



## WS23 COLLEGE Lesson Plan

WoodSongs Classroom  
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**Title:** The Statue

**Subject:** Injustice, Racism, the Importance of Community and Creating Change

**Length of Lesson:** Three Class Periods (May vary depending on class times)

**Introduction:** The song, “The Statue”, written and performed by Michael Johnathon, shares an incredibly important message. The video expands even further on this message and delivers in a very powerful way, the fact that racial injustice still exists in our world today. It is very important that we begin to teach love and acceptance of all. Michael is doing just that with this powerful song. It is our hope that youth will consider these words and what they view in the video, and begin to take steps to create positive change in their environments. This set of lessons is designed specifically to share the message and importance of treating all with compassion.

**The STATUE is NOT a song about literal statues ...** it is about the symbols of racial violence, injustice and the political divide remaining between people and races, black and white, conservative and liberal in America. It is a lyrical condemnation of prejudice and racism and the hurt it causes. The point is simple: unless you solve the reason the statues were put up in the first place, bringing them down will accomplish nothing.

**The video** opens with the words of Abraham Lincoln who set the template for the new America, the new society ... and ends with the words of Martin Luther King Jr who shows that we really haven't achieved that goal of peace between communities. The video uses bold imagery to show the foolishness and injury of racism. The confederate flag, a symbol of hurt to many, is used as a tool of comfort, there-by removing its power as a symbol of hurt.

**The film** is about a confederate woman protecting a black child at the height of a Civil War battle. The child is injured and as the woman runs out of the 1862 cabin she enters 2019 to see the issues that injured the child are STILL being fought with violence. Nothing has been learned and instead of helping, people take pictures with their cell phones. In the end she lays the lifeless body of the child at the feet of the statue as a statement against the violence and hurt she sees.

### **THE FOUNDATION OF RACISM:**

“If you can convince the lowest white man he’s better than the best colored man, he won’t notice you’re picking his pocket. Hell, give him somebody to look down on, and he’ll empty his pockets for you.” As explained by President Lyndon B. Johnson during an interview with reporter Bill Moyers

## The LYRICS

**"You hung your soul from the limb of a tree ..."** conjures up the hatred between the races, but it is NOT about hanging slaves. It is what the white race did to THEMSELVES by those acts of violence. They may have hung a black man's body ... but they actually hung their own souls, their own consciences from the limb of those same trees.

**"You might pull it down but the rope remains around the neck of Robert E. Lee ..."** makes the poetic point that pulling down a statue does not remove the REASON it's there. We learned in Charlottesville VA that a piece of rock, a carved image of marble, is not as important as the anger and emotion it represents.

### Goals/Objectives:

- To understand the importance of treating all with compassion.
- To understand the way that music builds community and brings people together.
- To understand the history of the civil rights movement.
- To understand the ways in which racism still exists today.
- To understand key moments and historical leaders of the civil rights movement.
- To understand presenting an idea in various ways, including music, art, and written expression.

### Course Activities:

#### Activity 1:

Begin by having students respond to a few fundamental questions which are as follows:

1. Identify ways that hatred and racism still exist today.
2. What do you know about the following leaders of the civil rights movement: Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr, and Rosa Parks?
3. What other civil rights leaders are you aware of and what are their achievements?
4. What are some ways that you can work to encourage love and stop hate?
5. What is significant about using the rebel flag as a source of comfort, the cell phones and laying the child at the feet of a statue?

Have students respond in a journal entry, with the option to share with the class if they choose to do so.

**Activity 2:** Reserve library or computer lab time in which students have time to research. This project will have them write their own ballad to demonstrate the idea of more love and less hate.

**Objective:** Encourage students to really put thought into this and think about the injustice and hatred in the world, and in turn, how we can work to create a better world with love and compassion. The art of music and writing is one way to share this message. Then, this could lead to our actions and the actions of others being that of love and not hate.

**Ballad:** A ballad is a narrative song in which each stanza of text is sung to the same melody. Brought to the American colonies by the earliest British settlers, the ballad form has remained in oral tradition through the present day, particularly in rural parts of the southeastern United States.

(<http://www.encyclopediaofappalachia.com/entry.php?rec=31>)

***Tips for writing a ballad as listed on Purdue Owl:***

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

Ballads tell of an event. They were often used to spread the news, provide entertainment, or create a "bigger than real life" story.

### **Ballad Writing Tips (Purdue Owl)**

- often have verses of four lines
- usually have a rhyming pattern: either abac, aabb or acbc (usually the easiest to rhyme)
- repetition often found in ballads
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- entire stanzas can be repeated like a song's chorus
- lines can be repeated but each time a certain word is changed
- a question and answer format can be built into a ballad: one stanza asks a question and the next stanza answers the question
- Ballads contain a lot of dialogue.
- Action is often described in the first person
- Two characters in the ballad can speak to each other on alternating lines
- Sequences of "threes" often occur: three tasks or three events, for example.
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**Activity 3:** This activity will be a research assignment in which students research a historical civil rights leader and include their message and achievements. This paper should be at least five pages and include at least 5 reliable sources

**Activity 4:** In this activity, students will research poetry that expresses overcoming obstacles.

- Students will research poetry that speaks to them and that goes along with the message of treating all with love and compassion.
- The assignment will have students select two poems that they feel relay the message of less hate, more love.
- The assignment will ask students to explain why they've chosen the poems and how they interpret the meaning of them.