THE LATIN RHYTHMS OF “DESPACITO”

Est. Time: 60-90 minutes
Subjects: General Music
Age Range: Elementary & Middle School
See the full lesson here!
What Latin American genres inspired Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee’s hit song “Despacito”?

In this lesson you will:

- Learn how “Despacito” incorporates a variety of Latin American genres
- Trace the rhythms and instrumentation of “Despacito” to their associated Latin American music genres
- Uncover the role of Latin American music genres in the history of American Pop music
Listen to “Despacito” by Luis Fonsi ft. Daddy Yankee

A GLOBAL SMASH HIT - “DESPACITO”
Think about or ask a friend:

- Do you know where Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee are from?
- What might make this song different from other hit songs in the United States?
- What signals this song as “Latin”? 
By September 2017, “Despacito” had reached #1 chart positions in close to 50 different countries around the world and became the most watched video on YouTube with over 4 billion views.

With YouTube, a song entirely in Spanish created by Puerto Rican artists achieved mass popularity in English-speaking countries like the United States.

“Despacito” embraced a variety of Latin American genres. Producers Mauricio Rengifo and Andrés Torres made an effort to incorporate a wide variety of Latin American musical styles, from traditional Puerto Rican rural music to Colombian Cumbia.
Click here to learn about the history and characteristics of the Latin American genres that influenced “Despacito.” If working as a group, have each person read about one style, and share what they learned with everyone else.
Using this online metronome, try to clap along to the different Latin American rhythms listed in the handout. Then think about or discuss with a friend:

- What differences can you hear and feel between the various rhythms?
- Can you think of other songs besides “Despacito” that utilize these rhythms?
Watch this video to see how producers Mauricio Rengífo and Andrés Torres combined musical disciplines and instruments from around the world to produce a #1 hit single.
Think about or discuss with a friend:

• What kind of “rules” did Mauricio Rengífo and Andrés Torres say they broke in making the song? What parts of “Despacito” did they say were not “normal”?

• Why did the producers feel the need to mix both digital and acoustic tracks for the song?
Using what you learned about different Latin American musical styles, answer the questions on this sheet while carefully relistening to “Despacito.”
Watch this video to learn about Latin influences in American Pop music.
Think about or discuss with a friend:

- Did you hear any Latin influences in these songs?
- Do these songs share instruments or rhythms with “Despacito”?
- In what ways does “Despacito” differ from these older pop songs?
- How might “Despacito” be continuing a tradition? How might it be unique?
“Despacito” shows how multiple traditions of Latin American music can be combined to create an international smash hit that transcends stylistic, cultural and linguistic barriers.

Different rhythms common to multiple genres of music can be traced back to roots in the Latin American musical tradition.
BE CREATIVE

Using **these charts**, play along to “Despacito” on an instrument of your choice! If you cannot play any of the instruments listed in the chart, refer back to the Latin rhythms used in the song and clap along to “Despacito” with the different rhythms!
CONNECT

Share your work with us! Share a video of you performing “Despacito” with TeachRock on Instagram or Facebook, email to info@teachrock.org, or Tweet it to @TeachRock
Visit us at teachrock.org for hundreds of other free arts-rich resources for every age range and classroom.

Please check back to teachrock.org/distancelearning frequently as we will update the material daily!