

Lesson Plan

Creating Covers

Book: *Nina Simone*

Series: Black Voices on Race

Level: Navigator

Objective

To help students explore how musicians blend styles and influences to create covers of other people's songs.

Supplies

- *Nina Simone* book
- YouTube video of "Love Me or Leave Me" by Ruth Etting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5oqk1iCQVQ>
- YouTube video of Nina Simone performing her cover of "Love Me or Leave Me" on *The Ed Sullivan Show*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cnZjClf6zM>

Before the Activity

Read through the *Nina Simone* book, or assign it to students to read on their own.

Activity

Nina Simone wrote and performed music in many genres. She was a classically trained pianist. But she also played blues, jazz, pop, and folk music. In addition to writing her own songs, Simone sang covers. She often created jazz- or blues-inspired versions of other people's songs.

For example, "Love Me or Leave Me" was a song written in 1928 and recorded by Ruth Etting. Nina Simone created a jazz cover of this song. She also blended in elements of classical piano music.

Pull up your web browser and play the original version by Ruth Etting for students. Then, pull up the video of Simone performing "Love Me or Leave Me" on *The Ed Sullivan Show* and have students watch that version. Ask students the following questions:

- What did the two versions have in common? (Sample Answer: The song's tune stayed similar, as did many of the words.)
- How were the two versions different? (Sample Answers: The two versions used different chords and instruments. Simone's version had a long piano solo in the middle. Simone's version used only some of the original song's the words.)

Then, have students turn to a neighbor and discuss the following questions:

- Which version did you enjoy listening to more? What did you like about it?
- If you were going to create a cover, what song would you choose? What musical styles or influences would your version incorporate?

Evaluation

Could students compare and contrast the two versions of the song in the large group discussion? Could they discuss ideas with their partners?

Standards

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' speaking and listening standards, grade 4 (SL 4.1).