



Behind the Scenes of Country Music's Biggest Night

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- **Identify** the key roles and responsibilities of production, design, visual effects, sound, and art that are needed to create a broadcast awards ceremony.
- **Determine** which 21st-Century Learning Skills are most vital to creating an awards ceremony.
- **Identify** careers that match their skills, interests, and experiences.

OVERVIEW

Join us for Country Music's Biggest Night: the CMA Awards! Go behind the scenes of this dazzling night to meet the people whose job it is to make it all happen. During this Virtual Field Trip (VFT), students will explore the inner workings of a televised music awards ceremony. Step beyond the stage and discover the most important people behind the magic. Students will be introduced to a variety of careers that are essential to the success of the production. They will have the opportunity to see a variety of non-traditional career paths that come together and ensure a successful event. Learn about the various people and careers that come together, collaborate, and work in harmony to create the CMA Awards.

The Country Music Association (CMA) was founded in 1958, and was the first trade association dedicated to a specific genre of music. CMA serves as a resource and forum for Country Music leaders and members. One of CMA's biggest events of the year is the CMA Awards, which began in 1967. The ceremony honors musicians, producers, vocalists, songwriters, and music video directors throughout the Country Music industry.

The pre-viewing activities in this companion guide are designed to introduce students to the topics they will learn about during the VFT. The activities designed for completion during and post viewership connect and extend student learning to classroom concepts. To engage your students with music backgrounds even further, ask your music teacher to co-teach with you! Music teachers can scaffold specific music concepts to deepen your students' learning and passion for music, while helping you connect music with content standards.

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITY CHOICES

- Create a multimedia presentation demonstrating how the CMA Awards have changed over the years.
- Analyze the musical characteristics of past CMA Awards winners and predict future winners.

TIME FRAME

- Virtual Field Trip—One-two class periods
- Extensions and Post-Viewing Activities—One class period per activity

NATIONAL STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

- CCSS Writing
 - Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
- CCSS Speaking and Listening
 - Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on Grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- CCSS Speaking and Listening
 - Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

Framework for 21st-Century Learning Skills

Critical thinking and Problem Solving

- Reason Effectively
 - Interpret information and draw conclusions based on the best analysis.

Communication and Collaboration

- Communicate Clearly
 - Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written, and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts.

Media Literacy

- Analyze Media
 - Understand both how and why media messages are constructed, and for what purposes.
 - Examine how individuals interpret messages differently, how values and points of view are included or excluded, and how media can influence beliefs and behaviors.
 - Apply a fundamental understanding of the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of media.
- Create Media Products
 - Understand and utilize the most appropriate media creation tools, characteristics, and conventions.

National Arts Standards

Responding

- Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Connecting

- Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

MATERIALS

- Internet access and projector
- White board, poster sized paper, or collaborative digital software
- Awards Show Production Career Capture Sheet
- 4 Cs Graphic Organizer

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITY

Don't forget to also watch the Pre-VFT sneak peek to get your class excited for the live event!

Concept Map Brainstorming

- Before heading backstage with the student hosts of the VFT, explore what students already know about careers in the music industry and television production. Guide students as they brainstorm different roles and skills needed to successfully produce and broadcast an awards ceremony of this caliber. Direct students to work in small groups to create a concept map of their ideas and show how the roles are interconnected. Students may use paper, posterboard, whiteboards, or other interactive digital tool to create their concept maps.

Differentiation Options:

- **Give students a head start:** Provide students with the *Career Concept Map—Student Resource* to give them a starting point for their concept maps.
- **Start with a blank slate:** Have students create free-form concept maps from scratch. Invite students to work independently and think critically about the roles and jobs that would be vital for an awards ceremony.
- Ask students to consider the following questions to guide their concept maps:
 - What categories of jobs are required to produce an awards show event? (E.g. On-stage performers, back-of-house technicians, event management, film crews and broadcast technicians, art and design, marketing and media, etc.)
 - Within those categories, which roles or careers are necessary? (E.g. On-stage performers would be musicians, hosts, and awards presenters; back-of-house technicians would be set designers, lighting engineers, sound engineers, etc.)
 - What skills do each of those jobs require? (E.g. Project planning, budgeting, scheduling, public speaking, operating a video camera, etc.)

AWARDS SHOW JOB SORT

- The CMA Awards would not be possible without the expertise and skills of people in an exciting range of careers in STEAM, business, management, and marketing. Some of these careers follow non-traditional training paths, like trade schools or apprenticeships.
- Encourage students to think critically about the many roles needed to pull off a successful televised music awards show.
- Cut out the *Awards Show Job Sort Cards* and have students match the careers with their job descriptions.
- After viewing the Virtual Field Trip, direct students to revisit the job sort and check their work.

Options for Differentiation:

- Gallery Walk—Print and cut out multiple copies of the job sort cards. Have students work in small groups to match the jobs with their descriptions. Then, direct groups to rotate to other groups' stations and compare answers. After groups rotate all the way around, guide the class in a discussion. Have the class come to a consensus about the jobs and descriptions.
- Tag-team Sorting Race—Divide the class into 2–4 teams and have each team line up in front of a bulletin board with all the job cards. Each team will race to place the descriptions next to each job title. One person from each team will run to the bulletin board, place a job description next to its title, return to the line, and tag the next teammate. The next teammate has the option of changing or correcting a card that's already on the board or they can place a new one before tagging the next teammate in line. Teams continue until all job descriptions are placed correctly next to the job titles.
- Chunking—For groups that may have trouble with a large volume of cards, chunk them into sets of five jobs/ descriptions each. This will give students fewer cards to choose from and provide more guidance.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY: AWARDS SHOW COLLAGE

- To extend students' connection to and understanding of the scale, scope, and purpose of televised awards shows, have students create a collage depicting their perspective of what an awards show is.
- Direct students to work in small groups to determine what the main themes and purposes of an awards show are.
- Provide them with access to the internet to find images that demonstrate those themes and ideas and compile them into a cohesive collage. Students may use physical or digital media and creation tools to complete their collages.
- Have students present their collages to the class and explain the themes they wanted to emphasize.
- Use the collages to prompt a class discussion about the purpose and impact of televised awards shows.
- Ask the students to consider the following questions as they create their collages:
 - What is the purpose of a televised awards show?
 - What themes are behind the messages of awards shows?
 - How do awards shows reflect the society and culture of the time?
 - What is the impact of televised awards shows? Who watches them and how do they affect society and culture?

Suggested resources:

<https://www.cmaworld.com/>

<https://cmaawards.com/about/>

<https://www.si.edu/spotlight/country-music>

<https://www.american-music.org/page/Libraries>

<https://www.countrymusicHallofFame.org/about/collections>

DURING THE VIRTUAL FIELD TRIP

- Direct students to watch the [CMA Virtual Field Trip](#) where they will get a unique behind-the-scenes look at Country Music's Biggest Night. This celebrity-filled event honors excellence in the Country Music industry, and students will get insider access into these prestigious awards.
- While they watch, guide them to pay attention to the highlighted CMA employees and complete the *Awards Show Production Career Capture Sheet*. This intricate and complex event would not be possible without the expertise and collaboration of a diverse group of professionals with a variety of backgrounds and skills.
- As students view the VFT, have students take note of skills, roles, responsibilities, and training for the different careers they see onscreen.
- Throughout the Virtual Field Trip, periodically pause the video and engage the students in discussion by asking the following questions:
 - What is the process for creating the live CMA Awards show?
 - What skills does the Executive Producer have that allow them to determine the show concept and steer the production?
 - How does the CMA Glam Squad use hair and makeup to create a story to tell the audience about the celebrity?
 - How do hair and makeup artists respect each celebrity's image and support body positivity?
 - What non-traditional career paths can someone follow to get the necessary skills to contribute to a successful awards show?

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Two activity options are available for students to continue their learning after viewing the virtual fieldtrip.

Vote with Your Feet: Four Corners

- Before beginning one of the following post-viewing activities, ask students to determine which of the 4Cs of 21st-Century Learning is the most vital to working in harmony to create the CMA Awards:
 - Collaboration
 - Creativity
 - Communication
 - Critical Thinking (Problem Solving)
- Designate one corner of the room to represent each of these 4Cs.

Teacher Note: Consider placing small signs in different areas of the classroom and label each corner.

- Ask students to think about which of the 4Cs is most important for the professionals featured to help bring the greatest night of Country Music to life.
- Then have students vote with their feet: walk to the corner that represents their choice.
- Once students have made their choices, have them discuss their reasons for choosing that particular skill with the group of students in their corner.

- Ask students to work together within their group to create a short list of evidence from the Video Field Trip to support their premise that the chosen skill is the most important.
- After groups are finished with their lists, have them present their evidence to the whole class.

ACTIVITY 1: THE CMA AWARDS THROUGH THE YEARS

Throughout the Virtual Field Trip, students were able to get an insider's perspective of the CMA Awards. From the red carpet to the green room backstage, producing a world-class show involves the careful coordination of hundreds of people and tasks. The sights, sounds, and experiences of Country Music are unique and dynamic. While the purpose and Country Music character of the awards remain the same, a lot has changed since the show began in 1967 with regards to *how* the show is created.

- Direct students to research how the CMA Awards have changed over the years. There are a variety of websites listed in the "Suggested Resources" section that would be excellent places for students to start their research.
- The goal of this activity is for students to examine how advances in technology have changed the way the CMA Awards are produced, broadcast, marketed, and consumed.
- Have students use the *CMA Awards Through the Years* Capture Sheet to guide their research and record their findings.
- Guide students to think beyond trends in fashion and popular culture to the ways in which technology has changed the character and processes of the show.
- Discuss how the following have impacted the production:
 - digital video and sound
 - technical aspects of set design, like the use of screens, pyrotechnics, and advanced lighting techniques
 - the ability of the audience to interact using social media communication and organization apps and devices

ACTIVITY 2: MUSICAL EXCELLENCE

There is no question that all the songs nominated for the category "Single of the Year" represent the best of the best in Country Music for that year. In fact, to even be nominated, the individual track must have reached the Top 10 of *Billboard's* Country Airplay Chart, *Billboard's* Hot Country Songs Chart, or *Country Aircheck* Chart. But what exactly makes a song so popular? Is there something that all of these songs have in common? The goal of this activity is for students to analyze the winners of "Single of the Year" for a minimum of five years and identify any patterns that might help artists predict future success in this category.

- Divide students into groups of 2–3.
- Ask students to select at least five winners of "Single of the Year" from various years.
- Have students listen to each of their chosen songs and discuss why they feel those songs were so popular that year. Why do so many people relate to these songs? They can use the *Musical Excellence: What Makes a Hit?* Capture Sheet to record their observations about each of the songs and see if any patterns emerge.
- Ask students how artists and producers might use these patterns to predict a future winner or create a hit song.

Take it Further: Music Theory Analysis

Enlist the help of your music teacher to deepen students' learning and build on their music theory knowledge. This activity gives students an opportunity to extend their analysis of the "Single of the Year" winners. Students can explore songs even further and examine the basic elements of each song:

- Rhythm—a strong, regular, repeated pattern of sound
- Melody—a pleasing arrangement of music notes
- Harmony—a combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes that produce chords with a pleasing effect
- Timbre—the sound quality or tone of the music
- Dynamics—the variation in loudness between notes or sections of a musical piece
- Texture—how the tempo, melody, and harmony combine to create the overall quality of the sound
- Form—the structure and organization of a musical piece

Have students use the *Musical Excellence: 7 Elements of Music* capture sheet to describe the characteristics of each song. Guide students to consider the following questions as they examine Country Music's "Single of the Year" winners:

- Do these songs have commonalities? Are there any patterns in the elements of music among the chosen songs?
- Which elements of music seem most influential when determining whether a song will be popular?
- Is there a "formula" for a successful Country Music single?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

CMA Awards Interactive Timeline

Objective

Create a digital, interactive timeline that shows the history of one CMA Awards category.

Time Frame

Two-three class periods (45–60 minutes each)

Materials

- Access to the internet
- Content production software like Discovery Education Studio, PowerPoint, Keynote, or Google Slides

The Country Music Association's prestigious awards show has been a fixture of the music industry for over 55 years. Since its inception in 1967, hundreds of performers, producers, songwriters, directors, musicians, and mix artists have been recognized for their excellence and awarded the coveted CMA Awards trophy. All of them have made their mark on the rich history of Country Music.

In this extension activity, students will have the opportunity to continue the research they started in *The CMA Awards Through the Years* activity. Working in small groups or individually, direct students to select one awards category to research more fully from the list of CMA Awards winners:

- Category 1—Entertainer of the Year
- Category 2—Single of the Year

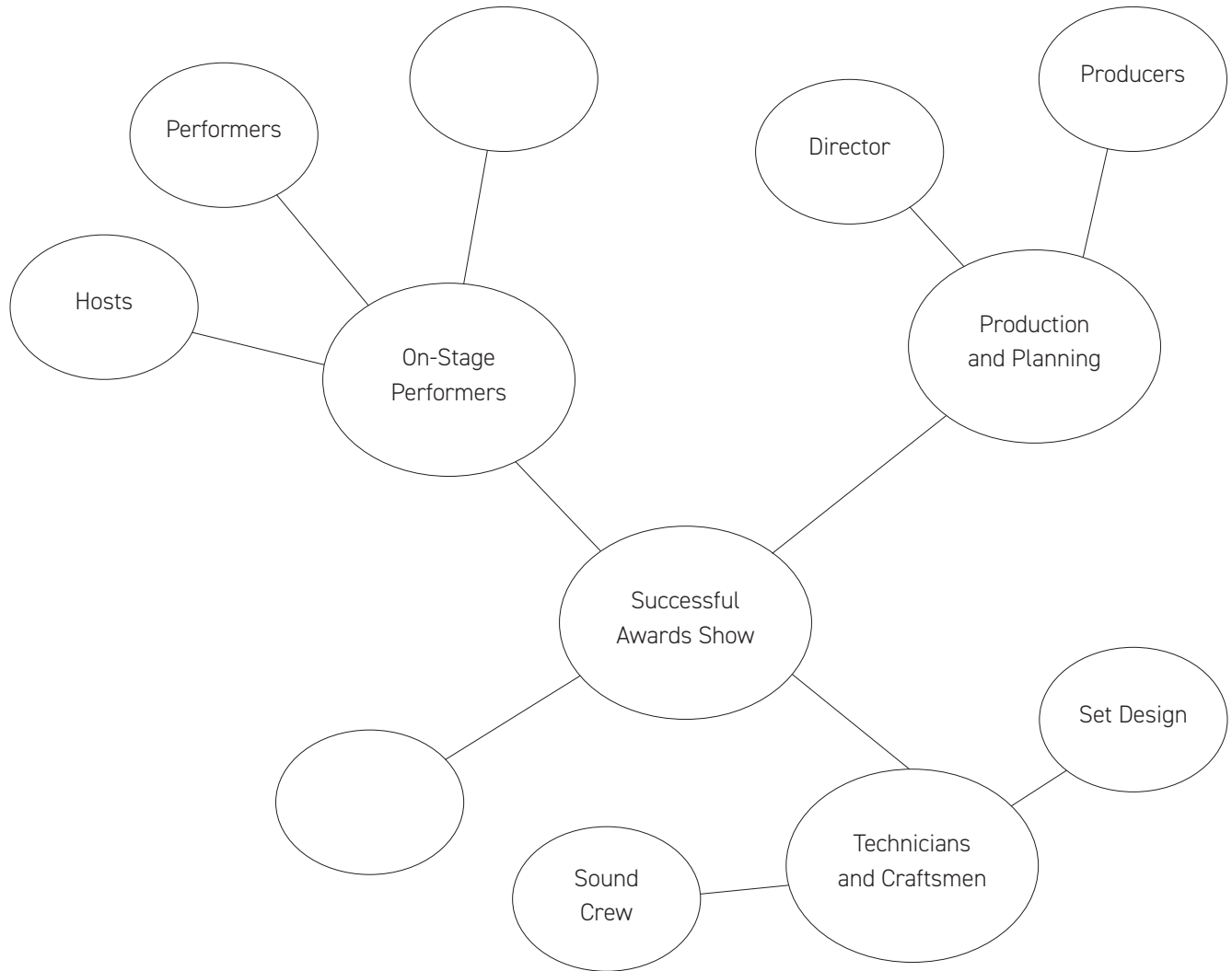
- Category 3—Album of the Year
- Category 4—Song of the Year
- Category 5—Female Vocalist of the Year
- Category 6—Male Vocalist of the Year
- Category 7—Vocal Group of the Year
- Category 8—Vocal Duo of the Year
- Category 9—Musical Event of the Year
- Category 10—Musician of the Year
- Category 11—Music Video of the Year
- Category 12—New Artist of the Year

Guide students to the CMA Awards website noted in the “Suggested Resources.” Direct them to read the descriptions of each award category so they can select one to explore. Have students research the history of that category and identify the winners for each year. The goal of this activity is to create an interactive digital time line showing the history of the awards category. Students can use digital production tools like Discovery Education Studio, PowerPoint, Google Slides, Keynote, or Prezi to create their time line.

- Instruct students to include a variety of media to support their written descriptions of each year’s winner. Primary source photographs, news articles, audio clips, links to biographical websites, and even recorded video of the ceremony itself or the artists’ work can be added to the time line.
- One goal of this activity is to introduce students to the idea that musicians do not create their art in a vacuum. The societal events and culture of the time have tremendous impact on the themes and style of the music as well as the images of the artists themselves.
- Direct students to add social, political, and cultural events to their time lines to give context to the artists and their work.
- Encourage students to consider the unique atmosphere of the CMA Awards and try to capture the essence of the award in the design of their time lines.
- Remind students to cite their sources and only use content that is eligible for Fair Use.
- When students have completed their time lines, you can showcase them on your class website or wiki.
- Another option would be to host a gala to display their time lines so their parents and peers can interact with and appreciate their work.

Career Concept Map

Directions: Think about the many jobs and skills required to plan, produce, and broadcast a successful awards show. Create a bubble map showing how all these people work in harmony. Use the bubble map below as a starting point and add more bubbles and ideas as you think of them.



Awards Show Job Sort Cards

Cut out the cards. Match the job title with the job description.

Executive Producer

Organizes and manages the production of the entire event

Director

The leading creative artist on set, who has control and approval over every area of the show

Scriptwriter

Writes the script for the host and awards presenters

Lighting Designer/Gaffer

Develops a lighting plan and oversees the best boy and key grip as they place and manage the lights

Music Director

Selects music, holds auditions for performers, and oversees the musical elements of the show

Performer

A musician or vocalist who entertains the audience during the show

Host

The master of ceremonies, who entertains the audience while guiding the show

Health Safety Supervisor

Oversees the health and safety of the crew, and ensures safety standards are met

Stage Manager

Oversees the sets, props, lights, and sound, and facilitates communication between all departments

Special EFX Technical Director

Coordinates special effects, including pyrotechnics

Camera Operator

Records video footage

Carpenter

Builds sets, props, and stage areas

Wardrobe Lead

Coordinates costume and wardrobe to help tell the story

Glamour

Hair stylists and makeup artists who work with celebrities to create their image

Accounting

Manages the budget and flow of money to stage the production

Head of Security

Oversees and coordinates the security policies and procedures both backstage and in the audience

Social Marketing Coordinator

Creates a social media campaign to promote the event and interacts with users before, during, and after it

Graphic Designer

Creates visual concepts for the event that are consistent through all print and digital media

Archives Curator

Acquires and manages photo and video artifacts for use in the show

Trophy Presenters

Appears onstage to hand winners their awards

Awards Show Production Careers

Instructions: The CMA Awards would not be possible without the talents and skills of various professionals. A successful show requires people from a variety of backgrounds and training to work in harmony. Some of these professionals may have college experience, but many also come from trade school or other non-traditional paths. While you watch the Virtual Field Trip, think about the skills required for each career and fill in the capture sheet.

Guiding Question	Executive Producer	CMA Glam Squad	Script Supervisor	Security
What are the basic tasks of this career?				
What talents and skills are required to be successful in this career?				
What aspects of this career match your talents and skills?				

CMA Awards Through the Years

Directions: The sights, sounds, and experiences of the CMA Awards are unique and distinctly tied to the history of Country Music. A lot has changed since the awards show began in 1967, from the clothes and hair to the musical styles. But technology has also changed the way the show is produced and how the viewers participate. Think about these advances in technology and how they have changed the CMA Awards over the years.

The CMA Awards in 1967	The CMA Awards Today
What types of audio and video equipment make the CMA Awards possible?	
How is the show broadcast to viewers?	
How do the viewers interact with the show?	

Musical Excellence: What Makes a Hit?

Song Title: Year: Artist	Song Title: Year: Artist	Song Title: Year: Artist	Song Title: Year: Artist	Song Title: Year: Artist
Is the song upbeat or mellow? Happy or sad?				
What are the major themes of the song? Love? Heartbreak? Friendship? Social Justice?				
What is unique about this song? Does it have a catchy chorus? An interesting hook? A surprise twist?				
Does the song have a danceable beat?				

Musical Excellence: Music Theory? (continued)

Song Title: Year: Artist	Song Title: Year: Artist	Song Title: Year: Artist	Song Title: Year: Artist	Song Title: Year: Artist
Rhythm				
Melody				
Timbre				
Texture				

Musical Excellence: What Makes a Hit?

Directions: Use your knowledge of music theory to analyze five winning songs of the CMA Single of the Year award. What patterns can you see? Is there a "formula" for a hit song?

Song Title: Year: Artist	Song Title: Year: Artist	Song Title: Year: Artist	Song Title: Year: Artist	Song Title: Year: Artist
Dynamics				
Form				
Harmony				