

THE HITS [popular music]

THIS WEEK

Whether it is hip-hop, alternative, country, or rap, *music* is one word that defines youth culture today. It's become a medium targeted specifically at teenagers, who purchase over 125 million CDs a year*. But popular music—and the world it has created—has little or nothing to do with the home or church. Your high schoolers have already established listening habits. This TalkSheet has been designed to create a positive dialogue about popular, secular music between students and adult youth workers.

OPENER

Ask your group how music plays a role in everyday life. It's not just something people listen to. Where do your kids see music videos, hear music, or see music? Some of these include TV advertisements, radio commercials, movies, stores, billboards, and more. Discuss how music has invaded culture and what influences it has. For example, what would a movie be like without a soundtrack? What would commercials be without background music? Why do stores play music while you're shopping?

Have your kids make a list of all their favorite music groups and performers. Write these down on a master list. How have the kids tell you what genre of music these are—Pop? Rock? Alternative? Swing? Jazz? Techno? Country? Christian? Point out to your group that today there isn't as clear of a line as there used to be between popular music and Christian music. Christian artists have crossed over mainstream, while mainstream bands have Christian musicians in them. What groups do your kids know that have Christian members?

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. How do kids feel about their parents and music? Are their parents strict? Nosy? Uninterested? How does this affect kids and the music they listen to? What do their parents think is the effect of their attitudes toward their kids' music?
2. Where do your kids stand? Most don't think that their music affects them in negative ways. But it does. Point out how music has had an adverse effect on its listeners. Then make a list of positive things about music as well as negative.
3. You may want to ask your kids to pick five or six statements they would like to discuss. You may also want to question what messages secular music sends.

4. Encourage your kids to let their parents into their world—that includes their CDs and radio stations. Discuss all the objections students might have about talking with their parents about music. What objections might parents have to talking with their kids about music?
5. Encourage your kids to be discerning with the music they listen to. You may want to ask students to bring specific songs to play, so they can discuss as a group how each should be rated.
6. Discuss how music influences the students—how does music influence immorality, sexual behaviors, involvement in drugs and alcohol, abuse, and more? Remind them that Satan is trying to have an impact on them and do anything to get into their lives, even if it's the music they're listening to.

THE CLOSE

Point out that listening to popular music isn't bad. But some of the music is bad—the violent content, sexual themes, and other messages aren't good. Be careful not to slam your kids with Bible verses or bash their favorite music groups. Instead, focus on your kids' responsibility to choose wisely the kinds of music they listen to, and to be discerning. Challenge your kids to choose songs that can keep their faith focused on Jesus and not worldly values.

MORE

- Brainstorm the values that most mainstream songs deal with. What are the themes that most talk about? They include love, drug abuse, violence, romance, suicide, and more. Make a list, then ask your kids to guess what percentage of the music they listen to deals with these topics. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the most applicable), how well does the music they listen to apply to their lives? Do they share the same values and morals that the musicians do? Why or why not? What influence do your kids think this has on them?
- Check out *Plugged In* magazine at www.family.org/pplace/pi/ (Focus on the Family) for the latest trends in music, TV, and movies. Also, check out www.YouthSpecialties.com for information and links to finding discussion topics and latest news on teen culture.

* Teen Fact Book 2000, Channel One Network: New York, Los Angeles, Chicago. Used by permission.