

WS12 COLLEGE Lesson Plan

April Ballard, M.Ed, BS



Title: Songs of Freedom

SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK

Subjects: History, English, Critical Thinking

Length of Lesson: One Week of Classes

College Level

This episode of WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour features Sweet Honey In the Rock.

Sweet Honey in the Rock used to be called The Freedom Singers. Sweet Honey in the Rock were a very active part of the civil rights movement with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. They continue to be an active voice for equal rights. Over the years, 24 different women have graced the Sweet Honey in the Rock stage. Each member has brought a different story; their own story. Each member has looked to the future with hopes and goals for equality and freedom. Within this lesson plan design, we will explore the civil rights movement. We will also explore the power of the music and words of Sweet Honey In the Rock. Sweet Honey in the Rock write and sing about subjects that truly matter for the greater good of humanity. Their music seeks social justice. It was and is a movement. Their music moved people into embracing equality. This lesson has a particular emphasis on the ways in which music brings us together. The issues of segregation during the 1960's are discussed and the ways in it influenced the music. The founding member of Sweet Honey In the Rock is Louise Robinson.

The name of the band, "Sweet Honey in the Rock" is inspired by strength in spirit. Meaning, they ladies in this band are strong women. They are rocks. If you break open that rock, there is sweet honey inside. The message and goal of their music is to inspire people to embrace justice and equality. One of the goals of this lesson is for students to realize that the music of Sweet Honey in the Rock, just as the music of many other artists such as Bob Dylan, U2, and Joan Baez, gets people to listen. With this recognition, students will also be encouraged to realize that they may also do the same. Students are encouraged through the discussion and activities within this lesson, to create their own music/art to inspire change and encourage a sense of community. This episode begins with the artists expressing that they believe that as artists, they have a responsibility to the world and to themselves to share the message and help promote change and inspire people to embrace justice and equality.

Introduction: The words to one of the songs performed, "We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes" will be reflected upon as an opening journal prompt to prepare for discussion. It is suggested that the instructor begin with presenting some fundamental questions. Students are encouraged to reflect upon and write about the performance in which students from SCAPA perform with the artists. The words to this song include, "We shall overcome; we'll walk hand in hand; we'll walk hand in hand someday. Deep in my heart, I do believe we shall overcome someday." Students are encouraged to think about their role in encouraging change and relaying important messages through their own music. Fundamental questions to prompt discussion may include: "What do you want to work toward in your life?", "What inspires you?", "Who inspires you?", "What does freedom mean to you?", "What do you do and what can you do in the future to reach this?" "Who do you consider to be modern freedom singers and artists?" Students will write their responses to these questions to prepare for in class discussion. Youth keep the legacy of music and art going and strong.

Description of Lesson/Activities:

Sweet Honey in the Rock perform the Marvin Gaye song, "Mercy, Mercy Me" within this episode of WoodSongs. Students will brainstorm creating their own version of a freedom song. Meaning, have students first reflect on a song that they consider to inspire freedom. The students will select a song and then brainstorm creating different versions of the song. Students are encouraged to think of many genres of music and music from various cultures. How will they make it their own? Encourage students to include various instruments and also explore increasing and decreasing the tempo of the song and how this may relay the message in a different way. Students will also explore various ways to perform.

Within this episode, **Shirley Childress performs using sign language**. She is singing with her hands and her heart. This will encourage students to think about the various ways to communicate and deliver messages. Students will also write a reflective piece on why they feel their chosen song would be considered a freedom song. Students will write their own reflective piece and research the history of the song they have chosen as well. Students are thinking about a freedom song and creating their own version of it and then also writing their own song of freedom. They may use the already existing song as inspiration and the research of the artist as inspiration as well.

Students will research segregation during the 1960's. Students will be asked to write a four to five page informational paper with at least five reliable sources. Students will learn about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and all that he did to pave the way for equality. In addition, the paper will also focus on ways in which music helped people to come together and encouraged equality and togetherness. Students are also encouraged to think of times in their lives in which music has encouraged a sense of community.

Students will research musical artists and the ways that their music inspires freedom and equality; how is their music a social justice movement? Students will research the following artists to learn more about their music and message: Sweet Honey in the Rock (featured artist on this episode of WoodSongs), Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, and U2. Students will also select an artist in which they research and find to be an artist of freedom. Students are encouraged to explore the importance of "voice" in a free society. In addition, they will expand upon this and reflect upon the question of, "has the internet really made expression 'free' or is it now buried by the sheer volume of 'noise'?"

Students will be asked to also think about how music from artists such as **Sweet Honey, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, and U2** move beyond this noise and really reach people. Who are freedom singers in today's music? This will first be written as a journal entry and students will begin brainstorming as they research and gather information and sources. Students will certainly listen to the songs as well. Some song suggestions may include the following: "Blowing in the Wind" by Joan Baez, Bob Dylan's, "The Times They Are- a-Changin", "Maggie's Farm", (and many other Bob Dylan songs). Students are encouraged to take up to a week on this lesson, as there is a very important message and much to listen to and learn that will encourage them to create change and social justice movements of their own. This reflection may be a good journal prompt or discussion board post.

Goals & Objectives:

- Students will understand the Civil Rights Movement
- Students will understand historical information regarding the Civil Rights Movement and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
- Creativity encouraged through creating their own unique version of a freedom song
- Knowledge of music as applied to creating their own version of a song/sounds of the instruments
- Builds communication and critical thinking skills via discussion and journal writing
- Encourages descriptive writing
- Connection to their life experience when selecting a song
- Students will learn the ways that music encourages equality by listening and researching freedom artists and the musical messages of artists featured in this episode of WoodSongs
- Students will reflect upon what it means to have a voice
- Students will learn the ways that they may deliver important social justice messages and encourage community by designing their own music and/or art