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Pirates!
From the High Seas to High Tech:
The Great Debate Over Music Piracy

by
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Overview

This case study has been developed around the real world issue of “music piracy.” As the Internet spread in the 1990s, the ability to send vast amounts of data without regard to distance, borders, or copyright laws touched musicians and the music industry. New technology allowed music CDs to be uploaded by anybody onto the Internet and downloaded by anybody free of charge. Unknown musicians, not wishing to sit around waiting to be picked up by a record label, found the Internet to be a cheap and efficient way to get their music out to the public. Sites like MP3.COM provided a cyberstage for tens of thousands of unknown bands, attracting tens of millions of potential fans. Established musicians and record companies watched in horror. Not only did new technology cut into artists’ royalties by allowing CDs to be uploaded and spread by fans for free, but new technology threatened to destroy record companies, removing the need for a middle man between artists and their audience. Needless to say, unresolved ethical and legal issues abound.

This case study first introduces students to the concept of “piracy” through group research activities on famous historical pirates. Students prepare oral reports on famous pirates, covering not only their biographies but the historical and geographical contexts within which they lived. They then discuss the controversy surrounding the lives of many famous pirates and the ethics of their actions.

Following their work on the lives of famous pirates, students are introduced to the contemporary debate on “music piracy.” Specifically, students explore the debate over Napster, the wildly popular Internet site that millions of fans use to “swap” virtual CDs free of charge. Students learn the various arguments put forth by parties involved in the Great Napster Debate, from popular artists like Metallica, Dr. Dre, Chucky D, to the CEOs of record companies, to

fans, and to Napster itself. Working in groups, students research the various stakeholders' positions and prepare arguments for a mock senate panel that is convened to explore the Napster issue.

The case study concludes with an essay in which students take positions to argue whether or not Napster's activities constitute music "piracy." Students are asked to suggest possible solutions to the controversy, to include comparisons with the activities of historical pirates discussed in class, and to decide whether they think music fans who download free virtual CDs off Napster are themselves guilty of "piracy."

Tapping students' strong interest in music and the Internet, this case study invites students to think about the ethical, legal, and economic issues surrounding the unbridled free distribution of music. The case study allows students to research and debate an authentic issue that is likely to touch their lives, and to grapple with the issue just as real life musicians, fans, music companies, Internet companies, and lawmakers do.

Lesson 1: Famous Pirates

Purpose:

This lesson is an introduction to the concept of piracy. Students are introduced to the concept of piracy by engaging in traditional book based and Internet research on the lives of famous pirates. They prepare oral presentations to be delivered to the whole class, using provided questions to guide research and presentations. The lesson is intended to lay the groundwork for subsequent lessons dealing with the more difficult concept of music piracy, enabling students to explore the concrete piracy of physical property before moving on to the more abstract piracy of intellectual property. In addition, the lesson requires students to prepare reports primarily based on web research, serving as a warmup for more extensive web research in the lessons that follow.

Procedures:

1) Briefly ask the students what they know about pirates....any names, when and where they sailed, and why they did what they did. Ask students to define “pirate.”

2) Break the class up into groups of 2-3, and give students handouts #1 and #2. Explain that each group will use books and the Internet to research the life of one famous pirate. Assign a pirate to each group. Go over the questions provided in handout #1 intended to guide research. Point out web site URLs on handout #2. Emphasize that in addition to these web sites students can enter the names of pirates on google.com (or some other search engine) to find information. Explain that each group will be responsible for a three to five minute oral presentation with at least one visual aid.

3) Give oral presentations. Ask the class to listen for common themes in the presentations. Point out that high seas piracy still exists in some areas of the world.

4) Homework: Research and preparation as needed.

Famous Pirates

AAAAARRRGHHH! Welcome to the world of high seas plunder. Below is a list of famous pirates. Choose one and using the Internet and books prepare an oral presentation with pictures for the class. A list of possible websites is included, but more excellent websites can be had by typing in the name of your pirate at search engines like google.com. Ask your teacher for help. Failure to do so will be punished by a walk down the gang plank into shark infested water!

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|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1) Henry Avery | 9) Henry Morgan |
| 2) Samuel Bellamy | 10) Grace O'Malley |
| 3) Stede Bonnet | 11) Mary Read |
| 4) Anne Bonny | 12) Bartholomew Roberts |
| 5) Cheng I Sao | 13) Calico Jack Rackham |
| 6) Sir Francis Drake | 14) Mary Read |
| 7) William Kidd | 15) Edward Teach (Blackbeard) |
| 8) Jean Lafitte | 16) Thomas Tew |

Guide Questions:

- 1) When did your pirate live? Where was your pirate from?
- 2) What did your pirate do before becoming a pirate?
- 3) How did your pirate become a pirate? What motivated his or her actions? Do you sympathize with these reasons. Why?
- 4) What did your pirate do that made him/her famous?
- 5) Where and for how long was your pirate operating?
- 6) How was your pirate regarded in his/her day? Was your pirate feared? Respected? Beloved? Did different peoples have different opinions?
- 7) What do you think of your pirate? Do you approve his/her actions? Why?

Pirate Resources

Below are a list of websites and books that may be useful for pirate research. Typing in your pirate's name at search engines like google.com may turn up loads of additional treasures. If you are stumped, just ask your teacher. Happy hunting!

Websites:

www.powerup.com.au/~glen/pirate2.htm

Information on individual pirates.

www.piratesinfo.com/fact/famous.html

Pirate history, types of piracy, and individual pirates.

www.ability.org.uk/pirates.html

Extensive, detailed links to individual pirates and related sites.

www.pibburns.com/pirates.htm

Links to pirate related sites.

www.sonic.net/~press/#Notorious%20Pirates

Excellent links to pirates, pirate literature, and pirate pictures.

www.discover.net/~nqgiven/ports.htm

Extensive links to pirate related sites.

Books:

Pirates and Privateers of the Americas by David F. Marley

The Pirate's Who's Who by Philip Gosse

The History of Pirates by Angus Konstam

Blackbeard and Other Pirates of the Atlantic Coast by Nancy Roberts

Pirates in Petticoats by Cathy Johnson