Echo: I Want My MTV

This activity corresponds to “I Want My MTV” feature in your textbook. The following questions are designed to help you comprehend the impact of MTV on globalization. Once you have answered the questions in the Comprehension section, submit your answers and move on to the questions in the Analysis and Outside Sources sections. Each section is designed to build upon the one before it, taking you deeper into the subject you are studying. After you have answered all of the questions, you will have the option of emailing your responses to your instructor.

Introduction

Most people who were watching television in the early 1980s will probably remember an animated video by the group Dire Straits, to their hit song, “Money for Nothing” and its plaintive refrain, “I want my MTV!” What none of us realized was that MTV was heralding an onslaught of global interchanges between cultures. First, American cultural icons and influences, especially Madonna and Michael Jackson, went around the world, as MTV itself went global. Eventually, as hip-hop and rap became dominant in American music, they influenced world music, fashion, and culture. However, the influences often became two-way streets, as world music became a greater and greater influence. Of even greater interest is the cultural subversion of youth rebellion as advertising contracts, both music and commercial, were given to singers barely older than the youths watching them.

Comprehension

1. What were the initial responses by young audiences and parents to the MTV phenomenon? What objections were raised to the MTV cycle of videos?

2. How was MTV a means to initiate the young into consumer culture? Was it successful?

3. How has MTV developed as it has gone international? Is MTV responsive to local cultures?

Analysis

1. Is American music pop music as influential as it was 10, 20, or 30 years ago? Discuss your opinion giving examples.

2. What is the patrimony of MTV? That is, what is the real contribution of MTV to American culture?

3. Has MTV’s heyday come and gone? How do young audiences get their music today if not through MTV?

Outside Sources
1. Examine the MTV website. How has MTV attempted to re-invent itself? Does it rely on music videos as much as it used to do so? If not, what is its main staple? http://www.mtv.com/

2. Read about the history of globalization in a variety of its guises at http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~dludden/global1.htm. Using this website as a reference on globalization, how do you think MTV became such a global phenomenon? Discuss some of the other ways that culture has been exchanged globally.