

Music of the Civil Rights Movement

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In this unit, elementary school students will focus on the guiding questions: To what extent does music play a role in culture? How does society influence musicians? How does music influence social change? Following the Delaware Music State Standards, students will sing the freedom songs “Oh! Freedom,” “This Little Light of Mine,” “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me ‘Round” and “We Shall Overcome”. Classes will learn how spirituals were collected, adapted and sung by civil rights activists. They will then sing and accompany these songs with percussion instruments. Students will learn how these songs became important in the Civil Rights Movement from 1954-1968. Music of the Civil Rights Movement unit also is collaborative with the Delaware Social Studies Common Core Standards in that students summarize important ideas and events for the Civil Rights Movement and describe how men and women such as Malcolm X, Medgar Evers, Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. influenced the movement. Description of the functions of freedom songs and the conditions under which these songs were sung and performed will be discussed. Learners will explain how music can motivate and move its listeners to take action.