

# **Our Songs, Our Story: From Spirituals to Hip-Hop The Use of Music in the African-American Culture**

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## **Overview**

This unit is designed for an eleventh-grade English 3 Honors class at William L. Sayre High School. Sayre is a comprehensive neighborhood high school located in the West Philadelphia section of the city. The school population is relatively small. Sayre has approximately 600 students of which 99% is African-American. All students qualify for a free/reduced price lunch program.

There is a special education population at Sayre that include multiple disabilities, life skills, emotional support, as well as learning support classes. We do have inclusive classrooms where students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) matriculate in general education classrooms. We also have a few English as a Second Language Learners (ESL) as well. Currently, there are no children with learning disabilities in the 2014-2015 English 3 honors class. However, next year, when this unit is to be implemented, there will be at least one student with SLD and one ESL student in the class. Therefore, some of the materials will need to be modified and differentiate to accommodate different learners.

The English 3 honors class is a smaller class of no more than twenty students that are selected based on their academic performance in English 2 as well as their behavior from the previous year. Many of the students were chosen for English 2 Honors; however it is not a requirement to be in the English 3 Honors class.

I took this course because I am always imploring my students to be lifelong learners. I am learning new content which allows me to open new doors to my students. I want

them to see their history content in a new light. I want them to see that history has a different perspective when taught from English class lenses.

This unit is to help the students become more proficient at reading and writing across the curriculum. This unit fits into the School District of Philadelphia's curriculum because there is a push and an emphasis to do more writing across the curriculum. It is important that students develop their English language arts skills using a variety of mediums and texts both fictional and informational. This unit intends to incorporate an analysis of the use of music and hymns as means of communication among the slaves in order to understand how the use of music was used to fight for their freedom and participate in their own way in a revolution.

### **Rationale**

I want my students to be able to relate to the importance of music in the African-American culture. It is important for them to be able to make real world connections to historical times. I want them to understand how the hidden messages and agendas that can be found in slave hymns and spirituals are very similar to today's hip-hop. I also believe it to be important for our students to understand different aspects of slave culture in America and how important music is to a culture.

### **Slave Culture and Communication in America**

There are a lot of different theories about the origins of the slave songs. Some say that they provide a historical account of slave life; others believe that slave songs were associated with their traditional African heritage and cultures; still others believe that these songs were used to address their day to day anguish. (Fisher, 1953) Although it is impossible to know the true origin I intend to explore a few theories.

I want the students to understand how the slaves came from a variety of cultures and tribal groups that all spoke different languages and dialects. (Leatherberry, 1999) This fact already made it difficult for slaves to be a cohesive unit because communication would be difficult. This fact worked in favor of slave owners as a means of segregating and controlling the slaves. As another means of controlling the slave population, slave masters attempted to ban many of their native cultures and traditions. (Leatherberry, 1999) African slaves used their traditional drums for the purpose of communication. These could be heard from a far distance. (Sullivan, 2001) Therefore, slave masters banned the use of percussive instruments including drums for fear that they were being used to transmit messages amongst the slaves on different plantations. (Hobson, 2008) Slaves were not deterred by the loss of their instruments. Instead, they demonstrated their resiliency by learning to adapt their behavior. They learned to use their hands and feet as means of creating a beat or percussion to their songs. (Leatherberry, 1999) This

correlates to the music of today because many of the hip-hop songs students listen to today carry very heavy percussion beats throughout.

### Coded Messages in Negro Spirituals

It is one belief that slave masters often used their religion, Christianity, as a means of controlling their slave population. Slave masters used Christianity to convince the slaves that their enslavement was ordained by God. (Leatherberry, 1999) They introduced Christian principles to the slaves who in turn sang biblically based songs. (Lawrence-McIntyre, 1987) It was believed that the slaves were more effective workers when they sang spirituals so it was allowed. (Sullivan, 2001)

Although it would appear that the slaves were singing basic songs as they worked, they were clever enough to pass messages along in the coded lyrics of the songs. An example is the spiritual song 'Steal Away to Jesus'. It would appear that this song was about getting home to Jesus and heaven but it was actually a song about preparing to escape to freedom. (Lawrence-McIntyre, 1987) These coded messages were a means by which slaves resisted their oppression. (Smith, 1984)

It has been debated whether slave masters were truly aware of the meanings of these hidden messages. However, it is generally held that the slave masters truly believed that the songs were no more than biblically-based work songs. (Sullivan, 2001) Even with this belief, many slave masters banned slaves from singing or congregating outside of the field, slave quarters, or performing for them. (Sullivan, 2001)

This is only one perspective. Another perspective is that through songs, slaves were attempting to mimic their tradition of folk tales which often including singing, gestures, and sometimes acting. (Blassingame, 1972) It has been stated that plantation owners often limited access to music because of the potential for articulating their discontent. (Blassingame, 1972)

### The Rise of Secular Negro Music Post Emancipation

It has been noted that the road to freedom for the freed slave was not an easy one. Although they were technically free, they still faced oppression and poor treatment. However, they did not have the right to protest in the normal fashion. (Levine, 1978) They had no political clout, they could not vote, **they did get the right to vote and had an important political impact]** they could not actively demonstrate against those that were oppressing them. (Levine, 1978) Therefore, black song is where they could express their personal feelings, reactions, messages, and innuendos. (Levine, 1978) Lawrence Levine stated it well when he wrote

” Negro songs don’t tend to weave narrative elements to create a story but instead accumulate images to create a feeling. These characteristics have made black song an especially effective medium for complain, protest, and the venting of frustrations. These same qualities, of course, also make it difficult to interpret the meaning of many black songs.” (Levine, 1978)

This speaks directly to the rationale of this unit. Although today African-Americans as a whole do have the right to vote and participate in the political process teenagers do not. Yes, they have the right to protest, however, as previously stated, that often does not end well for those that participate or their local communities due to the rise in violence and the potential for the protest to unfortunately evolve into rioting. This passage speaks to the importance of music as another means of expressing frustration.

### Spirituals and their Role in Civil Rights Movement

One of the most famous anthems of the Civil Rights Movement is “We Shall Overcome.” (The Smithsonian, 2015) However, many probably don’t know that the anthem was modified from a tobacco work song from the 1940’s, which have been used in the fields since the time of slavery. (The Smithsonian, 2015) This wasn’t the only slaver era song that was adapted. Many hymns, spirituals, and songs were resurrected and/or had their lyrics changed to represent the new fight for civil freedom. (The Smithsonian, 2015) Although many of the songs in from the civil rights era were work songs, the correlation is how the messages passed through the music over time and from generation to generation.

### Today’s Hidden Message Music – Hip-Hop

I hope to incorporate the student’s natural love of music to teach them how today’s hip-hop lyrics may have deeper meaning than they initially appear. I want them to understand that the history of hip-hop goes back to its African roots: drums. Many early hip-hop songs began with extending different drum beats to form a musical basis for their lyrics. (Chang, 2005) Although I want them to appreciate the complexity of the beats and the sway of the music I want them to begin to associate the importance of having a message in your music. I will be able to highlight various songs like Self-Destruction by the Boogie Down Productions, or Retrospect for Life by Common.

This unit was chosen specifically due to the turbulent times around us. I teach almost all African-American students, many of whom are male. They have expressed in class their anger and frustration about the violence against African-Americans by authority, male in particular. Although my classroom is a forum for them to express themselves, we have seen in the past year that often the youth are not talking about things, they are choosing to take action. They are choosing to take to the streets in protest. Although I understand the desire and need to express themselves in that way, it at times has led to further violence

and miscommunication with those in authority. Although I cannot stop them if they wished to express themselves in such a way, I want to teach them that there are other means of expressing their feelings and frustration. I want them to understand how music has been a part of our history and culture and promoted change in various ways. I hope they learn to channel their feelings into powerful pieces that could be heard and understood by many.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of the unit will include the following:  
Students will be able to (SWBAT):

- Work in cooperative groups to analyze and describe a coded spiritual from the slavery era in order to discuss how such songs addressed a slaves personal experience
- Analyze how relationships between humans and the physical environment lead to the formation of places in order to understand how it creates a sense of personal and community identity.
- Experience analyzing oral tradition, biography, and song in order to understand their role as historical evidence.
- Create verses to a coded spiritual that refers to a current news article create in order to present an original coded song in class.
- Create an opportunity in order to share their coded messages through reading, singing, a PowerPoint presentation, or another medium

## **Strategies**

There are a lot of different strategies that are useful in the classroom that will be utilized in this unit. For example:

### *Grouping*

I use grouping often. For this lesson we will sit in a circle as a whole class, we will also break into pairs. At certain points during the unit, the students may be divided into smaller groups of four (4) as well.

### *Group Roles*

You may choose to assign group roles. I find it beneficial because it helps groups stay on task and organized when each person knows what they have to do. In this unit there will be four roles. The first role is group leader- this person is to keep the group on task and moving throughout the entire activity. The second role is recorder- this person is

responsible for taking notes and writing on the chart paper. The third role is presenter- this is the person that will 'teach' their section of the article to the rest of the class. The final role is materials collector- this is the person that gets the highlighters, graphic organizers, chart paper, etc for the group. They are also responsible for returning all materials before the end of the period. To assist the students in picking/assigning roles, provide a sheet detailing each role and a line so that a person's name can be assigned.

### *Jigsawing*

This is a strategy that emphasizes cooperative learning by providing students an opportunity to actively help each other build comprehension. I assign students to reading groups (you can group them by reading level or by proximity if they are relatively on the same levels). Each group is responsible for becoming an "expert" on one section of the assigned material and then "teaching" it to the other teams in the class.

### *Graphic Organizers*

I started my career as a special education teacher and found that *all* students benefit from the use of graphic organizers. For this unit, I will be utilizing a Cornell Note taker graphic organizer, as well as a guided note sheet for my special needs students.

### *Videos/Songs*

I believe that children learn through different modalities. Therefore, I will use songs and videos to help the students understand the importance of music throughout this lesson. This is a great strategy to help visual/auditory learners. You can use several different sources from actual videotapes, DVDs, or Youtube. If your school network does not allow you to use Youtube, you may be able to find many useful videos on Schooltube, which is a video site for teachers. One last tip is if you find a good video on Youtube and cannot access it in your building you can use an online clip converter program and download the video.

### *Ask Three Before You Ask Me*

When conducting a class discussion, I want the students to learn and engage with each other more so than with me. Therefore, I also ask the students to agree or disagree with the statements of their classmate. The student must state whether they agree or disagree and then they must explain why. This automatically makes students provide supporting evidence for their position. This is important because the more comfortable they get with this process verbally it should carry over to their writing. I generally ask two students if they agree/disagree with the first position before weighing in. If you wish to give more autonomy to the students, you can let the students choose the next speakers as well.

### *Highlighters*

This may seem like a basic strategy but I believe it is very important. I provide students with multiple color highlighters so that they can distinguish between main points and key ideas. However I keep a legend on the board so that they always use the same colors throughout the class.

### *Parking Lot*

Each group will be given a pack of sticky notes. They can use them to write down any questions they may have and they can place their question on the chart paper “parking lot” on the wall. I stop mid-period and towards the end to answer any questions in the “lot”. Each group is given the same color post-it notes so that no one group feels singled out for having a question.

### *Technology*

Our kids are growing up in a digital world. They are very adept at using computers, cell phones, and tablets. For this unit, the students will be taken into the computer lab which has Macbooks. They will be taught how to use the software, GarageBand to create an audio track for their song presentation. If you don’t have access to this level of technology, you could find a general instrumental and play it in class and have the students write their song to the same music. I also utilize the Smartboard in my classroom to share information with my class a whole including videos, programs, and notes.

### *Music*

I often use music to transition from one activity to another. I use songs that the students choose to play during the do now activity. However, with these do now activities, music is the activity.

## **Classroom Activities/Lesson Plans**

### Lesson Plan Day One- The History of Our Past

**Objective:** Students will be able to experience analyzing oral tradition, biography, and song in order to understand their role as historical evidence. This objective will last for the first two to three lessons.

**Do Now:** Students head a page properly for a do now. They will copy the prompt from the board onto their page. The prompt will state: write down what you believe is the meaning of the song. Write down any lyrics that speak to the meaning of the song. I will play the song, swing low sweet chariot twice from the PBS website. (PBS, 2015) Once

the kids have written out their understanding of the song, we will compare response and what parts of the lyrics supporting their understanding.

**Direct Instruction:** (The students will be given a handout with the lyrics from the song as provided on the PBS website) The students will review the lyric sheet with their seat partner (pair activity) to see if their cited lyrics were correct. We will then discuss the various meanings they came up with before reading the text. We will then review the textbook [citation needed] to review the historical significance of spirituals. The students would then take notes on the topic from a prepared PowerPoint.

During the first day of instruction, there would be no guided or independent practice. Dr. Donyall Dickey, my former assistant superintendent, taught us that we should not feel pressed to have kids move onto guided/independent practice until we are sure that they have a strong understanding of the topic. Therefore, this lesson would end with the guided notes.

Lesson Plan Day Two: Group Text Jigsaw

**Do Now:** The students will listen to a second spiritual, “Wade in the Water”. However this time there will be no video. The students would listen to the song twice and attempt to decipher the meaning of the lyrics. We would review as a group the purpose of decoding the messages and then decipher the song together.

**Direct Instruction:** The class would be divided into groups of four to jigsaw an article. The class will be given different sections of the article African-American Music as Rebellion: From Slavesong to Hip-Hop by Megan Sullivan. Each group (there would be five) would be responsible for a different section of the text. The group would have to assign a student to each group role (Group leader, recorder, presenter, materials collector).

They would have to use cornell notes to highlight the main points of their section of the article and the supporting points. I would provide the group with multiple copies of a Cornell note graphic organizer. The students would spend the rest of the period reading their section of the article and determining the main ideas and supporting facts/details.

**Homework:** The students would have to come to class with their sections read and all notes made on the pages. They would be informed to be ready to work with their team members to solidify one list of main ideas and supporting details for their section of the article.

Lesson Plan Day Three: Peer Taught Article Share

**Do Now:** The class would divide their desk back into their groups. They would have 15 minutes to compare notes with each other and then decided on their main ideas and supporting details as a group. The group recorder would be responsible for compiling the group list. At the conclusion of the time, the team materials collector would come to the front a collect chart paper and markers so that the group could create their presentation.

**Guided Practice:** The group recorder would then work with the team to create a poster using the chart paper provided. The group will then use the poster to teach the class their section of the article. Each group would have twenty minutes to create their chart. At the conclusion of the twenty minutes we would start with the presentations. The groups not presenting would be provided with Cornell note graphic organizers to take notes on the presentations. We would continue the presentations until all groups have gone. It may require some time the following day.

Lesson Plan Day Four: Hip-Hop for Social Change

**Objective:** Student will be able to create an original song with a coded message in order to disseminate their message of social change to their classmates.

**Do Now:** I post the question on the board: “Tell me your favorite hip-hop song. Why is this your favorite song? Is there a meaning to the song? If yes, what is it?” As a class we will compile a list of songs and their meanings according to the students. We will then correlate this activity back to the article the students read previously.

**Direct Instruction:** The students would be given a handout with the directions for the activity. They would learn that they would each have to pick a social issue of today to code into their own song. They would have to determine how they would disseminate their song so that their message would spread.

The class would be given instructions on how to use Garageband on the Macbooks. I would use the Smartboard to project Garageband onto the screen and as a class we would walk through the steps of using it to create a song.

**Guided Practice:** The students would be given 3 or 4 days in the computer lab to work on their individual songs. They would have to create the lyrics, music and the meaning. The students would then email me a list of the song’s lyrics which I would copy for the class. The student would also have to email me a reflection paper explaining they social issue, why they chose it, and the hidden message in their song.

When they were all done with their songs, as a class we would listen to and try to decode each of the songs for its hidden messages. The students would be able to earn bonus points if they were able to decipher the message in the song.

**Homework:** They would have to do one final reflection paper where they discuss what they learned about the importance of music in the African-American culture, how it is relevant to today, and what they learned about various social issues through their classmates. They could either email or hand in a hard copy of this reflection paper at the end of the unit.

## **Content Standards**

The standards for this unit will be taken directly from the Pennsylvania Common Core English Language Arts Standards. The standards will include the following:

### **1.2-Reading Informational Text**

Students read, understand, and respond to informational text—with an emphasis on comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and making connections among ideas and between texts with focus on textual evidence.

CC.1.2.11–12.I - Analyze foundational U.S. and world documents of historical, political, and literary significance for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features.

### **1.4- Writing**

Students write for different purposes and audiences. Students write clear and focused text to convey a well-defined perspective and appropriate content.

CC.1.4.11–12.C - Develop and analyze the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic; include graphics and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

CC.1.4.11–12.I -Distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims; develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.

### **1.5 Speaking and Listening**

Students present appropriately in formal speaking situations, listen critically, and respond intelligently as individuals or in group discussions.

CC.1.5.11–12.A - Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade-level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

## **Bibliography**

### Teacher Resources

Abrahams, R. D. (1992). *Singing the Master: The Emergence of African-American Culture in the Plantation South*. New York: Penguin Books.

The information in this book is a bit dated. I appreciated that in the introduction they basically warn about the stereotypical depictions forthcoming in the text. They mainly focused on the role of music in celebrations and festive times which was not the focus of this unit. However, it does have an extensive bibliography which may be helpful for further background information.

Blassingame, J. W. (1972). *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*. New York: Oxford University Press.

This is a wonderful source of background information on slave culture. It offers extensive background information on how Africans came to be enslaved. Although the origin of slavery was not the focus of this unit, it was interesting and would be a good resource to share with the African-American history teacher. I utilized this resource as background for understanding the development of slave songs.

Brown, S. (1953). Negro Folk Expression: Spirituals, Seculars, Ballads and Work Songs. *Phylon*, 45-61.

This was a helpful article. This article distinguishes and explains the difference between spirituals, ballads, and work songs. It is a good source of background information and can be used to find additional

Dubois, L. (2006). *Slave revolution in the Caribbean, 1789-1804 : a brief history with documents*. New York: Palgrave Mcmillan .

This document is what prompted this unit. In reading this document, they discuss how after the slave revolt in Haiti, plantation owners in South Carolina were afraid of the news traveling in articles and papers and the slaves finding out about the revolt. I wondered why they were so afraid considering most slaves could neither read nor write? This is an interesting document about how and why the slave revolt occurred in Haiti and its effect on America.

Fisher, M. M. (1953). *Negro Slave Songs in the United States*. New York: Cornell University Press.

This is a good resource for gaining a better understanding of the various theories about the origins of slave spirituals. It discusses how/why the various theories were created and how/why they were or were not disproven.

Gavins, R. (1989, October). North Carolina Black Folklore and Song in the Age of Segregation: Toward Another Meaning of Survival. *The North Carolina Historical Review*, 66(4), 412-442.

This is a good article that discussed black folklore which can be used as background understanding for slave songs.

Hobson, J. (2008, Winter). Everybody's Protest Song: Music as Social Protest in the Performance of Marian Anderson and Billie Holiday. *Signs*, 33(2), 443-448.

This article was not helpful for this unit but could be an interesting aside for a music teacher who is willing to work on this as a cross-curriculum unit. This is also an interesting article for a social studies class studying the civil rights movement.

Jones, A. (2004). The Foundational Influence of Spirituals in African-American Culture: A Psychological Perspective. *Black Music Research Journal*, 251-26.

This article was not helpful for this unit. It is more focused on the spiritual and religious aspects of the music which was not the focus of this unit.

Lawrence-McIntyre, C. C. (1987). The Double Meanings of the Spirituals. *Journal of Black Studies*, 17(4), 379-401.

This is an excellent resource for this unit. It was helpful because it actually breaks down several different spirituals and looks at the meaning behind the lyrics. You could find audio versions of the songs and print the lyrics out and have the class decipher the songs as a group.

Levine, L. W. (1978). *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*. New York: Oxford University Press.

This book spoke directly the rationale behind this unit. It has great background information that speaks directly to the rise of black songs from pre and post emancipation. It also has a very detailed bibliography which provided a wealth of other resources.

Moore, L. (1971). The Spiritual: Soul of Black Religion. *American Quarterly*, 658-676.

This article was not very helpful for this unit. It was more focused on the religious connection and background of the spiritual. This article was not aligned to the focus of this unit.

Morris, C. (1998, December). The Articulation of Two Worlds: The Master-Slave Relationship Reconsidered. *The Journal of American History*, 85(3), 982-1007.

This article was not helpful at all. I thought when I read the abstract that it would shed light on different aspects of the slave-master relationship including how/why they feared communication and assembly by the slavers. However, this article mainly focused on the role of family and child-bearing by slaves.

Ownby, T. (1993). *Black and White Cultural Interaction in the Antebellum South*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

This book was not helpful for this unit. It did have a section on slave music. However, it mainly focused on the relations between slaves and white persons.

Schechner, R. (1995, Spring). Problematizing Jargon. *TDR*, 39(1), 7-9.

Although this article was not useful for this particular unit it is a good article. I believe that this article would be helpful to use in a Language Arts class to discuss slang, code switching, and the like. I would use this for another unit.

Schweninger, L. (2014). Slave Culture. In *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* (pp. 235-239). The University of North Carolina Press.

This article was not helpful to the focus of this unit. However, it may be a good resource for the history teacher in your building.

Shuler, J. (2009). Chapter 4: Negro Acts: Communication and African-American Declarations of Independence. In J. Shuler, *Calling Out Liberty: The Stono Slave Rebellion and the Universal Struggle for Human Rights* (pp. 96-115). University Press of Mississippi.

This was not a useful document for this unit. However, it would be a great resource to share with the African-American History teacher.

Simms, D. M. (1966, Winter). The Negro Spiritual: Origins and Themes. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 35(1), 35-41.

This article was not as helpful as I thought it would be. This article talked about the various themes but didn't really address the hidden or underlying messages in the songs. However, if you need general information about spirituals and their themes this is a good resource.

Simon, S. (2008, December 5). Trying to Make Old Negro Spirituals Resonate With the Hip-Hop Generation. *The Wall Street Journal*.

This is a short article that speaks directly to the rationale of the unit. I am listing this as a teacher resource because it was used as background information for this unit. However, this article is written so that it could be jigsawed by the class as well.

Smith, J. D. (1984, April). The Unveiling of Slave Folk Culture. *Journal of Folklore Research*, 21(1), 47-62.

This was a very helpful article. It addresses the various aspects of slave culture but it begins by looking at through the lens of music. It was a very easy read and if done slowly could also be used as a student resource.

Walling, K.-F. (1999). *Republican Empire: Alexander Hamilton on War and Free Government*. University of Kansas .

This was an article we discussed during seminar. It discusses a lot about America and its rise as an empire. Although it doesn't speak directly to the unit, it was where the original idea began to germinate. It also discusses various other cultures, like the Native Americans which could be useful as well.

Weinstein, A. (1979). *American Negro Slavery*. New York: Oxford University Press.

This book had a section on slave songs and slave consciousness. It was helpful because it led me to Lawrence Levine whose book began a great resource for this unit.

White, J. (1983). Veiled Testimony: Negro Spirituals and the Slave Experience. *Journal of American Studies*, 17(2), 251-263.

This was a very helpful article. I used this as background information for the rationale for this unit. It is full of resources that can be used for further research. It also speaks directly to the double messages of slave songs.

Williams, W. A. (1970). *The Roots of the Modern American Empire*. New York : Vintage Books.

This was a really good background article for the teacher. I learned a lot about the various ethnic groups that played a role in the rise of the American Empire. It gave me a lot of interesting ideas, like topics for debating, the different races/ethnicities importance to the growth of America, and a lot of interesting background information.

## Student Resources

Carawan, G. C. (1990). *Sing For Freedom*. Bethlehem: Sing Out Corporation.

This is good source of spirituals to share with the students. They have lyrics and the music in the book. This is a good resource to make the lesson cross-curricular. This book could be shared with the music teacher and these songs could be taught because the music and lyrics are printed in the book.

Chang, J. (2005). *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*. St. Martin Press. Retrieved from [http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_lesson/what-is-hip-hop.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/what-is-hip-hop.shtml)

This is a good lesson that could be taught in an english class. It provided good background information on the rise of the hip-hop culture. It would be a fun and interesting lesson for students.

Leatherberry, E. C. (1999). An Overview of African Americans' Historical, Religious, and Spiritual Ties to Forests. *Society of American Foresters* , 452-457.

This is a wonderful article full of background information that would be easy to share with the students. Also, this is another good resource to make the lesson cross-curricular. This article could be shared with the science teacher in your building. This article discusses the role the forest played in the slaves quest for freedom as well as the role the forest played in spiritual songs.

PBS. (2015, March ). *Hidden Messages in Spirituals*. Retrieved from PBS: <http://www.pbs.org/black-culture/shows/list/underground-railroad/classroom/hidden-messages-spirituals/>

This is a great source for spiritual songs to share with the students. They have audio files that can be played in class. They also have copies of the lyrics that can be copied and shared with the students so that they can follow along as the song plays.

The Smithsonian. (2015, March ). *Smithsonian Folkways: Voices of Struggle*. Retrieved from The Smithsonian: <http://www.folkways.si.edu/voices-struggle-civil-rights-movement-1945-1965/african-american-spoken-word-protest/article/smithsonian>

This is an excellent resource. This website has photos, video, and audio about the songs of the civil rights movement. It gives you the background and history of the music of the movement. It also has featured artist. This is also another great resource to share with both the African-American or American history teacher as well as the music teacher in your building to create a truly cross-curricular unit.

Sullivan, M. (2001). African-American Music as Rebellion: From Slavesong to Hip-Hop. *Discoveries*, 3, 21-39.

This is a wonderful article to have the students jigsaw. It is divided into different sections so it is easy to break into chunks for a group activity. It is also a good source of information for the students to learn about the past and connect it to the present. I think the students will enjoy this article immensely.