

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

Music of Slavery and Oppression in the Mid-1800s from David Jones
Grade - 7-8

Length of class period – **one class period**

Inquiry – (What essential question are students answering, what problem are they solving, or what decision are they making?)

What was life like for African Americans, free and slave during the middle of the 19th Century?

In what ways were African Americans discriminated against during the middle of the 19th Century?

How did African Americans resist slavery and oppression during the middle of the 19th Century?

What role did music play in the lives of African Americans during the middle of the 19th Century?

Objectives (What content and skills do you expect students to learn from this lesson?)

Students will list the different roles of music in the lives of African Americans during the middle of the 19th Century.

Students will describe the conditions faced by slaves, ex-slaves and African American soldiers as told in songs.

Students will list ways in which African Americans fought back against slavery and oppression.

Materials (What primary sources or local resources are the basis for this lesson?)

The following websites provide access to information, lyrics, purchasing of music and some free performances of slavery songs.

www.gacoast.com/navigator/quimbys.html (Performance of hymns and other folk music from the Georgia Sea Islands.

www.negrospirituals.com/news-song/ (collections of spirituals from the 19th Century).

www.slaveryinamerica.org/scripts/sia/gallery.cgi (great resource for slavery in general)

www.pbs.org/wnet/slavery/experience/education/feature.html (great resource for slavery songs)

Song Analysis Worksheet

General Information:

Title of Song: _____

Where was the song written? _____

When was it written? _____ Author: _____

Observations/Descriptions/Analysis:

What is the mood of the song? What emotion(s) does it evoke? _____

Why do you think this recording was made? _____

What audience is the song intended for? _____

Describe / Explain what this song said about life for Irish Immigrants or life in general, in the United States during the American Civil War.

Is there a message the song is trying to convey? If so, what? _____

Historical Significance:

What historical event does this song portray? _____

When did the event take place? _____

Where did this event take place? _____

Who were the major participants in this event? _____

What was its significance relative to the American Civil War? _____

How well did the song reflect the meaning and feelings of the American Civil War?

Inferences:

Write down three inferences about life during the time period of the American Civil War.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Questions:

Write down three questions you still have after analyzing these songs.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Activities (What will you and your students do during the lesson to promote learning?)

Students will examine the lyrics of several slave songs. They will complete a song analysis worksheet to go with each song that they listen to. They will listen to two songs. Then, each group will present their information to the rest of the class. The teacher will lead a class discussion about what students found, recording information on white board or overhead projector or smart board. As part of the debriefing process, the teacher will ask students what information is missing, what questions they still have and ask students where they might go to find the answers.

How will you assess what student learned during this lesson?

Through oral discussion, you can assess what students have learned. You can also have students add another verse to one of the songs that they are working with. You can also have students draw pictures to match the activities or emotions represented in the song.

A possible extension activity: Often times, songs contained secret codes/clues for escaping along the Underground Railroad. You could have students choose a song and in pairs, create a map of a possible route to freedom based on the lyrics in the song.

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards –

- **formulate historical questions based on primary and secondary sources, including documents, eyewitness accounts, letters and diaries, artifacts, real or simulated historical sites, charts, graphs, diagrams and written texts;**
- **interpret data in historical maps, photographs, art works and other artifacts;**
- **describe examples of how societies throughout history have used various forms of visual arts, dance, theater, myths, literature and music to express their beliefs, sense of identity and philosophical ideas;**