



Punk Rock Discussion Guide

Directions: Use the videos of Emerson, Lake & Palmer, the Clash, and the Sex Pistols you have already seen and additional materials in the document set to guide your discussion. If you are unsure about a particular question, move on to the next one. When you have completed your discussion, work as a group to complete the two sentences at the end of this handout.

MUSIC

1. “Virtuosity” is defined as having great technical skill. For which of the bands in the videos is virtuosity more important?
2. Which of the images in the document set indicate artists who are showcasing virtuosity? How can you tell?
3. Which of the images in the document set indicate artists who are not interested in virtuosity and have more of a “do-it-yourself” or “DIY” attitude? How can you tell?
4. Why do you think virtuosity was not important to them? Was it simply because they were not good musicians, or might there be other reasons? Could deliberately not playing like a virtuoso be seen as a reaction to a certain style of music?
5. According to Bono (Document 1), what was Punk Rock’s attitude toward virtuosity? Does he believe you need to be a virtuoso to make Rock and Roll?
6. Look at the track listings from two different albums (Document 2). What do you notice about the lengths of the songs? How does the length of the songs on the Clash’s 1977 album reflect what Bono is talking about?
7. Does the music created by the virtuosic artists convey the same message as the music performed by the other groups? How might their messages differ?

AUDIENCE

1. What do you notice about the performers’ interactions with the audience in the two videos? Is the audience involved? What distinguishes the audience from the performers?
2. How would you describe the different roles of the audience in Documents 3, 4, 5, and 6?
3. What does the speaker in Document 7 say about why he is attracted to Punk performances?
4. Who do you think was going to each of these performances? Would they have the same reasons for attending? For example, are they attending to be entertained, or to be an active participant in the creation of the music?

SOCIAL CONTEXT

1. According to the Graham Parker video and the information in Document 9, what was the outlook in Britain in the late 1970s? What are some of the specific words Parker uses to describe the general situation?
2. What do you imagine the situation of young people in particular in this period would have been? What words do you think would best describe their outlook on life?
3. Why might young people turn to music to express themselves in this type of situation? If you had been living in this situation, how might you have gone about expressing yourself through music, even if you didn’t have any money or musical training?

4. Do you think a young person living in this situation would have been more likely to attend a Stadium Rock concert or a Punk Rock show? Why? Do you think that one of the performances in the videos best represents the social and political events of the time? If so, which one and why?
5. What do you imagine the music you would have made in this situation would sound like? (Note the words Parker uses to describe two album titles from this period, which include the words “howling” and “anarchy.”)
6. Can Punk Rock be considered a form of protest music? If so, what were the people who created it and listened to it protesting?
7. How might Punk Rock have been empowering to young people in this time and place? Think about the role of the audience, the sound of the music, and the “DIY” attitude of Punk.

ALBUM COVERS

1. How are the two album covers in Document 10 different from the album covers in Document 11?
2. Which covers seem to better represent the idea of virtuosity? The idea of “DIY”? Why?
3. What message do you think the Sex Pistols and The Clash were trying to convey with these album covers? (Note: “Bollocks” is British slang with multiple meanings, but is generally taken to mean “nonsense” or “rubbish.”) Did they make them because they couldn’t afford professional artists to design their covers? What other reasons might there be?
4. Which album cover do you find more appealing, and why?
5. Look at the album covers in Document 12. Why do you think the Clash decided to use this idea for their 1979 album *London Calling*? What message do you think they were trying to convey about their music? About how they saw themselves fitting in to the history of Rock and Roll?

Complete the following sentences:

1. Punk Rock was a reaction against _____

2. The main message of Punk Rock was _____

