener can clearly perceive every word she sings.

(Danielson, p. 143)

Source #5:

Al-Masrah, arts and culture magazine published in Egypt:

. . . the melodiousness of her voice, purity and clarity of articulation, excellence of delivery as well as the deep feeling for what she sings, for the most beautiful singing is that which moves the singer herself. And above all that she excels in her choice of poetry, ancient and modern, which is unparalleled in beauty of style and loftiness of imagery.

(Danielson, p. 53)

Source #6:

Riyad al-Sunbati, an Egyptian composer, contemporary of Umm Kulthum:

Sometimes we would sit in her glassed-in room, if it were winter, an entire day without food, water, telephone calls or visits. Umm Kulthum would spend the entire time rehearsing a single line! For Umm Kulthum does not sing ordinary songs or ordinary texts. . . . Days spent in this manner became weeks and then months producing a song.

(Danielson, p. 116)

Umm Kulthum: Entertainer Extraordinaire

At the height of her career, Umm Kulthum was a household name all over Egypt and the Middle East. She was known as “*Kuwwkab EL Sharq*”, literally the Star of the East. She was loved by Arabic speaking audiences all over the world.

So what made her so good? Is what made her so good the same thing that makes the musicians you love good? Use the sources provided to analyze what made this musician so successful and loved.

Part I: Images of Umm Kulthum

7 – 10 adjectives that describe Umm Kulthum’s style:	Two similarities and two differences to a musical artist you listen to today:
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Part II: Audio of Umm Kulthum

7 – 10 adjectives that describe Umm Kulthum’s sound:	Two similarities and two differences to a musical artist you listen to today:
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Part III: Voices of fans and contemporaries

Source's name	Relationship to Umm Kulthum	Qualities that make Umm Kulthum great

Synthesis through writing:

DIRECTIONS: Describe Umm Kulthum to a person from the United States who has never heard of her before. Explain why she was an accomplished and famous musician. Also explain what makes her both different from and similar to modern musical artists from the United States. Use details from all the sources you examined to support your explanation.