

Y8 C3 Reggae & Rhythm - Exploring Reggae and Syncopation



A. How did Reggae develop?

REGGAE is one of the traditional musical styles from **JAMAICA**. It developed from :

REGGAE

MENTO

A form of Jamaican **FOLK MUSIC** like **CALYPSO** popular in the 1950's.

SKA

Fast dance music that emerged in the 1950's fusing American R&B with **MENTO** rhythms and featuring **ELECTRIC GUITARS, JAZZY HORN SECTIONS** and characteristic **OFFBEAT RHYTHMS**.

ROCK STEADY

A more vocal style of dance music which used **RIFFS, SIMPLE HARMONIES, OFFBEAT RHYTHMS** and a strong **BASS LINE**.

Reggae was first heard in the UK in the 1950's when immigrants began to settle. During the 1960's, people began importing singles from Jamaica to sell in UK shops. Now, Reggae is known as the national music of Jamaica.

C. BASS CLEF

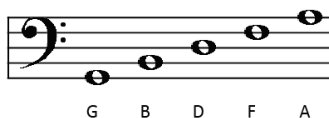
BASS CLEF is a symbol used to show **low**-pitched notes on the stave. It is often used by low instruments that play the **BASS LINE**

STAVE - five lines where musical notes are written. The position of notes on the stave or staff shows their **PITCH** (how high or low a note is).

Notes on the **LINES** of the **BASS CLEF**: **G, B, D, F, A**

Notes in the **SPACES** of the **BASS CLEF**: **A, C, E, G**

Green Buses Drive Fast Always



All Cows Eat Grass



Bass Clef **STAFF NOTATION**:



B. Where is Jamaica?

BOB MARLEY was a famous reggae singer, **SONGWRITER**, and musician who first became famous in his band The Wailers, and later as a **SOLO ARTIST**. He was born Nesta Robert Marley on February 6th, 1945 in Nine Mile, Saint Ann, Jamaica. Although he grew up in poverty, he surrounded himself with music and met some of the future members of The Wailers. Bob Marley became involved in the Rastafarian movement and this influenced his music style greatly. Bob Marley and The Wailers worked with several famous musicians before becoming famous on their own. His career flourished and he became a cultural icon. He was the first international superstar to have been born in poverty in a Third-World country.



D. WHAT ARE REGGAE SONGS ABOUT?

Reggae is closely associated with **RASTAFARIANISM** (a religious movement worshipping Haile Selassie as the Messiah and that black people are the chosen people and will eventually return to their African homeland). The **LYRICS** of Reggae songs are strongly influenced by Rastafarianism and are often political including themes such as **LOVE, BROTHERHOOD, PEACE, POVERTY, ANTI-RACISM, OPTIMISM** and **FREEDOM**.

JAMAICA is an Island in the Caribbean



E. Offbeat Rhythms & Syncopation

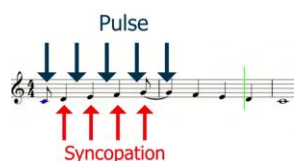
OFFBEAT RHYTHMS – Rhythms that emphasise or stress the **WEAK BEATS OF A BAR**. In music that is in 4/4 time, the first beat of the bar is the strongest, the third the next strongest and the second and fourth are weaker. Stressing the second and fourth beats of the bar gives a “missing beat feel” to the rhythm and makes the music sound **OFFBEAT**, often emphasised by the **BASS DRUM** or a **RIM SHOT** (hitting the edge of a **SNARE DRUM**) in much Reggae music.

ONBEAT RHYTHM GRID

Pulse/ Beat	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
“Onbeat” rhythms (strong beats)	♩	♩	♩	♩	♩	♩	♩	♩

OFFBEAT RHYTHM GRID

Pulse/ Beat	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
“Offbeat” rhythms (weak beats)	♩	♩	♩	♩	♩	♩	♩	♩

**SYNCOPIATION**

– A way of changing a rhythm by making some notes a bit

early, often so they cross over the main beat of the music giving the music a further

OFFBEAT feel – another common feature of Reggae music.

F. Musical Features of Reggae

OFFBEAT RHYTHMS AND CHORDS (see E)

SYNCOPIATED RHYTHMS AND MELODIES (see E)

SUNG LYRICS (see D)

LEAD SINGER often with **BACKING SINGERS** sometimes singing in **CALL AND RESPONSE** (see G3) accompanied by a Reggae band which often features: **BRASS INSTRUMENTS** and **SAXOPHONES, ELECTRIC GUITARS, BASS GUITAR, KEYBOARDS, DRUMS AND PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTS**.

VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL IMPROVISATIONS (see G2)

MELODIC RIFFS (see G5)

SLOW, RELAXED (‘chilled!’) **TEMPO**

4/4 METRE/TIME SIGNATURE

Most Reggae songs are structured in **VERSE AND CHORUS/POPULAR SONG FORM**.

SIMPLE HARMONIES (see G4)



- LYRICS (MELODY)
- SYNCOPIATED RHYTHMS
- RIFFS
- OFFBEAT CHORDS
- BASS LINE RIFFS

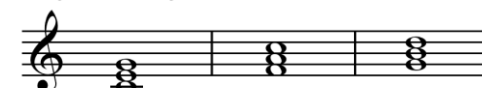
THICK TEXTURAL LAYERS (see G9)

“The Reggae Trifle” is an example of how many Reggae songs are ‘layered’.

G. Reggae Key Words

- MELODY** – The main ‘tune’ of a piece of music, often sung by the **LEAD SINGER**.
- IMPROVISATION** – Previously unprepared performance.
- CALL AND RESPONSE** – Similar to a “Question and Answer” often the call sung by the lead singer and answered by the backing singers or instruments (the response) – musical dialogue.
- SIMPLE HARMONIES** – using a limited number of **CHORDS**, mainly **TRIADS** such as the **Chord I, IV & V**.

Key of C major



Chord I Chord IV Chord V

- RIFF** – A repeated musical pattern. Often the **BASS GUITAR** plays repeated **MELODIC BASS RIFFS** in Reggae songs.
- BASS/BASS LINE** – The lowest pitched part of a piece of music often played by the **BASS GUITAR** in Reggae which plays an important role.
- CHORD** – 2 or more notes played together in **HARMONY**.
- RHYTHM** – A series of long and short sounds.
- TEXTURE** – Layers of sound combined to make music.