WHO IS RITCHIE VALENS?

Est. Time: 60 minutes
Subjects: ELA, General Music, Social Studies
Age Range: Elementary & Middle School
See the full lesson [here](#)!
Who was Ritchie Valens?

In this lesson you will:

• Learn about Rock and Roll Pioneer Ritchie Valens

• Discover the traditional Mexican roots of Valens’ famous song, “La Bamba”

• Use a timeline to understand the life of Ritchie Valens
Read this biography of Valens to learn about his short but amazing life.
Consider or ask a friend:

- Why do you think that Ricardo Valenzuela changed his name to Ritchie Valens?
- Can you think of any of today’s popular artists that changed their names?
Watch one of the few recordings of Ritchie Valens performing here.
Consider or ask a friend:

• What five words would you use to describe what’s going on in this video?

• Why do you think that Ritchie Valens became so popular when he was just 17 years old?
Ritchie Valens’ song “La Bamba” is one of early Rock and Roll’s most famous songs. But before Valens made the song so popular in 1958, it was a well-known Mexican Folk Song.

Listen to an excerpt of the traditional version of “La Bamba” [here](#). Then listen to Ritchie Valens’ version of “La Bamba” [here](#).

Use [this handout](#) to help compare and contrast the two versions of “La Bamba.”
Consider or ask a friend:

• What differences do you hear between Valens’ version and the traditional version?

• How does the song combine elements of a traditional Latin song with Rock and Roll?

• What do you think Valens was trying to express when he recorded this song?
Ritchie Valens is known as the Father of Latino Rock.
He turned the traditional folk song “La Bamba” into a Rock and Roll Classic.
He lived a short, but important life.
Use *this handout* to create a Ritchie Valens infographic, or use this handout to create a timeline of Valen’s life.
The movie “La Bamba” which was released in 1987, tells the story of Ritchie Valens. To watch it (with your parent’s permission) go to YouTube, Netflix, or Amazon Video.

Los Lobos covered “La Bamba” for this movie. The song topped the charts at #1 for 3 weeks in 1987. Watch them perform the song here.
CONNECT

Share it with us! Either you or an adult in your life can share your infographic and timeline 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!