



MUSIC AND THE MOVEMENT: GIVING VOICE

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How did Sixties Soul help give voice to the Civil Rights movement?

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will explore the emergence of Sixties Soul music within the context of the Civil Rights movement of the early 1960s. Using Curtis Mayfield and the Impressions' iconic "People Get Ready" as a starting point, students will examine the connection between musical and political voices, and the ways in which popular song helped express the values of the movement and served as a galvanizing force for those involved.

While the lesson is presented in traditional fashion, with specific directions for use in the classroom, instructors are encouraged to put their own stamp on the material and use the resources provided in ways best suited to the contexts within which they are teaching. For example, instructors may set up viewing stations around the room to allow students to interact individually with the video and audio resources, rather than presenting them in a whole-class format. Or instructors may find that they wish to focus on only one portion of the lesson. The lesson as presented is merely one suggestion for how to use this rich material; instructors should strive to find new approaches that will resonate with their students.



OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):

- The contributions of such pioneering figures as Curtis Mayfield, Andrew Young, the Freedom Riders, and Martin Luther King Jr. to the Civil Rights movement and the emergence of Sixties Soul music
- The central importance of music to the progress of the Civil Rights movement
- The historical connection between religious and political themes both in the Civil Rights movement and in Sixties Soul

2. BE ABLE TO (SKILLS):

- Develop interpretive skills by analyzing song lyrics
- Identify connections between artistic expression and the broader social and political context in which that expression occurs
- Common Core: Students will read short texts to gather information in order to write a summary (CCSS Reading 1; CCSS Writing 2)
- Common Core: Students will read and listen to analyze lyrics to comprehend the meaning more fully (CCSS Speaking and Listening 2; CCSS Language 3) Language 5)

ACTIVITIES

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY:

1. Divide students into pairs for a Think-Pair-Share activity. Ask the following question: Why do people sing? Ask students to write down one or two ideas that come to mind, then share/compare answers with partner. You may wish to offer the following examples to help encourage a wide range of student responses:

- A child joins a church choir
- Your brother sings in the shower
- Slaves sang work songs and “field hollers” while they harvested cotton
- A mother sings a child to sleep

2. Ask for volunteer pairs to share their ideas with the class. Post sample answers on the board.

3. Next, discuss the following:

- Do people sing for one reason?
- Can someone be singing for more than one reason at the same time? What might be an example of this?
- Why do you think it has been so important for people to sing no matter the time they lived in or the circumstances they faced?
- Does singing change things? Why or why not?

PROCEDURE:

1. Distribute Handout 1: Andrew Young.
2. As students, remaining in pairs, to read the handout to each other, alternating by paragraph.
3. Play video clip of Young discussing Curtis Mayfield and “People Get Ready.”
4. Distribute Handout 2: “People Get Ready.”
5. Play the video of “People Get Ready.” Ask students to follow the lyrics as they listen.
6. Ask each pair to discuss briefly what they think the song is about. After they’ve done this, ask each student to write one sentence summarizing in his or her own words what the song is about.
7. Poll sample student responses.
8. Lead a classwide discussion built around the following questions:
 - Is “People Get Ready” a religious song? What might be some clues suggesting religious themes?
 - Is “People Get Ready” about something other than religion? What might that be?
 - What does the song mean when it says you “don’t need no baggage” and “don’t need no ticket”? To go where?
 - Whom do you think this song would most appeal to?
 - Why do you think this became such an important song in the Civil Rights movement, as Young discussed?
9. Ask students, remaining in pairs, to read the excerpt from the chapter essay about the song (on Handout 2), alternating by paragraph. Ask students to underline key words and phrases as they read and listen.
10. Discuss the following with the class:
 - What does the author believe made Mayfield’s music so important to the Civil Rights movement?
11. Play video clips one and two of Andrew Young discussing the role of singing and musical expression to the Civil Rights movement and his personal experience within the movement. (Explain to students that the “Bull” Connor Young refers to was the chief of the police and fire departments in Birmingham, Alabama, and was notorious for his use of attack dogs and fire hoses against peaceful marchers during the Civil Rights movement.)
12. Lead a classwide discussion built around the following questions:
 - What does Young mean by “moaning”? What do you imagine this “moaning” sounded like? Is that a form of singing? Why or why not?
 - What effect did the singing have on the marchers?
 - Why did the dogs stop barking? Why did the fireman put down his fire hose?
 - What effect did the singing have on the Civil Rights movement overall, according to Young?

SUMMARY ACTIVITY:

Distribute Handout 3: Freedom Riders and Song and Writing Prompt:

- Watch the clip of Martin Luther King Jr. on The Merv Griffin Show. What do you feel are the main points Dr. King makes? What is his explanation for violence at Civil Rights demonstrations? How would you describe his manner in this casual, talk-show context?

EXTENSIONS:

- Have students research the events surrounding Martin Luther King Jr.'s arrest in Birmingham, Alabama, on April 12, 1963, and analyze the "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" he authored during his incarceration, one of the most important documents of the Civil Rights era.
- Watch the clip of Rosa Parks on The Merv Griffin Show. Write an account of what happened to Parks based on her retelling, using your own words.
- The song "People Get Ready" has been performed and recorded by dozens of famous artists, from Bruce Springsteen to Joss Stone. Using YouTube and other online resources, ask students to find a recording of the song by another artist, and analyze the performance. Why does this song continue to have such resonance?
- Have students research the role Andrew Young played in the Civil Rights movement.
- Have students research the life and accomplishments of Curtis Mayfield.

STANDARDS

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

College and Career Readiness Reading Anchor Standards for Grades 6-12 for Literature and Informational Text

Reading 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

College and Career Readiness Writing Anchor Standards for Grades 6-12 in English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects

Writing 2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening for Grades 6-12

Speaking and Listening 2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language for Grades 6-12

Language 3: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

SOCIAL STUDIES – NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES (NCSS)

Theme 1: Culture

Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance

Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

Core Music Standard: Responding

Select: Choose music appropriate for a specific purpose or context.

Analyze: Analyze how the structure and context of varied musical works inform the response.

Interpret: Support interpretations of musical works that reflect creators' and/or performers' expressive intent.

Evaluate: Support evaluations of musical works and performances based on analysis, interpretation, and established criteria.

Core Music Standard: Connecting

Connecting 11: Relate musical ideas and works to varied contexts and daily life to deepen understanding.

RESOURCES

VIDEO RESOURCES

- Rosa Parks – Civil Rights (1983)
- Andrew Young – The Impact of Curtis Mayfield and the Impressions on the Civil Rights Movement (2007)
- The Impressions – People Get Ready (1965)
- Andrew Young – The Brutality Faced by Civil Rights Activists (2007)
- Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. – The Merv Griffin Show (1967)

FEATURED PEOPLE

- Curtis Mayfield

HANDOUTS

- Handout 1: Andrew Young
- Handout 2: “People Get Ready”
- Handout 3: Freedom Riders and Song
- Handout 4: Exit Ticket