

SACE Board of South Australia

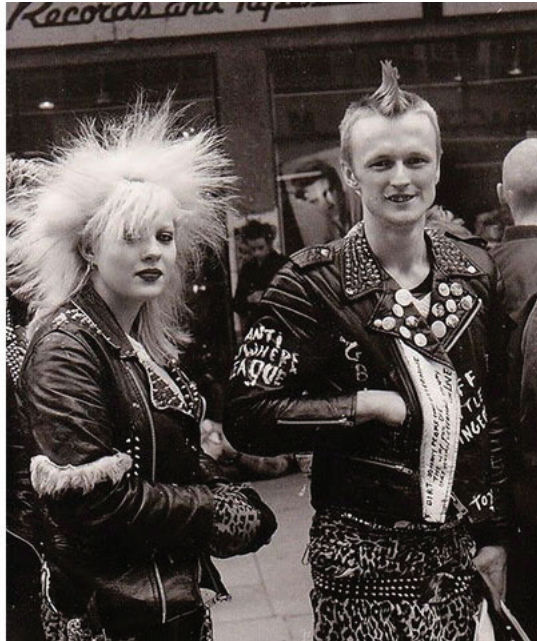
Sources to accompany the 2025 Modern History Examination

SECTION 2: SOURCES ANALYSIS

Introduction – Punk Rock

By the early 1970s, a growing number of rock music fans began feeling disconnected from popular music and performers, which they believed were becoming too sophisticated and commercialised. In addition, those fans also felt alienated from their societies that were facing increasing political and economic challenges. As a result of these factors, a new genre of music, known as punk rock (also known simply as punk), began to emerge in the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK) in the mid-1970s. It was characterised by short, fast-paced songs with aggressive melodies and raw singing styles. Punk lyrics reflected the musicians' and fans' dissatisfaction, and anger with established governments and corporations. Those musicians and fans also expressed their views through their appearance, manner, language, art and, publications.

SOURCE 1 — English punks photographed in 1982



Source: Unknown 1982, photograph, 'Vintage History in Pixels', Facebook post (16 March 2025), viewed 29 April 2025, www.facebook.com/VintageHistoryinPixels/photos/in-1982-a-moment-in-punk-rock-history-was-captured-outside-virgin-records-in-bri/1100546642118579/?_rdr

SOURCE 2 — A segment from a documentary about women and punk rock

Video transcript

Narrator: Punk rock was one of the most important social movements of the 21st century. Punk artists pushed radical social agendas and changed the music, film, fashion, and really, all aspects of culture. However, as it grew in influence, punk rock became fractured and toxic in many ways, and one of the groups that the movement was most toxic towards was women, who would be assaulted at shows and not taken seriously as artists.

Male punks became household names while females faded into the underground, and so, in the early 1990s, a group of women came up with a vision that would change punk rock and musical history forever. Riot Grrrl. Let's take a closer look.

When women's frustrations with the punk scene began to spill out in the early 1990s, it didn't actually start as music. Many women felt that they had no voice within the scene, so they created a space where they could speak freely. Fan zines¹. Zines had been adopted by the British punk scene in the 1970s as a do it yourself way of perpetuating punk culture and sticking it to the establishment.

However, some of these early fan zines set the stage for the sexism that would dominate punk rock over the next two decades. As far back as 1976, the London punk zine, Sniffin' Glue, wrote 'punks are not girls'.

¹ Fan zine = a specialty magazine created by fans for fans

Source: adapted from Riot Grrrl 2018, *The 90s Movement that Redefined Punk*, video, Polyphonic, viewed 29 April 2025, www.youtube.com

SOURCE 3 — A 1976 performance of *Anarchy in the UK* by Sex Pistols

Video transcript

Singer: Right now. Heh, heh, heh, heh. I am an antichrist. I am an anarchist. Don't know what I want, but I know how to get it. I wanna destroy the passers by. 'Cause I, I wanna be anarchy. No dog's body. Anarchy for the U.K. it's coming sometime and maybe. I give a wrong time, stop a traffic line. Your future dream is a shopping scheme. 'Cause I, I wanna be anarchy. In the city.

Source: adapted from The Sex Pistols 2016, *The Sex Pistols - Anarchy In The U.K. (official video) 1976*, video, TM, viewed 29 April 2025, www.youtube.com

SOURCE 4 — An extract from a journal article by American historian, Dillon Ferdinandi

In the gloomy ambience¹ during the 1970s in Britain, it was fitting for punks to present themselves as degenerates²; as signs of the highly publicised decay³ which perfectly represented the culture at the time. [They] expressed genuine aggression, frustration and anxiety. Punk rock style tore down sex, gender and race barriers. Men dressed as women and women dressed as men. Both men and women wore makeup and maintained frail body types. Clothes were typically grungy—punks wore leather jackets, boots, ripped shirts.

“Although it was often directly offensive (t-shirts covered in swear words) and threatening ... punk style was defined principally through the violence of its ‘cut-ups’⁴ ... a pin, a plastic peg, a television component, a razor-blade could be brought within the province⁵ of punk fashion. Punks would borrow any object to include in their ensemble. ... The punk community placed a high value on ... abnormality. They saw this crude style as a form of protest against clothing produced by the clothing industry. Punks would rather design and make their own clothes than support large corporations run by cultural elitists⁶.”

¹ Character of a place

² People of low moral character or standards

³ Decline in quality

⁴ Altered clothing

⁵ An area of specialised knowledge

⁶ People who believe traditional forms of culture are superior to others

Source: adapted from Ferdinandi D 2010, ‘*The Only Band that Matters: An Analysis of the Relationship between Punk Rock and Culture*’, ResearchGate, viewed 29 April 2025, www.researchgate.net/publication/304162847_The_Only_Band_That_Matters_An_Analysis_of_the_Relationship_Between_Punk_Rock_and_Culture

SOURCE 5 — A punk meme, circa 2005



Source: hecreative 2005, 'How to be punk', Pinterest illustration, hecreative, viewed 29 April 2025, au.pinterest.com/pin/aesthetic--39547302971317986/

SOURCE 6 — An excerpt from a 2024 magazine interview with punk singer, producer and presenter, Henry Rollins

"I think everybody should be allowed to have their own little version of it and not have to make their version of it be the version for everybody else. It had so much impact on so many people that it can't possibly be a blanket statement. To me it really gave me the opportunity to question authority and to really say, I don't have to do that. I was raised in an environment where one was to be very conformist¹. I went to a school where everyone was taught to sit down and shut up: I had parents who were the same and it turned me into, by conditioning², someone who would sit down and shut up.

So, for me, punk rock was very liberating³. It was like the prison doors swung open. And it was a prison, not my life, but now I could leave it. It's never been closed since. It gave me a lot of strength and much needed courage to hit back. And that's what punk rock means to me.

...Then, all of a sudden, you were hearing Anarchy in the UK or White Riot, and I just thought, Wow there's an anger I thought would never be possible. As Hubert Selby, the great writer said, I was an outlet looking for a scream, that was me. When I heard that music I was like, A-ha, this is it, my ship has come in! And I'm still on that ship."

¹ A person who behaves according to accepted standards

² Training a person to behave in an approved manner

³ Release from a restrictive situation

Source: adapted from Young S 2024, *Minor Threat were like The Beatles. I saw Ian MacKaye write Straight Edge on his mother's piano*, interview transcript, LouderSound.com, viewed 29 April 2025, www.loudersound.com/features/henry-rollins-on-black-flag-minor-threat-the-stooges-the-clash-beyonce-and-the-meaning-of-punk

