

EDUCATOR GUIDE

Story Theme: Up from the Street
Subject: Tommy Guerrero
Discipline: Music

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Tommy Guerrero.
Still image from SPARK story, February 2004.

SECTION I - OVERVIEW

EPISODE THEME

Up from the Street

SUBJECT

Tommy Guerrero

GRADE RANGES

K-12 & Post-secondary

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Music & Physical Education

OBJECTIVES

To help students -

Understand the development of personal works of art and their relationship to broader social themes and ideas, abstract concepts, and the history of art

Develop visual, written, listening and speaking skills through looking at, creating and talking about artwork

Develop an expressive vocabulary with which to address personal and/or social themes and ideas through music

STORY SYNOPSIS

Spark meets Tommy Guerrero, world famous street skateboarder and musician, whose music evokes the sounds and rhythms of San Francisco.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Group oral discussion, review and analysis, including peer review and aesthetic valuing as a group

Teacher-guided instruction, including demonstration and guidance

Hands-on individual projects in which students work independently

Hands-on group projects in which students assist and support one another

Critical reflection on personal expressions and how they are seen and received by others

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

To introduce and contextualize contemporary skate culture

To provide context for the understanding of skate culture and contemporary music

To inspire students to approach contemporary culture critically

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

SPARK story “Tommy Guerrero” about skateboarder and musician Tommy Guerrero on VHS or DVD and related equipment

Computer with Internet access, navigation software, speakers and a sounds card, printer

Cassette player, CD player, or computer audio program

MATERIALS NEEDED

Access to libraries with up-to-date collections of periodicals, books, and research papers

Pencils, pens, and paper

INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED

Bodily-Kinesthetic - control of one's own body, control in handling objects

Interpersonal - awareness of others' feelings, emotions, goals, motivations

Intrapersonal - awareness of one's own feelings, emotions, goals, motivations

Spatial - ability to manipulate and create mental images in order to solve problems

Logical-Mathematical - ability to detect patterns, reason deductively, think logically



See more information on [Multiple Intelligences](http://www.kqed.org/spark/education) at www.kqed.org/spark/education.

SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT

CONTENT OVERVIEW

Native San Franciscan Tommy Guerrero is a legend in the skateboarding world. An original member of the famous "Bones Brigade" skateboarding team, Guerrero pioneered street skating in the mid 1980s and 90s. But lately Guerrero has been following his musical passions. As a solo artist and with his group Jet Black Crayon, Guerrero has been developing a hypnotic, pulsing style of music that is echoed in the sounds of the city he lives in. In "Up from the Street," Spark checks in on one of San Francisco's most versatile performers.

Guerrero made his name in skateboarding when, as a young teenager, he entered the first ever street skating competition, held in Golden Gate Park in 1984. The only amateur involved in the event, Guerrero won, beating out 15 well-known professionals. Propelled by this unprecedented success, Guerrero went pro, signing to the Powell Peralta skateboard company in May, 1985. Over the following years, Guerrero remained at the forefront of street skating, increasing his reputation as one of the style's most exciting skaters. In 1990, as he began to find himself taking a backseat to younger, newly emerging skaters on the Powell Peralta roster, Guerrero helped to found Real/Deluxe Skateboards, a San Francisco-based company that designs boards for skaters by skaters. Still a part owner in the company, Guerrero works as a designer for Real/Deluxe creating striking graphics for decks, stickers, T-shirts, caps and other gear.

These days, though Guerrero's been putting much of his energy into his musical projects, having recorded several down-tempo Trip-Hop records under his own name and two full-lengths with Jet Black Crayon, as well as doing guest spots on a number of other projects. Though writers and critics are fond of calling him an ex-professional skater turned musician, Guerrero is quick to point out that music has always been a part of his life, a track that has run parallel to his more public persona as a skater.

What is most striking about Guerrero's music is that just as his skating style took him to the city streets as its locale rather than skate ramps or empty swimming pools, so does his turns to the urban environment for musical inspiration. Using music that evokes the sounds that might intertwine and drifting through the streets, Guerrero's moody, atmospheric music perfectly captures the tenor of San Francisco's more urban neighborhoods. Listening to a Jet Black Crayon record, one might imagine an experience of the streets: hip hop beats pumping out of passing cars, a busker strumming a guitar on a corner, or the cacophony of passing conversations in multiple languages--all melding together into a hypnotic soundtrack for the city itself.



Tommy Guerrero playing bass.
Still image from SPARK story, May 2004.

THE BIG PICTURE

Skateboarding has borrowed from surfing, punk rock, and psychedelic art, to assemble a larger culture that has incorporated music, graphic art, photography, and film. This culture has changed as skateboarding has, mutating with each of the sport's many ups and downs.

The first skateboards, dating back to the early part of the 20th century, were modified homemade milk crate

scooters. Kids would take the wheels off roller skates, attach them to a two-by-four, then nail a milk crate and handles onto the board. Eventually the milk crate and handles were discarded, and the first rudimentary modern skateboards were born. In the 1950s, skateboard trucks--the device on which the wheels are mounted--were greatly improved, offering the rider better control. By the end of the 1950s, skateboarding became popular amongst Southern California surfers, as a way of surfing on the sidewalk. In the early 1960s, Larry Stevenson, the publisher of Surf Guide Magazine began covering skateboarding in his magazine, and launched the first ever professional board through his surfing company, Makaha, in 1963. More companies followed, helping to make skateboarding enormously popular. It is estimated that over fifty million boards were sold between 1963 and 1965. There were still many problems with the technology, however. Boards mostly used clay wheels, which were cheap to produce, but did not grip the road effectively, causing needless injury. After a number of fatal accidents, cities began passing anti-skateboarding laws, and the industry abruptly came to a standstill.



Tommy Guerrero skateboarding.
Still image from SPARK story, May 2004.

In the early 1970s skateboarding saw its first resurgence, as a surfer named Frank Nasworthy pioneered the use of urethane wheels on boards. With the improved control and grip offered by urethane, skaters began looking for more challenging terrains, and the underground practice of swimming pool skating began. Southern Californian skaters would cruise upscale residential neighborhoods looking for backyard swimming pools that had been drained for the winter, and used them as surfaces on

which to practice their tricks. Because pool skating was illegal, skateboarding came to be linked with anti-establishment youth culture, an association promoted by the skaters themselves. Borrowing heavily from surfing culture, skaters wore long hair, developed their own style of dress, and their own language of terms and phrases. Music became a large part of the culture, and when the first homemade skateboarding videos began to circulate in the late-seventies, they invariably featured a punk rock soundtrack.

In the mid-1970s skaters began decorating their decks with stickers and decals applied directly to the underside of the board. Borrowing in equal parts from the psychedelic art of late-60s Southern California, 1970s hot rod graphics, and punk album covers and posters, skaters fashioned an aesthetic to match their rebel image. Rick Griffin, a comic book artist who had gained wide acclaim for his psychedelic graphics for the Grateful Dead and other psychedelic era bands, began developing skateboard graphics, as did many other graphic artists associated with the '60s counter-culture.

In part due to legislative repression in the late 1970s, skateboarding hit another slump, and it was not until the emergence of street skating and vertical skating in the mid-1980s that skateboarding saw another resurgence. Skaters like Tony Hawk helped to promote "vert skating," which features steep launch ramps, while Tommy Guerrero and the Bones Brigade team helped to popularize street skating. Along with the resurgence in the sport came a new effort to document events. Skate videos became very popular and widely distributed, while new magazines--such as San Francisco's Thrasher--published the work of photographer Glen E. Fried, who had been dutifully documenting the skating scene since the mid-1970s.

Just as any unique folk culture, skateboarding today is passed on from one youth to another, and its influences reflect 50 years of development. Skateboarders maintain an individual identity even though they are part of a larger cultural phenomenon. They are constantly seeking out their voice, finding new ways of interacting with their environment while exploring the physical demands of this challenging artform. Likewise, the music they listen to is a culmination of all their environmental influences

including the past, present and their own personal choices. Although many may be listening to punk rock, there is also a great deal of rap and hip hop, and music from Indie labels such as Mo Wax. In any case, the music, look and style of each skateboarder is part of how each individual expresses him or herself.

Unlike most kids today, Tommy Guerrero didn't grow up with MTV (at least punk rock wasn't as prevalent on MTV in the early 80s as it is today), so his musical decisions were very self-motivated, as was his decision to start recording his own style of music, influenced by a variety of sounds, including funk, rap, hip hop, soul and jazz – all in all a more melodic approach than his punk roots.

Even in the face of a surging industry filled with products such as t-shirts, hats, shoes, boards, bags, videos, etc. that on one level create a homogenized look, the real innovators such as Tommy Guerrero find a way to create something vital and expressive, unique to themselves.

RESOURCES – TEXTS

Borden, Iain. Skateboarding, Space, and the City: Architecture, the Body, and Performative Critique. Gordonsville, VA: Berg Publishers, 2001.

Brooke, Michael. The Concrete Wave: The History of Skateboarding. Lynchburg, VA: Warwick House Publishing, 1999.

Davis, James, et al. Skateboard Roadmap: History. Surrey, UK: Carlton Books, 2002.

Friedman, Glen E. and C. R. Stecyk III. Dogtown: The Legend of the Z-Boys. Santa Monica: Burning Flags Press, 2002.

Friedman, Glen E., et al. F**k You Heroes: Glen E. Friedman Photographs, 1976-1991. Santa Monica: Burning Flags Press, 1994.

Hawk, Tony. Hawk: Occupation: Skateboarder. New York: Regan Books, 2001.

Hoye, Jacob. Boards: The Art and Design of Skateboards. Antioch, IL: Universe Publishing, 2003.

Munson, Mark and Steve Cardwell. Skateboard Stickers. New York: Harper Design International, 2004.

Phillips, Jim. Surf, Skate, and Rock Art of Jim Phillips. Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 2003.

Weyland, Jocko. The Answer is Never: A Skateboarder's History of the World. New York: Grove Press, 2002.

RESOURCES – WEB SITES

<http://www.epitronic.com/artists/tommyguerrero.html>
|--Check out some sound clips of Guerrero's music from epitronic.com

<http://www.beggars.com/us/tommyguerrero/>--
Guerrero bio and discography from Beggar's Banquet records

<http://www.ink19.com/issues/july2003/musicReviews/musicG/tommyGuerrero.html>--Review of Tommy Guerrero's album Soul Food Taqueria

http://www.sfbg.com/36/23/art_tommy_guerrero.html
|--An in depth biographical article about Guerrero from the San Francisco Guardian.

<http://www.warpedtour.com/index2.html>--Official website of the Vans Warped Tour, an annual skateboarding event that includes competitions, stunts, and live music.

<http://www.skatepark.org/>--A website dedicated to the promotion of skateboard culture and building skateparks around the country.

VIDEO RESOURCES

Dogtown and Z-Boys. Directed by Stacy Peralta. Written by Stacy Peralta and Craig Stecyk. Columbia Tristar, 2001.

ON Video Skateboarding--The Four Seasons Limited Edition Box Set. 411 Production, 2003.

Stoked--The Rise and Fall of Gator. Directed by Helen Stickler. Written by Helen Stickler. Lion's Gate, 2002.

The Bones Brigade Video Show. Powell Peralta
Video, 1984.

DISCOGRAPHY

Guerrero, Tommy. Loose Grooves and Bastard
Moves. Galaxia Records, 1998

Guerrero, Tommy. A Little Bit of Somethin. Mo' Wax
Records, 2000

Guerrero, Tommy. Junk Collector. Mo' Wax Records,
2001

Jet Black Crayon. Inaccuracies of the Mind Machine.
Function 8.

Jet Black Crayon. Experiments in the Space Metal
Time Signature. Galaxia Records.

Dead Kennedys. See their website for a complete
listing of recordings and information:
<http://www.deadkennedys.com/discography.htm>

VIDEO RESOURCES

Dogtown and Z-Boys. Directed by Stacy Peralta.
Written by Stacy Peralta and Craig Stecyk. Columbia
Tristar, 2001.

ON Video Skateboarding--The Four Seasons Limited
Edition Box Set. 411 Production, 2003.

Stoked--The Rise and Fall of Gator. Directed by
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Gate, 2002.

The Bones Brigade Video Show. Powell Peralta
Video, 1984.

SECTION III – VOCABULARY

DISCIPLINE-BASED VOCABULARY AND CONCEPTS IN THE SPARK STORY

Adhere

To remain devoted to or be in support of something

Atmospheric

Intended to evoke a particular emotional tone or aesthetic quality

Cerebral

Appealing to or requiring the use of the intellect

Cinematic

Of or pertaining to or characteristic of the films

Culminate

To reach the highest point or degree

Entrepreneur

A person who organizes, operates, and assumes the risk for a business venture

Forefront

The position of most importance, prominence, or responsibility, the vanguard

Gamut

A complete range or extent

Gig

A job, especially a booking for musicians

Hotbed

An environment conducive to vigorous growth or development

Interpret

To decipher or define

Score (Film)

To write, arrange or orchestrate a musical soundtrack for a film

Tangible

Possible to touch

Therapeutic

Having or exhibiting healing powers

Transition

Passage from one form, state, style, or place to another

Tribulation

An experience that tests one's endurance, patience, or faith

Zen

A school of Mahayana Buddhism that asserts that enlightenment can be attained through meditation, self-contemplation, and intuition rather than through faith and devotion and that is practiced mainly in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam

SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

Listening to and responding to music.

Tommy Guerrero turns to his urban environment for his musical inspiration, just as he did when he was skateboarding. Listen to T. Guerrero’s recordings (see resource guide) and have students respond to what they hear. Some of the sounds come from the city streets in San Francisco. Consider the following questions as a starting point for discussion:

- What do students imagine they hear when they listen to different tracks of his CDs?
- What emotions does the music conjure? How are those emotions conveyed - what compositional techniques has T. Guerrero used to create a mood?
- Can they imagine any familiar neighborhoods based on what they hear?
- Do they like this music? Why or why not?
- What makes this music interesting and unique or not?

Create your own urban musical soundscape.

Armed with simple cassette recorders, have students go out into their urban environment and capture a variety of street sounds, everything from automobiles and sirens to bits and pieces of conversations, to street construction and music blaring out from different places as they walk down the street.

Take these recordings to the classroom and listen back.

Students can try to pick certain samples of the sounds and try recording them over one another using multiple cassette recorders or, if you have the equipment, on a recording system capable of recording multiple tracks. They can layer these sounds together with some musical tracks that they like or create themselves. Play back the final product for the classroom and have students respond to what they hear.

History of skateboarding

Working in groups and using the resource list as a guide, write a historical perspective of skateboarding and what it has meant for the youth who created it back in the 60’s through today. With the advent and subsequent decline of specially designed areas such as skateboard parks (instead of illegally using people’s swimming pools), as well as professional competitions, is skateboarding still as anti-establishment as it was 30 years ago? How does it tie together both physical sport, artful skills, visual arts and music, as well as continue to identify an entire youth culture? Describe the different styles, such as street skating verses vertical, or “vert skating”. Are students in your school skateboarding? With what do they associate it? What music do they listen to while skateboarding?

4 - Build your own skateboards

Go to the website: <http://members.cruzio.com/~sc58/> which is called “Skateboards for School Shops”, and check out the instructions on how to order the basic materials for creating your own skateboards. Students must assemble and decorate the boards themselves. Testimonials and photos are listed from many different middle schools.

5 - Skateboarding

Building on the previous activity, have students use the skateboards they have created (or just have them bring in their own) and allow them to practice the techniques of basic skateboarding in the school yard, using cones and other objects for them to negotiate around. Encourage students who have prior experience to help others to learn the basics of balance, speed, turning and stopping. Students must use basic protective gear, such as helmets, elbow and kneepads.

Sparklers – Other possible lines of inquiry

Interview skateboarders from your school or on the street. How do they feel about skateboarding?

What got them started and why? How do they feel after watching the SPARK episode? How do adults react to them? Try to include some of these testimonials as part of a soundscape project or a school paper or radio.

Compare Tommy Guerrero to other prominent names in the history of skateboarding. How is his contribution to the form different from his predecessors?

Learning about television and how a story is told. Watch the SPARK episode again and this time consider the way the story is presented. Is there a dominant point of view being defined? If so, how is it done? How does the production affect the viewing experience? Does the camera make use of particular angles, follow a specific character, or does the use (or non-use) of voice-overs and editing contribute to the POV? Finally, have students consider how else this story might have been told.

**RELATED STANDARDS
PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Grades 6-12

Meeting Challenges and Making Decisions

A well-planned physical education program takes into account the importance of the transition from sixth to eighth grade and the rapid physical, social and emotional changes occurring at this level. This is an appropriate time to introduce individual risk taking and individual sports rather than focus exclusively on team sports.

Movement Skills and Movement Knowledge

Students at this age tend to enjoy risk-related activities. Unless the school curriculum provides such activities in a safe environment, students are likely to pursue the activities on their own without supervision. Appropriate activities include aquatics, tumbling, individual and group sports, and adventure-based activities such as rock-climbing, skateboarding, and cycling.

Students should be able to identify proper warm-up, conditioning, and cooling-down techniques and the reasons for using them. They should become engaged in activities that provide for challenge, problem solving, decision-making and risk taking.

RELATED STANDARDS - MUSIC

Grade 1

4.0 Aesthetic Valuing

Derive Meaning

4.2 Describe how ideas or moods are communicated through music

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

Connections and Applications

5.1 Recognize and explain how people respond to their world through music

Grade 3

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

Careers and Career Related Skills

5.2 Identify what musicians and composers do to create music

Grade 6

4.0 Aesthetic Valuing

Derive Meaning

4.2 Explain how various aesthetic qualities convey images, feeling, or emotion

Grades 9-12

1.0 Artistic Perception, Advanced

Listen to, Analyze and Describe Music

1.5 Analyze and describe the use of musical elements in a given work that makes it unique, interesting, and expressive

For more information about SPARK and its educational content, including the Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the Web site at <http://www.kqed.org/spark/education>.



For more information about the California Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the CA Dept. of Education at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/>