



Study Guide:

And Now I See: Race, Racism, and American Music

Ball in the House is an R&B/Pop/Soul a cappella group based out of the Boston area. A cappella is music made without any instruments. Everything is 100% vocal. The group has been around for over 20 years. The current group is Jonny, the beatboxer, Kevin, the bass, Oscar, the baritone, Tyler, the tenor, and Wallace, the high tenor.

A cappella has a long history, starting as a way for people to worship in the church through music at a time when instruments were not allowed. In fact, a cappella actually means “in the church/chapel” or “in the style of the church” in Italian, and originally referred to music used in those services, but today refers to any music made without instruments.

While unison singing, (everyone singing the same note) was great, eventually, more notes were added, and harmony (singing different notes at the same time) became more appealing. You can hear a cappella harmony in many different styles of music - from madrigals, spirituals, and gospel music to barbershop and doo wop. With the introduction of vocal percussion (or beatboxing), more rhythmic contemporary styles were possible a cappella. Today, you can hear a cappella that uses not just beatboxing, but effects, amplification, live looping, and all kinds of technology to enhance the sound. Those other older styles are still very present but contemporary a cappella is a global sensation that you can find on TV, on the radio, and in movies.

If you have any questions for us, email us at

bith@ballinthehouse.com

If you want to learn more about the band, and each member's schooling, music, and learning experiences:

<https://www.ballinthehouse.com/about>

[Ball in the House YouTube Channel](#)

Post-Show Discussion Questions

1. Were any of the stories of racism influencing a specific style of music or musician familiar to you? Did any of them shock you? Are there other stories of how racism influenced music, musicians, or other artists in general that you were aware of and can share?
2. A number of musicians were mentioned in the show who used their influence to help raise awareness of social issues and make positive social change. Are there any musicians that you're aware of who have used their voice and influence for good?
3. What are some of the reasons why enslaved Africans would often sing while they were forced to work on plantations?
4. Can you think of a song that uses Call & Response?
5. What are some features of African-American music? How do these differ from the European traditions?
6. Next time you hear a song, listen carefully to see if you can pick out what styles of music might have influenced the band and/or songwriter. What specific elements of those influencing styles can you hear in the song?
7. With the cover songs of the 1950s, what were some of the ways that record labels changed the recordings and artists to make them more appealing to white audiences?
8. What are your thoughts on Elvis Presley and his legacy as the King of Rock n Roll? Was he culturally appropriating African-American music or did his contributions actually help African-American musicians?
9. Can you think of a song that uses swing rhythm rather than straight rhythm?
10. What are some specific ways that you can celebrate African-American excellence in the arts, and the amazing influence of African-Americans on so many American styles of music?