

Direct Lesson Outline

- I. Teacher will begin lesson by playing Madonna's "Vogue" and getting students energized
 - a. Teacher will prompt students to think about how they feel about the song: "This is a bop, right? You may think, 'there couldn't possibly be anything problematic behind such a great song!'"
 - b. Teacher will suggest that there may something more to this statement that will be explored momentarily
- II. Teacher will set up and then defy student expectations & provoke thought, first by asking students what images come to mind when they think about the word "ballroom" and will be prompted to give responses
 - a. For time, this may be cut down to just a few rapid-fire responses
 - b. Teacher will show a picture of a couple ballroom dancing and ask if that was what they envisioned
 - c. Teacher will show a picture of the ballroom scene/people voguing, and ask "how about this?"
- III. Teacher will give a brief bit of background history regarding the ballroom scene and community. Teacher will explain that:
 - a. Ballroom was born out of drag balls, which were crossdressing pageants for people of all genders and races, held at Harlem's Hamilton Lodge No. 710 as early as post-Civil War 1800s
 - b. As we move into the 20th century, the Ballroom scene increases with popularity, especially with inception of the Harlem Renaissance, in which the Black American community experiments with both cultural expression and gender expression and sexuality in ways they never have been able to before; these new cultural elements are infused into the drag balls
 - c. As growth in popularity occurred, scene forced to go underground b/c it was considered illegal & taboo: balls raided & contestants arrested for "lewd acts" as early as 1938
 - d. In spite of huge contribution of elements of Black culture to balls and notion of inclusivity promoted, Eurocentric beauty standard was preferred in drag balls, with white drag queens as main attraction, winning most pageants
 - e. In protest of discrimination against Black and Latinx contestants, trans woman of color Crystal LaBeija left drag ball scene and, by suggestion of Lottie LaBeija, promoted and held her own Ball exclusively for queer/trans Black & Latinx people (early 1970s)
 - f. From this, the first Ballroom "house" was established: the House of LaBeija, w/ Crystal as mother
 - g. As ballroom scene expanded, more and more houses (Corey, Dior, Wong, Dupree, Xtravaganza) rose up & competed with each other by throwing their own balls & walking categories

- h. Houses functioned “more like families than teams” and offered security & safe space for queer & trans Black & Latinx youth; normalizes queer concept of the chosen family
 - i. In drag balls, **Voguing** was form of dance that evolved from elements of break dancing; Paris Dupree said to have been flipping thru Vogue magazine, and brought poses to the ballroom, doing them to the beat
 - j. Served as non-violent way to “fight” and throw shade during competitions
 - k. As Black & Latinx queer culture grew and developed, so did voguing; an entire vernacular evolved from the balls: phrases like “tea,” “shade,” “werk,” “yaas queen”
 - l. In early 1990s, Madonna observed the Ballroom scene and was so eager to know about voguing that she begged Jose Gutierrez Xtravaganza to show her
 - m. From this event, Jose & 7 other male dancers, toured with Madonna on her Blond Ambition tour, & choreographed and danced in her “Vogue” music video; were later nominated for an MTV award for this
 - n. Release of Madonna’s vogue inspired rise in popularity of new voguing categories, such as New Way and Vogue Femme
 - i. Teacher will break to how tiktok displaying difference between Old Way, New Way, and Vogue Femme, emphasizing Vogue Femme is what appears in the “Vogue” music video and was made popular in the 90s Ball community by Madonna:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWT32Y182ls>
 - o. Gave many community members hope that their rich culture would finally get a spotlight, that their struggles would finally be recognized, and that their ways of life would be seen normalized, as Madonna was bringing ballroom into the mainstream like never before
- IV. Teacher will, if time, show clip from FX’s *Pose* solidifying sentiment of hope that was held by the Ball community early after the release of Madonna’s “Vogue”:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WCf0ZA1fhzc&t=38s>
- V. With students having this much information, teacher will ask students how they perceive the release of Madonna’s “Vogue” and its effect on the ballroom scene, as well as how they perceive the ballroom scene’s reception of the single
- a. “Do you perceive the increase in visibility provided by Madonna as a positive thing?”
 - b. Students will respond by jotting down ideas and justifications on their guided note-taking worksheet
- VI. Teacher will complete the secret “bait and switch” that has been set up from the beginning: “Well, what if I told you that...”
- a. Many members of ball community felt that, as the buzz around Madonna’s single died down, Madonna “stole” voguing, and established a greater cultural perception of voguing as “just a passing fad,” totally delegitimizing and discrediting queer people of color’s whole culture
 - b. One of the “Vogue” dancers became a waiter... others fell into homelessness and drug addiction, as Madonna’s career skyrocketed
 - i. Madonna is no longer in contact with any of them

- c. Many people in the ball community were frustrated with Madonna (a white woman), as she was making money off an entire culture which POC were previously persecuted for participating in; all as people in the ball community continued to suffer with issues of systematic racism, poverty
- VII. If time, teacher will provide quote solidifying frustration felt by the ballroom community: “Every generation thinks they’re going to be the ones that are finally invited to the party... it ain’t never gonna happen.” -Pray Tell, *Pose*
- VIII. Teacher will prompt students to once again provide their thoughts about Madonna’s “Vogue,” and will be asked to consider and respond to on their guided note-taking worksheets: Can art, or an artform, be “stolen?” If so, did Madonna participate in the cultural appropriation of the vogue dance form? Why or why not? Do you see the release of “Vogue” as a net win, or a net loss for the ballroom community? Why or why not?