

VOCALESSENCE  WITNESS

# Blooming with Creativity

2019-2020 Teacher Resource Guide







# 2019-2020 WITNESS SCHOOL PROGRAM TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE

## VOCALESSENCE WITNESS BLOOMING WITH CREATIVITY

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Photo montage by Lora Aadalen Joshi

## ABOUT THE WITNESS TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE

Thank you for your participation in the VocalEssence WITNESS School Program, where we celebrate the contributions of African Americans to our shared American cultural heritage. Since 1991, the annual concert theme, repertoire, and performers have provided the framework for the study of cultural movements and the opportunity to learn about respected African American icons both past and present. **This year, VocalEssence WITNESS celebrates its 30th Anniversary!**

### 30TH ANNIVERSARY WITNESS THEME

VocalEssence WITNESS: *Blooming with Creativity* is a multi-disciplinary celebration of the creative spirit in honor of the 30th Anniversary of the program! In 2019-2020, the program will highlight the multi-faceted gifts of our VocalEssence Teaching Artists through an introduction to their work and to the key artistic figures that have helped shape and inspire their lives and careers as artists. VocalEssence WITNESS: *Blooming with Creativity* builds upon the roots of artists who have inspired and paved the way for new legacies of artistic creation to flower and blossom.



VocalEssence WITNESS Teaching Artists



## PURPOSE OF THE TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE

Addressing social, historical, and cultural contexts, this resource guide can be used primarily in arts, language arts, or social studies classes for grades 4-12. In an effort to stay current with trends in arts education and infused curriculum, we have prepared these materials in a manner that is collaborative with you. This resource guide integrates Minnesota Academic Standards and offers you a myriad of ways you can prepare students for the VocalEssence Teaching Artist workshops and Young People's Concert. The activities in this guide are intended as a springboard for teachers—they can be altered for different age groups, be implemented before or after the VocalEssence WITNESS Young People's Concert, or be a jumping off point to go deeper into a particular subject.

With this said, we strongly recommend that all VocalEssence WITNESS partner school teachers explore the lesson plans included in this guide, which are organized to provide a common foundation of knowledge for students who are attending the concert. Lesson plans are organized in pairs, in which each “set” begins with a biographical/historical-based lesson about an inspirational African American figure (historical or living), followed by a complimentary music-based lesson. We also encourage you to share the handout “**What You Can Expect at the VocalEssence WITNESS Young People's Concert**” on p. 14 with your students one week prior to the concert so that they have appropriate expectations for what they will experience as well as behavior and concert etiquette.

As part of our mission at VocalEssence, we strive to engage with diverse constituencies. This collaboration between musicians, historians, artists, and teachers supports this goal and provides experiences that extend into lifelong learning. Thank you for your continued support and shared commitment to teaching and learning in our school communities.

—**Robert J. Graham**

VocalEssence Program Manager  
for Learning and Engagement



—**G. Phillip Shoultz, III**

VocalEssence Associate Conductor I  
Director of Learning and Engagement



## ABOUT OUR WRITING TEAM



**Joanna Cortright** is a member of the Minnesota Music Educators Association Hall of Fame. She has an extensive background in arts education that includes work with both the Minneapolis and Saint Paul Public School districts. Over the years, Cortright's work with community music organizations has included curriculum development, project and program planning and assessment, assisting musicians to create strategies for teaching in schools, and aligning programs with school music standards. Cortright developed and narrated *Kinder Konzerts*, a children's concert program sponsored by WAMSO (now FRIENDS of the Minnesota Orchestra) and the Minnesota Orchestra for 31 years. She was an artistic partner with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra for 14 years, creating and narrating the Start the Music concert series for families with young children. She has hosted more than a thousand educational concerts for children, working to build bridges between young listeners, musicians, teachers, parents/grandparents, and music.



**Dwight Scott** is an accomplished actor, composer, researcher, and linguist who received his bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College. He has over fifteen years' experience in historical research, education, and curriculum development for museums and other nonprofit organizations. He has served as an educational consultant, helping schools to improve student engagement and motivation. He currently teaches English as a second language and also serves as Hmong Language instructor, interpreter, and translator. During his time as a Program Associate for the Minnesota Historical Society, Dwight developed programs, while also serving as a museum educator and history player (portraying historical characters in an interactive, multimedia presentation) at schools, libraries, and senior centers.



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# PART 1:

## WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?



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What You Can Expect at the VocalEssence WITNESS Young People's Concert



## ABOUT VOCALESSENCE

*VocalEssence champions choral music of all genres, celebrating the vocal experience through innovative performances, commissioning of new music, and engaging with diverse constituencies.*

As a leading Minnesota arts organization, VocalEssence uses the power of choral music to enhance our community by producing innovative vocal music events that stir people's souls. We engage people of all ages and cultures through innovative, enticing choral music programming, such as performing ensembles, school curricula, elder learning initiatives, and advocacy projects.

Called "one of the irreplaceable music ensembles of our time" by Dana Gioia, past chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, VocalEssence is renowned for its innovative exploration of music for voices and instruments under the enthusiastic direction of Artistic Director and Founder Philip Brunelle and Associate Conductor G. Phillip Shoultz, III. Each season, VocalEssence presents an eclectic series of concerts featuring the VocalEssence Chorus, the professional Ensemble Singers, the VocalEssence Singers Of This Age, guest soloists, and instrumentalists.



### **PHILIP BRUNELLE:** *Artistic Director and Founder, VocalEssence*



**Philip Brunelle**, artistic director and founder of VocalEssence 51 years ago, is an internationally-renowned conductor, choral scholar and visionary. Philip

has conducted symphonies, choral festivals and operas on six continents. He holds five honorary degrees, served 9 years as Vice President of IFCM (International Federation for Choral Music), and has been recognized for his commitment to choral music by the governments of Norway, Hungary, Sweden, Mexico, and the United Kingdom. In 2019 he was awarded the American Prize in Choral Conducting and in 2020 will be given the Honorary Member Award by the Society for American Music. His thoughts on music are at RenaissanceManpodcast.com.

<http://vocalessence.org/philipbrunelle>

### **G. PHILLIP SHOULTZ, III:**

*Associate Conductor | Director of Learning and Engagement, VocalEssence*



**G. Phillip Shoultz, III**, Associate Conductor | Director of Learning and Engagement, is known for fostering community and inspiring action among people of all ages and abilities. Phillip has

conducted choirs and workshops across the United States and in Canada, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Mexico, Germany, and Russia. He has taught at the University of St. Thomas, the University of Minnesota, and Georgia State University and his work in the public schools garnered multiple Teacher of the Year honors. The winner of the 2015 ACDA Graduate Conducting Competition and an International Conductors' Exchange Program Participant, Phillip believes in the transformative power of shared singing experiences.

<http://vocalessence.org/staff/g-phillip-shoultz-iii>



# PROGRAM TIMELINE

We hope you will use this timeline as a calendar for your lesson planning. Everything below is organized so that you know what is expected of you in advance of the concert. Wherever possible, we have suggested possible date ranges for the activities. You will, however, need to choose when to do other lessons based on your own classroom schedule.

<b>Saturday, October 5, 2019</b>	Teacher Orientation Seminar, Plymouth Congregational Church, Minneapolis
<b>October 7, 2019-February 21, 2020</b>	Introduce the VocalEssence WITNESS School Program to your students through various lesson plans included in this Teacher Resource Guide
<b>October-November 2019</b>	Select Teaching Artist; Schedule Planning Meeting and Artist Workshops; Determine which activities from the Teacher Resource Guide you would like to do with your students and the timeline for doing so
<b>October 2019-April 2020</b>	VocalEssence WITNESS Planning Meetings & Artist Workshops
<b>October 2019-April 2020</b>	<b>All participating teachers and administrators</b> complete workshop evaluation efforts following your final Artist Workshop ( <i>note: this is different from the Young People's Concert evaluation</i> )
<b>Wednesday, February 19, 2020</b>	Distribute the student handout "What You Can Expect at the VocalEssence WITNESS Young People's Concert," p. 14
<b>Sunday, February 23, 2020 4pm</b>	VocalEssence WITNESS: <i>Deep Roots</i> Subscription Concert, Orchestra Hall (Teachers receive a 50% discount—for tickets, call 612.371.5656)
<b>Monday, February 24, 2020 10am, 11:35am, 1:15pm</b>	VocalEssence WITNESS Young People's Concerts, Orchestra Hall
<b>February 25-28, 2020</b>	<b>All participating teachers and administrators</b> complete Young People's Concert Evaluation and submit bus reimbursement forms ( <i>note: this is different from the Artist Workshop evaluation</i> )
<b>May 1, 2020</b>	Final day to submit Bus Reimbursement Forms to VocalEssence



VocalEssence WITNESS Artist Workshop with Patricia Brown, Nativity of Our Lord Catholic School



VocalEssence WITNESS Artist Workshops with Ginger Commodore, Columbia Heights High School



Artist, Ta-coumba Aiken

## VOCALESSENCE WITNESS PROGRAM: CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

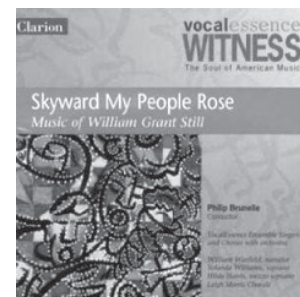
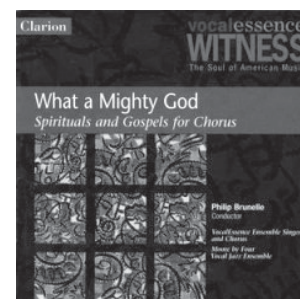
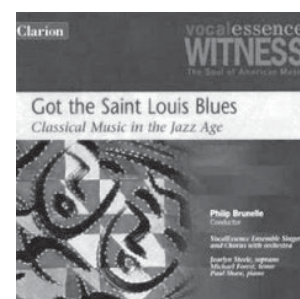
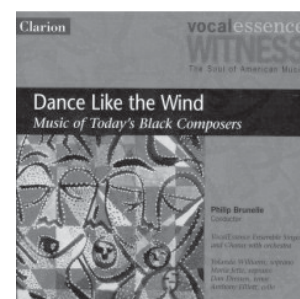
In 1991, VocalEssence created WITNESS to celebrate the artistic contributions of African Americans to the fine arts and to our common cultural heritage. By commissioning new works and programming rarely heard works by African American composers, we help broaden ideas about African American musical expression and introduce important new voices to our audiences through concerts, recordings, and radio broadcasts. Michael Abels, David Baker, Ysaye Barnwell, William Banfield, Larry Farrow, Jonathan Bailey Holland, Joseph Jennings, Bobby McFerrin, Rosephanye Powell, Patrice Rushen, Evelyn Simpson-Curenton, and Alvin Singleton are some of the many artists who have composed new works and arrangements especially for the WITNESS program. The first commission—David Baker’s ***WITNESS: Six Original Compositions in a Spiritual Style***—inspired the name for our program.

Our VocalEssence WITNESS concerts have featured artists such as James Earl Jones, Rita Dove, Billy Taylor, Melanie DeMore, Anthony Elliott, Patrice Rushen, Paul Shaw, Marietta Simpson, and Yolanda Williams, and vocal ensembles Moore by Four, The Steele Family, Sounds of Blackness, The Fairfield Four, the Leigh Morris Chorale, the Morehouse College Glee Club, the Spelman College Glee Club, and the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Many of these artists have made return appearances on other VocalEssence concerts. WITNESS has made it possible to initiate collaborations with African American artists in many disciplines. A Minnesota State Arts Board Cultural Collaborations Grant supported our partnership with St. Paul visual artist Ta-coumba Aiken, whose art has become the visual representation of WITNESS on all ads and publications. Aiken’s large colorful banners provide a stunning visual backdrop for WITNESS concerts, and his artwork adorns our WITNESS Companion CD covers.

For 30 years, VocalEssence WITNESS has been critical for many of the students who would not otherwise have the opportunity to attend a professional event at a major concert hall. We believe an education and performance experience like WITNESS gives students an opportunity to learn from exceptional role models. It nurtures their self-esteem and fosters a desire to continue exploring their own ways to express themselves through the arts.

# VOCALESSENCE WITNESS THROUGH THE YEARS

- **February 10, 1991:** The Plymouth Music Series, now known as VocalEssence, devotes a concert to celebrate and share the artistic contributions of African Americans to fine arts. The first WITNESS concert is held at the Basilica of Saint Mary accompanied by one high school performance. Prior to this concert, area schools which seldom have an opportunity to hear live artists and composers, participated in a week-long residency.
- **February 1994:** Celebrity James Earl Jones comes to Minneapolis to narrate a newly commissioned piece based on Leo Lionni's fairytale *Frederick's Fables* at the annual WITNESS concert.
- **January 20-February 28, 1997:** The WITNESS residency program is designed to fulfill curriculum objectives of the Minneapolis and Saint Paul Public Schools and included a complement of preparation and study materials for teachers.
- **February 7, 1997:** First VocalEssence WITNESS Young People's Concert.
- **February 17 and 19, 2000:** For the first time, students who participated in the VocalEssence WITNESS School Program were featured on both the Young People's Concert and the VocalEssence WITNESS subscription concert. (Dancers for *Dream N. the Hood*)
- **2000-2001 Season:** VocalEssence WITNESS residencies focus on classroom visits by artists with the intention of having artists and students interact in an informal setting rather than in an assembly/performance and resource guides are expanded to address various grade levels and graduation standards.
- **2001-2002 Season:** First VocalEssence WITNESS Teacher Orientation Seminar to familiarize teachers with the resource guide and help them integrate the materials into their own classroom settings and school curricula.
- **February 2002:** First VocalEssence WITNESS Younger People's Concert for students in grades 4-6.
- **2002-2003:** VocalEssence WITNESS Artists will visit each classroom twice to allow the artists to provide students with a more in-depth look at their art form and promote more personal interaction between students and the artists.
- **Fall 2003:** VocalEssence WITNESS School Program was presented to communities in greater Minnesota. WITNESS Workshops and Young People's Concerts were held in Red Wing and Bemidji.
- **February 2004:** The VocalEssence WITNESS School Program and concert selections turn their focus to one particular personality or theme each year. Since this shift, program themes have included Langston Hughes, Sojourner Truth, Rosa Parks, Duke Ellington, Gordon Parks, the Underground Railroad, and the Harlem Renaissance.
- **2005-2006 Season:** First year of the Talented Tenth Apprentice Program-Inspired by the principles of African American scholar W.E.B. DuBois, this program offered urban area high school students the opportunity to receive professional music and vocal training, free tickets to VocalEssence concerts, and the opportunity to sing on stage with the VocalEssence Chorus & Ensemble Singers.
- **February 2007:** The Reatha Clark King Award for Excellence and Youth Motivation through the Cultural Arts was developed to celebrate and recognize outstanding leaders who are in the field empowering young people through direct contact, making a way for them to be as successful as possible. This award was named after the VocalEssence WITNESS co-founder and pioneering African American scientist, educator, and philanthropist Reatha Clark King.
- **June 2016:** Chorus America awards VocalEssence with the Chorus America Brazeal Wayne Dennard Award that recognizes organizations whose work shows a commitment to diversity, inclusiveness, and furthering African American and other diverse choral traditions through performance, research, or creation of new compositions.
- **February 2018:** VocalEssence Singers Of This Age make their debut performance at the VocalEssence WITNESS concerts and serve as the official face of the students on stage during the Young Peoples' Concerts.





# WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT AT THE VOCALESSENCE WITNESS YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONCERT

## WHO WILL I SEE AND HEAR?

### VocalEssence Teaching Artists



The **VocalEssence Teaching Artists** represent a wide array of artistic disciplines, and are leaders in the Twin Cities performing arts community. Not only do they teach, they are also award-winning performers with local, national, and international acclaim! They include professional dancers, choreographers, composers, music producers, actors and actresses, and musicians. Many of you will experience workshops with them in your classrooms, but at the VocalEssence WITNESS Young People's Concert, you will experience them as performers! They are delighted to share their artistic gifts with you as they collaborate with VocalEssence Associate Conductor, G. Phillip Shoultz, III, the VocalEssence Chorus, and the VocalEssence Singers Of This Age.

### VocalEssence Singers Of This Age



The **VocalEssence Singers Of This Age**, also known as VESOTA, are a dynamic group of young people from Twin Cities high schools who sing, dance, write their own music, rap, and—most importantly—reflect the diversity of our community in its membership. They have worked hard to prepare for today's concert, and they encourage **you** to take part in your school's music program!

### VocalEssence Chorus



The **VocalEssence Chorus** is an exceptional group of talented, committed singers from many walks of life. The Chorus is well known around the world. People recognize them for their great voices as well as their performances of new and rarely heard songs. With help from the community, they sponsor the workshops you had or will have by VocalEssence Teaching Artists. They are happy that you get to hear them perform.



## WHY SHOULD I CARE?

- Music can express what people cannot put into words alone.
- All people have music in their lives, no matter where they grew up.
- Singing brings people together.
- Learning about people who create and perform music can help us better understand our differences and similarities.

## WHERE WILL IT BE?



This year's concert will be held at Orchestra Hall in downtown Minneapolis. Just a few blocks from Orchestra Hall, the Convention Center Auditorium hosts many different types of events each year.

## HOW SHOULD I ACT?

When you go to the concert, concentrate on listening to the music...

- Try to feel the rhythms and follow the tunes.
- Listen for changes in the music—sometimes it will be very powerful and loud, and other times very soft and delicate.

...also, don't forget to watch the performers on stage...

- Which instrument or voice has the main tune?
- What can you tell about the music by how the performers interact with one another?

...and reflect on what you hear.

- How does it make you feel?
- Does it bring back certain memories?
- Could you sing these songs?

If you feel a little nervous because this is your first concert, that's okay. You are not alone. Other students feel the same way, even though they may not show it. The main thing to remember is that although performers like to hear your applause, they are also grateful for your quiet attention. Remembering the following rules will help make the experience more enjoyable for everyone.

### *Refrain from talking.*

The first and greatest rule. It also includes whispering during the music. If you like, tap your toes quietly inside your shoes—it's a good exercise to reduce toe fat.

### *Please have nothing in your mouth, besides your teeth and tongue.*

Gum and candy are not allowed.

### *Do not ring or text.*

Leave cell phones, video games, iPods, cameras, and other electronic devices at school or on the bus.

### *Do not sigh with boredom.*

If you are really bored, keep it to yourself. Your neighbor just may be having a good time, which should also be kept under control.

### *Do not embarrass your teacher or your school.*

Remember that you are representing your school and want to be on your best behavior. There are many eyes looking at you. Show respect to the students and teachers around you, and to the artists performing on stage.

### *Do not compete.*

Cheering, screaming, and trying to chant a little louder than your neighbor is allowed at a basketball game, but not at Orchestra Hall. Applause is the best way to show you have enjoyed something.

*(Adapted from "The Ten Rules of Concert Etiquette for Students," by the National Association for Music Education.)*

# PART 2:

## ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES



**BLOOMING WITH CREATIVITY:**  
 Meet the VocalEssence WITNESS Teaching Artists  
 and their Inspirational Figures ..... 17

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 Lesson Plan: Connecting the Arts .....27

**KATHERINE DUNHAM**  
 Lesson Plan: Biographical Exploration ..... 31  
 Lesson Plan: Connecting the Arts .....38

**PEARL PRIMUS**  
 Lesson Plan: Biographical Exploration .....43  
 Lesson Plan: Connecting the Arts .....49

**DR. CHARLES “BABA CHUCK” DAVIS**  
 Lesson Plan: Biographical Exploration .....53  
 Lesson Plan: Connecting the Arts ..... 60

**ARETHA FRANKLIN**  
 Lesson Plan: Biographical Exploration .....65  
 Lesson Plan: Connecting the Arts ..... 71

**BERNICE JOHNSON REAGON**  
 Lesson Plan: Biographical Exploration .....75  
 Lesson Plan: Connecting the Arts ..... 81

**AHMIR “QUESTLOVE” THOMPSON**  
 Lesson Plan: Biographical Exploration .....85  
 Lesson Plan: Connecting the Arts ..... 91

## LESSON PLAN:

### BLOOMING WITH CREATIVITY

#### THE 2019-2020 VOCALESSENCE WITNESS PROGRAM THEME

Seeds of creativity are within every person. How they are inspired to take root and nurtured to grow is the theme of the 2019-2020 VocalEssence WITNESS Program.

This year, as we celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the program, we honor the VocalEssence Teaching Artists. They have nurtured their seeds and shoots of creativity to develop their artistic lives. They share their art in classrooms all over Minnesota and beyond to encourage and nurture future artists.

But who inspires and nurtures them?

The question was posed to the VocalEssence Teaching Artists. Each of them responded with a wonderful list of performers and inspirational African American figures, who have influenced and motivated their work.

## INTRODUCTION

This lesson introduces educators and students to the 2019-2020 VocalEssence Teaching Artists and to the artists who inspire them. Students will be introduced to both when they view a PowerPoint pairing each VocalEssence Teaching Artist with their Inspiring Artist. The Inspiring Artists represent the roots, trunk, and sturdy branches of the tree metaphor, while the VocalEssence Teaching Artists represent the fruits and new shoots of the tree.

## KEY TERMS

<b>Creativity:</b>	The ability to produce original and unusual ideas or the ability to make something new and imaginative
<b>Inspire:</b>	To fill someone with confidence and desire to do something
<b>Metaphor:</b>	Figure of speech that makes a direct comparison of two unlike things such as a tree and creativity



## LEARNING GOALS

Students will view a PowerPoint and discuss ideas prompted by the concert theme, ***Blooming with Creativity***, to prepare for the 2020 VocalEssence WITNESS Young People's Concert.

## MATERIALS

*The following are included in the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources*

- PowerPoint of the VocalEssence Teaching Artists and their selected inspirational artists

## PROCESS

### ACTIVITY #1

1. View **Slide # 1** and ask students to read the title, BLOOMING WITH CREATIVITY.
  - Read aloud the questions on **Slide # 2**: Why and how is the tree — from the deep roots to the top branches—a good metaphor for creativity? Direct students to turn to a partner and discuss the questions.
  - Reconvene and briefly share ideas from their discussions.

*“Creativity is the mental capacity to generate novel and useful ideas.”*

**-Tanner Christensen, author of “The Creative Challenge”**

<http://www.hilarysutton.com/blog/2016/8/16/conversation-with-a-creative-meet-creativity-expert-facebook-product-designer-tanner-christensen>

2. Continue on through the PowerPoint **[Slides 3-10]**, sharing the images of the current VocalEssence Teaching Artists and their inspirational artists.
  - After viewing all the slides, ask students to speculate about why they think VocalEssence selected *Blooming with Creativity* for this year’s program theme title.
3. Wrap up with some ideas to discuss:
  - Have students seen creativity bloom in friends and members of their family? Tell us about it.
  - Is creativity only about the arts? (Reinforce the concept that creativity doesn’t exist only in the arts.)
  - What are your creative superpowers? Discuss other areas such as science, math, cooking, athletics, gardening, teaching, connecting with little kids, etc. Make a list of the creative pathways your students are on currently.

## RESOURCES

- Resources for this lesson are listed in the last PowerPoint slide.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Challenge students to design other visual metaphors for creativity.
2. Ask students to write a short paragraph about someone who inspires them to be a more creative person. What does that person do to inspire the student’s creativity?
3. Connect this brief introduction with an English Language Arts writing lesson. Assign students to interview someone they think of as creative, asking questions about that person’s interests, activities, what they love to do, and how they see themselves as a creative person.

## MEET THE VOCALESSENCE TEACHING ARTISTS



**Timothy Berry** is a composer and has performed nationally as a singer, actor, and percussionist. Dr. Berry is Assistant Professor and Director of the Center for Education Partnerships | Student Support for the

College of Education at Minnesota State University, Mankato and is highly regarded for his presentations on racial equity, cultural competency, and organizational change.

***Paul Robeson** is the artist from the past who has inspired my life in music and the arts. His courage, confidence, and determination, combined with his incredible talent in many fields allowed him to pursue his dreams, embrace his heritage, stand up for his beliefs, and not back down to anyone.*

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**Patricia Brown** is an active member of the Twin Cities arts scene as a dancer-performer and instructor-choreographer. Her style is rooted in the traditions of West Africa, other African regions, the Caribbean, and the Americas. Patricia

serves as an adjunct faculty member at Macalaster College and the University of Minnesota. Her work has been seen on stages around the country.

*I am inspired by the work of **Dr. Charles “Baba Chuck” Davis**. His commitment to collecting, preserving, and teaching African traditions and dance has profoundly shaped my teaching. I, like him, seek to use dance as a means to combat racism and show my commitment to peace, love, and respect for everybody.*



**Brandon Commodore** is a well-versed musician whose love and passion for music shines through in every lesson, rehearsal, workshop, or performance. Brandon decided to follow his father’s footsteps and picked up a pair of drumsticks at a very

young age. Off the stage, Brandon cares very deeply for young people and strives to offer mentorship and guidance through the art of music and creative expression.

*When asked to choose the artist who continues to influence and inspire me, **Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson** immediately came to mind. Not only do we share similar backgrounds with our parents being professional musicians, but his creativity and vision, intelligence, and hard work in many spaces have created a unique and profound legacy.*

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**Ginger Commodore** is a singer, songwriter, and actress who enjoys an illustrious career in the Twin Cities area. An original member of the Grammy Award winning Sounds of Blackness and the Moore by Four vocal jazz ensemble,

Ginger has shared the stage with countless stars and has taken her inspirational performances around the globe.

***Aretha Franklin** has been a strong influence in my life for many years. One of my favorite memories is of the day I met Aretha in person at the Minneapolis Aquatennial. She started out just like me and was inspired by those who had made their mark before her. Now, we are all inspired by her determination, hard work, and courage. She truly was the “Queen of Soul.”*





**Karla Nweje** is an arts educator, choreographer, performer, and literary artist known for cultivating partnerships across organizations and programs to make quality arts experiences accessible to all learners. Karla is a regular

presenter and speaker at arts and education conferences and serves on the teaching artist roster for many organizations.

***Pearl Primus** was a dancer, a choreographer, and an anthropologist who pursued her passion fearlessly. She continues to influence and inspire my work in so many ways... “She turned me inside out as a dancer!”*



**T. Mychael Rambo** is a regional Emmy award winning actor, vocalist, arts educator, and community organizer who continues to make an indelible mark here in the Twin Cities. He has appeared around the globe in on stage performances

and has also appeared on camera in commercials, feature films, and other television programming.

***Bernice Johnson Reagon** has fearlessly worked to give voice to the voiceless and fight for justice and equality through her music. That inspires me in my work to help students discover their own personal voice.*



**Anita Ruth** has been active in the Twin Cities theatrical, musical, and educational circles for many years. She served as musical director for eighty shows at the Chanhassen Dinner Theater, spent time with Children’s Theater Company, Project

Success, and now serves as Resident Music Director at Artistry Theater in Bloomington.

***Bernice Johnson Reagon** is so versatile—a song leader, composer, scholar, and social activist. I think it is important for young people to learn about her, because she is a living and breathing representation of freedom fighter.*



**Roxane Wallace** is active in the arts as a performer, teacher, dancer, and choreographer and continues to lead workshops to people of all ages and abilities. Roxane is the recipient of a McKnight Artist Fellowship, has international dance

credits, and is the creator of two socially conscious theatrical works that she choreographed, directed, and produced.

*People hear the name **Katherine Dunham** and they often only think of her as a dancer. I am also inspired by her work as anthropologist and activist. She devoted her life to creating and teaching cultural dances. She brought African dance to this continent and then used her platform to fight for civil rights. That influences me on a daily basis in my work with people of all ages.*

# LESSON PLAN: PAUL ROBESON

## BIOGRAPHICAL EXPLORATION

### INTRODUCTION

The American Civil War and slavery had ended some 33 years before Paul Robeson was born. But prejudice and discrimination against African Americans was still very much alive, whether subtle or direct. So, to become a successful black person during this time would take great courage, confidence, and determination. Paul Robeson had those qualities and an incredible talent in a variety of fields, which allowed him to open doors of opportunity through which other artists could enter after him. This biographical lesson will introduce your students to a man who pursued his dreams, embraced his heritage, stood up for his beliefs, and did not let anyone intimidate him into backing down.

### KEY TERMS

<b>Academic:</b>	Of or relating to performance in study and learning, especially in school
<b>Valedictorian:</b>	The student usually having the highest academic rank in a graduating class
<b>Courage:</b>	Mental and emotional strength to stand up to danger, difficulty, or fear
<b>Determination:</b>	The act of making a firm and definite decision to reach a desired goal
<b>Heritage:</b>	Something passed down or received from those who existed or set an example in the past
<b>Ancestry:</b>	Family line of people linked together and traced back into the past
<b>Civil rights:</b>	Rights and personal freedoms guaranteed to the citizens of a country
<b>Activist:</b>	A person who is especially active, energetic, and forceful in support of or against a cause
<b>Legacy:</b>	Anything handed down from the past, as from a person, group of people, or event



Paul Robeson

### LEARNING GOALS

Students will learn about Paul Robeson. As they do so, they will consider what it means to be a multifaceted person. They will be asked to think about the importance of studying one's heritage. Then they will reflect on the lessons in courage, confidence, and determination that they learned from studying the life of Paul Robeson.

### MATERIALS

*The following are included in the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources*

- Paul Robeson PowerPoint
- Multifaceted Paul Robeson Worksheet
- Paul Robeson's Travels Chronology and World Map Worksheet
- *HERE I STAND* Poem Worksheet

## PROCESS

### PART ONE: SOIL AND SEEDS

*For a garden to grow and flourish, you must start with seeds and soil. Part One of this lesson focuses on the “soil”—the world into which Paul Robeson was born and the early situations he encountered, and on the “seeds”—the choices Robeson made as a young man and the circumstances that were influential in his life.*

1. **SHOW:** **Slide # 1** of Paul Robeson

2. **TELL:**

- PAUL ROBESON was born on April 9, 1898 in Princeton, New Jersey. These images give you an idea of what life was like in the 1890s.

3. **SHOW:** **Slide # 2** of life in the 1890s

- Commercial production of automobiles began.
- The Kinetoscope, a motion picture machine, was invented by Thomas Edison.
- Helium was discovered to exist on earth.
- Rudyard Kipling wrote *The Jungle Book*.
- First modern Olympic Games were held in Athens, Greece.
- Provident Hospital, the first African American owned hospital, was established by Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, who performed the first successful open heart surgery.
- U.S. Supreme Court, in the Plessy v. Ferguson case, ruled in favor of “separate but equal” laws.
- George Washington Carver’s research advanced the production of peanut, soybean, and sweet potato farming.

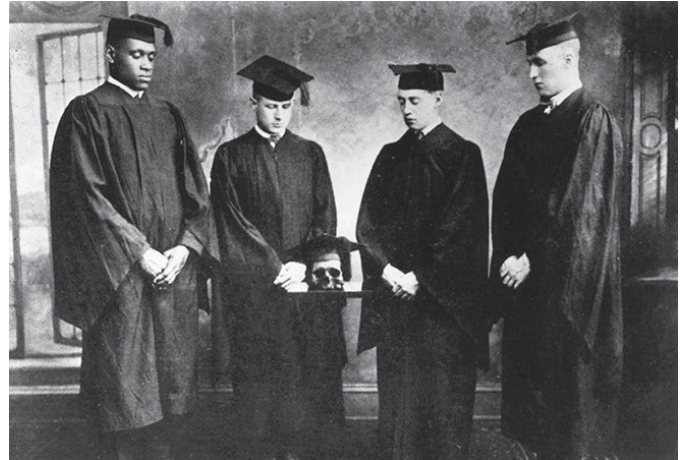
4. **ASK:**

- *Would you like to have grown up in the 1890s? Why? Why not?*
- *From the above list, what do you think was the most interesting or important event that happened during that time period? Why?*

5. **SHOW:** **Slide # 3** with the question “WHAT KIND OF STUDENT WAS PAUL ROBESON?”

6. **ASK:**

- *What kind of student are you?*
- *Why is it good to be interested in and to at least try many different activities?*



Paul Robeson as a student at Rutgers

7. **TELL:**

- In high school, Paul **acted** in performances of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* and *Othello*.
- He **sang** in the chorus.
- He played **football, basketball, baseball, and track**.
- He won a statewide academic contest for a scholarship to Rutgers University.
  - **STORY:** At Rutgers, Paul tried out for the **football** team. The other players were so rough during practice that he broke his nose and dislocated his shoulder. However, when the coach saw Paul’s courage and determination, he put him on the team.
- At Rutgers, Paul joined the **debate** team and sang in the **Glee Club**.
- He graduated as **valedictorian** of his class.
- Paul entered New York University School of Law in 1919 but transferred to **Columbia Law School** the following year. He graduated in 1922.
- While in law school, Paul played **football** for the NFL’s Akron Pros and the Milwaukee Badgers.



- During one spring term, Paul took time off from being a law student to act professionally in a play (in America and Britain) and he **sang** in the chorus in an Off-Broadway musical production.

**8. ASK:**

- *What kind of student was Paul?*
- *Why is it good to be interested in and to at least try many different activities?*

**9. SHOW: Slide # 4** “The Multifaceted Paul Robeson”

**10. TELL:**

- Facet = a small plane surface
- Multifaceted = having many facets
- Discuss how a cut diamond is multifaceted, not like a flat piece of paper.

**11. ASK:**

- *How can a person be like a piece of paper or like a diamond?*

**12. DO:** Multifaceted Paul Robeson Worksheet

- Hand out the worksheet.
- Have student fill out the worksheet, first showing how Robeson’s life was multifaceted. (Tell them that they may learn about some other facets later in the lesson.)
- Then have student think about their own diverse activities and interests—including interests they would like to pursue in the future. Have students share their multifaceted interests with each other.

**13. ASK:**

- *What kind of job(s) do you think Paul had when he got older?*

**PART TWO: BUD AND BLOOM**

*Over time, you will see how the plants, flowers, fruits, or vegetables in a garden are developing. Part Two of this lesson will consider how Paul Robeson’s talents and career developed during his journeys—both his literal travels and the course of his life.*

**1. SHOW: Slide # 5** with the question “HOW DID PAUL ROBESON MAKE THE MOST OF HIS LIFE?”

**2. TELL:**

- While Paul was studying to become a lawyer at Columbia Law School, he decided to end his professional football career.
- He practiced law for a brief time, but found that he did not want to deal with the racist attitudes of others in the legal profession. So, he also ended his law career.

**3. SHOW: Slide # 6** of Paul Robeson’s life

- In 1924 and 1925, Paul was given the starring role in two major New York productions—*All God’s Chillun Got Wings* and *The Emperor Jones* written by the famous playwright Eugene O’Neill.



Paul Robeson in *The Emperor Jones*

- Also in 1925, Paul acted in his first movie, called ***Body and Soul***.
    - **ASK:** *What do you think movies were like in 1925?* [black and white; silent]
    - **SHOW:** Video from the 1925 silent film *Body and Soul* (link embedded in **Slide # 7**; be sure you are connected to the internet for the video to play)
  - Paul went on **concert tours**, singing African American folk songs and spirituals. Soon his fans grew into the tens of thousands, because they could hear Paul's performances on the radio and on recordings.
  - Paul's fame as a stage actor, movie star, concert singer, and **recording artist** grew throughout the world.
  - When he appeared in the movie version of ***The Emperor Jones*** in 1933, Paul became the first African American to have a starring role in a major film.
    - **SHOW:** Video from the film ***The Emperor Jones*** (link embedded in **Slide # 9**; be sure you are connected to the internet for the video to play)
4. **SHOW:** **Slide # 10** of quotation about the "central ideas: to be African"
5. **TELL:**
- In 1934, Paul enrolled in the School of Oriental and African Studies (at the University of London), where he learned Swahili and other African languages. He eventually mastered 25 languages.
  - Paul also liked to write. In 1934, he published an essay titled: **"I Want to be African."**
6. **ASK:**
- *Why do you think Paul learned African languages and wrote this essay?*
  - *Why do many people feel it is important to connect with their heritage and ancestry?*
  - *Would you like to know more about your ancestry? Why? Why not?*
7. **SHOW:** **Slide # 11** with the question "HOW DID PAUL ROBESON SHOW COURAGE AND DETERMINATION?"
8. **ASK:**
- *Have you ever had to face a situation where almost everyone around you believed differently than you about something?*
  - *Did they try to change your mind?*
  - *What did they do?*
  - *Did you try to change their mind?*
  - *How did the situation end?*
9. **DO:** Paul Robeson's Travels Chronology and World Map Worksheet
- Hand out the Worksheet.
  - Help students read the chronology of events (on the worksheet) and have them chart Robeson's travels around the globe, drawing a line from one place to the next.
10. **TELL:**
- Paul's views in support of communism and workers' rights were not popular.
  - In 1953, *First Book of Negroes – A Child's History of the Negro* is published but does not include Paul.
  - In 1956, Paul is omitted from the *College Football and All-American* list of players.
11. **ASK:**
- *How did Paul show courage and determination in his life?*
  - *If you believe strongly in something, as long as it does not hurt others, what can you do if others try to get you to change your mind?*



## PART THREE: FRUIT AND FRAGRANCE

*When the garden has produced its plants, flowers, fruits, or vegetables, and the harvest season is over, what is left? Perhaps dried flowers and herbs, produce that has been frozen or canned, the memories and photographs of what was accomplished, and even seeds that were produced to create future gardens. Part Three of this lesson highlights Paul Robeson's legacy—honors, lessons learned, and inspiration from his life and career.*

1. **SHOW:** Slide # 12 with the question "WHAT IS PAUL ROBESON'S LEGACY?"
2. **TELL:**
  - Paul Robeson died on January 23, 1976 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, at the age of 77. Five thousand people attended his funeral at Mother AME Church in Harlem, New York. But his legacy—through his photographs, recordings, films, writings, speeches, artistry, and action—continues to live on, inspiring other scholars, athletes, singers, actors, and activists.
3. **ASK:**
  - *What is Paul's legacy? What have you learned from his life that inspires you?*
4. **SHOW:** Slide # 13 of *HERE I STAND* Poem Activity
5. **TELL:**
  - In 1958, Paul wrote a book about his life, titled *Here I Stand*. The title certainly describes his strength of character in the face of the obstacles, challenges, and opposition he faced throughout his life and is a testament to his success in so many different endeavors.
6. **ASK:**
  - *What do you think the title of Paul's book and the photograph on the cover tells about Paul and his life?*

## 7. TELL:

- Use what you have learned about Paul Robeson's life to create a poem that highlights his talents, courage, confidence, determination, and his legacy.

## 8. DO: HEAR I STAND Poem Worksheet

*[NOTE: This activity can be used as an assessment to determine what your students have learned from the lesson.]*

- Hand out worksheet and have students work independently or in groups to write an acrostic poem.

*[It would be good to write your own poem beforehand to help your students generate ideas.]*

## 9. ASK:

- *If you could have interviewed Paul Robeson, what would you want to ask him?*

*[NOTE: This can also be used as an assessment. Encourage students to write down their questions and to do further research to see if they might find the answers to their questions.]*

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Students can hold a Paul Robeson Tribute Program, which would highlight Paul Robeson's life and career.

Students can:

- Create and present posters
- Prepare songs
- Prepare dramatic readings (*perhaps their own poems*)
- Present speeches in support of or against an issue that is important to them

## MINNESOTA STATE STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

### **SOCIAL STUDIES: Citizenship and Government**

*Civic Skills:* Identify ways people make a difference in the civic life of their communities, state, nation, or world by working as individuals or groups to address a specific problem or need.

*Civic Values and Principles of Democracy:* Explain the importance of civic discourse and the principles of majority rule and minority rights.

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### **SOCIAL STUDIES: Geography**

*Geospatial Skills:* Use maps and concepts of location to describe places in one's community, the state, the United States, or the world.

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### **SOCIAL STUDIES: History**

*Historical Thinking Skills:* Reference different time periods using correct terminology, including the terms decade, century, and millennium. Examine historical records, maps, and artifacts to answer basic questions about times and events in history.

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### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Key ideas and Details**

Determine the main idea(s) of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea(s).

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### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**

Use and interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively and demonstrate understanding of the text in which it appears.

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### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Writing Process: Production and Distribution of Writing**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

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### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

Recall relevant information from experience or gather relevant information from print and digital sources and sort evidence into provided categories.

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### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Comprehension and Collaboration**

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners.

Determine the main ideas and supporting details of, paraphrase, and/or summarize a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media formats.

## RESOURCES

Robeson, Paul. *Here I Stand*, Beacon Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 1958

Duberman, Martin. *Paul Robeson: A Biography*, Open Road Media, 2014

Foner, Philip S. (ed.). *Paul Robeson Speaks: Writings, Speeches, Interviews*, Kensington Publishing, New York, NY, 2002

Stewart, Jeffrey C.. *Paul Robeson: Artist and Citizen*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ, 1998

Paul Robeson, Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_Robeson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Robeson)

### **For Young People:**

Ehrlich, Scott. *Paul Robeson: Athlete, Actor, Singer, Activist*, Chelsea House, New York, NY, 1988

Mckissack, Patricia, Fredrick Mckissack. *Paul Robeson: A Voice for Change*, Enslow Publishing, New York, NY, 2013

Ford, Carin T. *Paul Robeson: "I want to make freedom ring"*, Enslow Publishing, New York, NY 2008

# LESSON PLAN: PAUL ROBESON

## CONNECTING THE ARTS

### INTRODUCTION

VocalEssence Teaching Artist Timothy Berry named Paul Robeson (1898-1976) as the artist from the past who inspired Berry's life in music and the arts. Robeson was a talented man in many fields. He is remembered for musical and theatrical accomplishments, but also for political activism.

His voice was striking, both when he spoke and when he sang. In 1933, a British critic wrote that this singular voice was "...always lyrical; it flows like a deep river which has not a ripple on its surface." But Robeson's artistry went far beyond his talent to entertain audiences. He used his voice and position to speak truth on behalf of people of color and working-class individuals around the world.

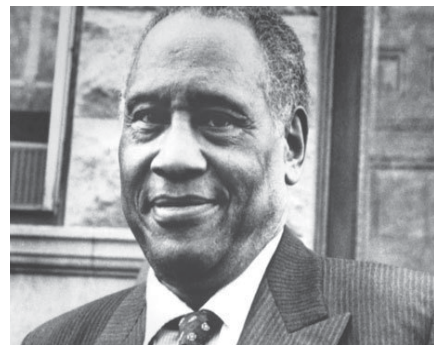
This lesson will highlight Robeson's incredible voice.

### KEY TERMS

- Baritone:** Voice classification lower than a tenor, higher than a bass; most often, but not always associated with males
- Bass:** The lowest classification of voices; most often, but not always associated with males
- Larynx:** The hollow muscular organ which forms the air passage to the lungs and holds the vocal cords in humans and other mammals; also called the voice box
- Tenor:** Voice classification in the middle range, often, but not always associated with males

### PROCESS

1. Ask students to summarize what they learned about Robeson's multifaceted life after reading and completing the biographical activities in the previous biographical lesson. Prompt students to recall comments about his singing and speaking voice and his support of union miners, factory workers, and organizers.



Paul Robeson

### LEARNING GOALS

Students will **listen**, **describe**, **analyze**, and **respond** to Robeson's voice using an organizer and class discussion. Based on the analysis and description, they will then write statements about his voice to convey their viewpoints using descriptive phrases and sentences.

### MATERIALS

*The following are included in the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources*

- Copies of the Predict→Listen→Respond→Write Organizer
- Selected Robeson speaking and singing recordings
- A picture of Paul Robeson
- Recording of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot"
- Voice Ranges Typically Associated with Males

2. Introduce the **Predict→Listen→Respond→Write** Organizer. Point out the four quotes describing Robeson's voice. Explain that the quotes were spoken or written as opinions expressed by critics and writers. Ask volunteers to read them out loud.

Direct the readers to pause between quotes to allow time for students to frame their first thoughts and comments. Provide definitions if there are any questions about certain words; for example, **larynx**.

3. Assign each student a partner. Distribute the organizer and explain the steps students will follow and complete.
- With your partner, re-read the quotes, identify the important words, then write them in box #1.
  - Write your predictions about what you think and imagine Robeson's voice will sound like in box #2. What do you think you will hear?
  - **Listen to three excerpts of Robeson's voice.** Two are songs performed by him, and one is of Robeson speaking a passage from a play by Shakespeare. There will be a pause after each to give you time to discuss what you noticed with your partner. After hearing and discussing all three examples, compare your descriptions with your prior predictions. **Teachers:** There are examples are in the materials box.
  - Complete the organizer by writing your own description of Robeson's voice in box #4. What did you like or not like? If you did not care for his voice, find an interesting way to express your opinion.
  - Reconvene as a class and ask pairs to share their descriptive sentences.
4. Create a wall display from students' descriptions of Robeson's voice on a classroom wall or bulletin board. Make it a display as large as Robeson's voice.
- Hang a picture of Robeson at the center of a wall or bulletin board.
  - Provide paper in various colors and markers and direct students to write

their quotes from the worksheets. Sketches and other additions can also be included.

- Surround Robeson's picture with the students' comments and descriptions.
  - Brainstorm a headline for the exhibit.
  - Take a picture and email it to VocalEssence at [engage@vocalessence.org](mailto:engage@vocalessence.org)
5. Sing "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," a well-known African American Spiritual. Then listen to the recording and focus on the vocal range of the students compared to the vocal range of Paul Robeson. He is most often categorized as a bass or a bass-baritone. Look at the Voice Ranges Typically Associated with Males worksheet.

### Examples of Robeson Singing and Speaking

- **"Old Man River" with altered lyrics**  
An example of the intensity Robeson expresses as he sings this one. The song comes from the musical, *Showboat*, in which Robeson appeared and sang the original lyrics. He was not happy with them, but liked the song. As he continued to perform "Old Man River," he changed the lyrics to fit his own beliefs.
- **Joe Hill, a union organizer's song of protest and tenacity**  
Robeson often sang this song when he visited striking workers around the world. Joe Hill's spirit resides in all workers who protest unfair (and dangerous) labor practices.
- **An excerpt from Shakespeare's *Othello***  
In 1930, Robeson played the role of Othello in London. At that time, the role was always given to a white actor in dark makeup on the more-or-less explicit basis that a black man could not convey the deep humanity of Elizabethan tragedy. Robeson's critical and popular triumph not only reshaped Shakespearean theatre, it also struck a blow against the assumptions underpinning Jim Crow America.



### Paul Robeson Quotes

- *"As an artist, I come to sing, but as a citizen, I will always speak for peace, and no one can silence me in this."*  
([https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/paul\\_robeson\\_100425](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/paul_robeson_100425))
- *"Sometimes great injustices may be inflicted on the minority when the majority is in the pursuit of a great and just cause."* ("The Undiscovered Paul Robeson" (2001) by Paul Robeson Jr.)
- *"My father was a slave, and my people died to build this country, and I am going to stay here, and have a part of it just like you. And no Fascist-minded people will drive me from it. Is that clear?"* (Testimony before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, 12 June 1956)
- *"I want to make freedom ring."*

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Channeling Paul Robeson: Select a famous Robeson quote and practice speaking it aloud as you channel his energy, rich spoken voice, and serious commitments to the "underdog." Then, speak your quote aloud with conviction to the class to honor and celebrate Paul Robeson.
- Speculate: What if Paul Robeson appeared on **The Voice** in 2020? What would the text messages from the voting listeners say? What would the judges say? How do you think he would do? Use these questions for an 'up to date' analysis and discussion of Robeson the performer.
- Encourage students to learn more about Robeson. There are multiple biographical books for children and adolescents available in school/public libraries. Some titles are listed in the RESOURCES section.

### ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS

- Assess students' written descriptions of Robeson's voice (evidence of learning) using your rubrics for the ability to analyze and construct interpretations of artist work.
- Informally assess students use of musical vocabulary that is used as they verbally respond to Robeson's voice.

## MINNESOTA STATE STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

### MUSIC: Respond

*Anchor standard #7:* Analyze and construct interpretations of artistic work

*Anchor standard #8:*  
Evaluate artistic work by applying criteria

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### MUSIC: Connect

*Anchor standard #9:* Integrate knowledge and personal experiences while responding to, creating, and presenting artistic work.

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### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Writing (Text Types and Purposes)

*Standard 2:* Write informative /explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately.

## RESOURCES

### BOOKS

*Grandpa Stops a War: A Paul Robeson Story* (2018) by Susan Robeson. New York: Triangle Square Books for Young Readers.

A picture book recounting one episode in Robeson's life during the Spanish Civil War(1936-1939). He visited the battlefields and sang for the soldiers who were fighting for democracy in Spain. He asked the loudspeakers to be turned on so the soldiers on the other side could also hear. While he sang spirituals and songs of peace, the fighting stopped and there was peace for a brief time. The author is Robeson's granddaughter.

This picture book is most appropriate for primary grades. The colorful images and supporting historical facts and photographs would be useful for 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

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*Paul Robeson* (2009) by Eloise Greenfield. New York City: Lee and Low Books.

Heavily illustrated with mono-color drawings that are strong, bold, and looks like chalk on paper. The illustrations and text are best for upper elementary and middle school.

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*Paul Robeson "I Want to Make Freedom Ring"* (2008) by Carin T. Ford. Berkley Heights, New Jersey: Enslow Publishers, Inc.

This biography is most suitable for middle school students and includes many illustrations in color and black and white. This book is part of a series entitled *The African American Biography Library* from Enslow Publishers.

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### WEBSITES

<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=wikipedia+Paul+Robeson&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjtllyl1PHjAhWUb-c0KHYN6AXwQ7xYIKygA&biw=1280&bih=607>  
Paul Robeson's biography and long list of references.

<https://youtu.be/iEQEeNhtosg>  
"Old Man River" with altered lyrics.

**Note: the video description includes some inappropriate, derogatory language to reference the altered lyrics. We recommend minimizing the browser window to cover this description section while displaying video for students.**

<https://youtu.be/n8Kxq9uFDes>  
Joe Hill, a union organizer's song of protest and tenacity.

<https://youtu.be/oSBWCKEj3N0>  
Paul Robeson reciting lines from Shakespeare's *Othello*.

# LESSON PLAN: KATHERINE DUNHAM

## BIOGRAPHICAL EXPLORATION

### INTRODUCTION

Why do you do things—think, speak, move—in a certain way? How much of it is the environment in which you grew up and live? And how much of it is part of your heritage, embedded in your DNA? As Katherine Dunham began her professional dancing career, she started to think about the African roots of how Black people around the world moved and danced. In this lesson, your students will see how Dunham, the anthropologist, did research into those cultural roots, and how Dunham, the dancer, devoted her life to performing, creating, and teaching the cultural dances. In addition, students will discover that Dunham was a civil rights activist.

### KEY TERMS

<b>Anthropology:</b>	The study of human beings in relation to their physical, social, and cultural characteristics
<b>Research:</b>	Carefully searching for, collecting, and analyzing information about a particular subject
<b>Choreographer:</b>	One who creates and arranges dance movements to produce an artistic composition
<b>Prejudice:</b>	Negative attitude, judgment, and action against another without just cause and respect for one's rights
<b>Heritage:</b>	Something passed down or received from those who existed or set an example in the past
<b>Ancestry:</b>	Family line of people linked together and traced back into the past
<b>Civil rights:</b>	Rights and personal freedoms guaranteed to the citizens of a country
<b>Activist:</b>	A person who is especially active, energetic, and forceful in support of or against a cause
<b>Legacy:</b>	Anything handed down from the past, as from a person, group of people, or event



Katherine Dunham

### LEARNING GOALS

Students will learn about Katherine Dunham. As they do so, they will consider what it means to be a multifaceted person. They will be asked to think about the importance of studying one's heritage. They will reflect on the lessons they learned from Dunham's life: working hard, acting on one's principles, and educating through art.

### MATERIALS

*The following are included in the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources*

- Katherine Dunham PowerPoint
- Multifaceted Katherine Dunham Worksheet
- Katherine Dunham's Travels Chronology and World Map Worksheet
- *SHE DID IT* Poem Worksheet



## PART ONE: SOIL AND SEEDS

*For a garden to grow and flourish, you must start with seeds and soil. Part One of this lesson focuses on the “soil”—the world into which Katherine Dunham was born and the early situations she encountered, and on the “seeds”—the choices Dunham made as a young woman and the circumstances that were influential in her life.*

### 1. SHOW: Slide # 1 of Katherine Dunham



Katherine with  
her brother Albert,  
ca. 1920

### 2. TELL:

- KATHERINE DUNHAM was born on June 22, 1909 in Chicago, Illinois. These images give you an idea of what life was like in the 1900s.

### 3. SHOW: Slide # 2 of life in the 1900s

- One of the largest world's fairs in history opened in Paris, France. This world's fair also included the second modern Olympic Games.
- Carrie Nation, a leader in the Temperance Movement, began a campaign to destroy saloons.
- President William McKinley was assassinated, and Vice President Theodore Roosevelt became President.
- The first movie theater in the United States opened in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
- Guglielmo Marconi accomplished the first two-way wireless communication between Europe and the United States.
- Wilbur and Orville Wright succeeded in the first sustained manned airplane flight.
- The ice cream cone was invented.

- The NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) was formed.

### 4. ASK:

- *Would you like to have grown up in the 1900s? Why? Why not?*
- *From the above list, what do you think was the most interesting or important event that happened during that time period? Why?*

### 5. SHOW: Slide # 3 with the question “WHAT KIND OF STUDENT WAS KATHERINE DUNHAM?”

### 6. ASK:

- *What kind of student are you?*
- *Why is it good to be interested in and to at least try many different activities?*

### 7. TELL:

- Katherine attended Joliet Central High School.
- She played **baseball**, **tennis**, **basketball**, and **track**.
- She was vice-president of the **French Club**.
- She learned modern **dance** in the Terpsichorean Club.
  - **STORY:** When she was 15, Katherine organized a cabaret to raise money for a local church. It was in this variety show that she danced publicly for the first time. Katherine was also interested in **teaching** from an early age. During her high school years, she opened a dance school for young black children.
- Katherine attended and graduated from Joliet Junior College.
- Katherine went to the University of Chicago, where she heard a lecture given by a professor of anthropology, who said that much of black culture in America has its origins in Africa. Katherine decided that she would study **anthropology**.

**8. ASK:**

- *What kind of student was Katherine?*
- *Are there interests and talents that you are sure you will continue pursuing when you're an adult?*

**9. SHOW: Slide # 4** “The Multifaceted Katherine Dunham”

**10. TELL:**

- Facet = a small plane surface
- Multifaceted = having many facets
- Discuss how a cut diamond is multifaceted, not like a flat piece of paper.

**11. ASK:**

- *How can a person be like a piece of paper or like a diamond?*

**12. DO:** Multifaceted Katherine Dunham Worksheet

- Hand out the worksheet.
- Have student fill out the worksheet, first showing how Dunham's life was multifaceted. (*Tell them that they may learn about some other facets later in the lesson.*)
- Then have student think about their own diverse activities and interests—including interests they would like to pursue in the future. Have students share their multifaceted interests with each other.

**13. ASK:**

- *What kind of job(s) do you think Katherine had when she got older?*

## **PART TWO: BUD AND BLOOM**

*Over time, you will see how the plants, flowers, fruits, or vegetables in a garden are developing. Part Two of this lesson will consider how Katherine Dunham's talents and career developed during her journeys—both her literal travels and the course of her life.*

**1. SHOW: Slide # 5** “DANCE: African Roots”

**2. TELL:**

- Katherine combined her interest in anthropology with her love of dance and began studying the dances from different parts of the world that had roots in Africa.
  - **SHOW: Slide # 6** — Video of a Haitian dance (video is embedded into Slide # 6; be sure you are connected to the internet for the video to play)

**3. SHOW: Slide # 7** “DANCE: Ballet”

**4. TELL:**

- Katherine also studied ballet and, in 1931, formed a dance company called *Ballets Nègres*. It was one of the first black ballet companies in the United States.
  - **SHOW: Slide # 8** — Video clip of ballet (video is embedded into Slide # 8; be sure you are connected to the internet for the video to play)

**5. SHOW: Slide # 9** “DANCE: Modern”

**6. TELL:**

- Katherine soon decided to focus on modern dance and opened her first professional dance school in 1933. It was called the Negro Dance Group. Through it, Katherine taught young black dancers about their African heritage.
  - **SHOW: Slide # 10** – Video of modern dance (video is embedded into Slide # 10; be sure you are connected to the internet for the video to play)

**7. ASK:**

- *What are some differences between these dance forms?*
- *Which dance form do you enjoy most? Why?*
- *Can different types of dance be combined together?*

**8. SHOW: Slide # 11** with the question: “ANTHROPOLOGY or DANCE?”

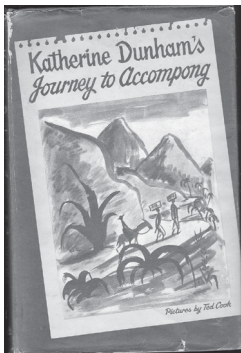
**9. ASK:**

- *Have you ever had two different interests you wanted to pursue, but could only pick one to focus on?*
- *What were the determining factors in your decision?*
- *Was there a way to enjoy both?*

**10. SHOW: Slide # 11** of Dunham’s work as an anthropologist

**11. TELL:**

- In 1935, Katherine received an award from the Julius Rosenwald and Guggenheim Foundations to study the anthropology of dance forms in the Caribbean, especially Haiti.



This book is a collection of notes Katherine Dunham wrote about her experiences in Accompong, Jamaica

- Katherine did research in Accompong, Jamaica, in Marinique and Trinidad, where she studied the African god Shango, and in Haiti, where she did extensive research in Vodun religious rituals and dance.
- Katherine returned to Chicago and graduated from the university. She was the first African American woman to attend the University of Chicago and earn a degree in anthropology.

- After graduating, Katherine felt that she had to make a choice between putting anthropology or dance first in her life.
- Katherine was offered another award to pursue academic studies, but she declined it.

**12. ASK:**

- *Why do you think Katherine was so interested in African dances?*
- *Why do many people feel it is important to connect with their heritage and ancestry?*
- *Katherine chose not to get a job as an anthropologist, but how could she use anthropology as a dancer and choreographer?*

**13. TELL:**

- The time Katherine spent researching in the Caribbean and performing in the southern states moved her to become an activist and speak out against the injustices she observed.

**14. SHOW: Slide # 12** with the question “HOW DID KATHERINE DUNHAM SPEAK OUT AGAINST INJUSTICE?”

**15. ASK:**

- *Have you ever been treated unfairly or witnessed someone else suffer an injustice?*
- *How did you react?*
- *What is something you can do to stop that kind of injustice from happening again?*

**16. DO:** Katherine Dunham’s Travels Chronology and World Map Worksheet

- Hand out the worksheet.
- Help students read the chronology of events (on the worksheet) and have them chart Dunham’s travels around the globe, drawing a line from one place to the next.

**17. ASK:**

- *How did Katherine speak out against injustice?*

**18. SHOW: Slide # 13** about Dunham’s hunger strike

## 19. TELL:

- Katherine continued to be a social activist in her old age. In 1982—at the age of 83—she went on a 47-day hunger strike to protest the U.S. government’s refusal to take in refugees from Haiti.

## PART THREE: FRUIT AND FRAGRANCE

*When the garden has produced its plants, flowers, fruits, or vegetables, and the harvest season is over, what is left? Perhaps dried flowers and herbs, produce that has been frozen or canned, the memories and photographs of what was accomplished, and even seeds that were produced to create future gardens. Part Three of this lesson highlights Katherine Dunham’s legacy—honors, lessons learned, and inspiration from her life and career.*

### 1. SHOW: Slide # 14 with the question “WHAT IS KATHERINE DUNHAM’S LEGACY?”

## 2. TELL:

- Katherine Dunham died in New York City, New York on May 21, 2006, at the age of 96. But her legacy—through her writings, photographs, films, artistry, and actions—continues to live on, inspiring other scholars, dancers, and activists.

## 3. ASK:

- *What is Katherine’s legacy? What have you learned from her life that inspires you?*

### 4. SHOW: Slide # 15 of the SHE DID IT Poem Activity

## 5. TELL:

- Katherine Dunham was once quoted as saying: “I used to want the words ‘She tried’ on my tombstone. Now I want ‘She did it.’”

## 6. ASK:

- *Why do you think that Katherine, at one point, wanted the words “She tried” on her tombstone?*
- *Why do you think she changed her mind?*
- *Let’s say you live to be 96 years old. What would you want on your tombstone?*

## 7. TELL:

- Use what you have learned about Katherine Dunham’s life to create a poem that highlights her talents, courage, confidence, determination, and her legacy.

### 8. DO: SHE DID IT Poem Worksheet

*[NOTE: This activity can be used as an assessment to determine what your students have learned from the lesson.]*

- Hand out worksheet and have students work independently or in groups to write an acrostic poem.

*[It would be good to write your own poem beforehand to help your students generate ideas.]*

## 9. ASK:

- *If you could have interviewed Katherine Dunham, what would you want to ask her?*

*[NOTE: This can also be used as an assessment. Encourage students to write down their questions and to do further research to see if they might find the answers to their questions.]*

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Students can hold a Katherine Dunham Tribute Program, which would highlight Katherine Dunham’s life and career.

Students can:

- Create and prepare posters
- Create and prepare a presentation about Haiti or other Caribbean countries and their cultures
- Prepare dramatic readings (*perhaps their own poems*)
- Present a modern dance (*accompanied by music and/or by a student’s poem*)



## MINNESOTA STATE STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

### **SOCIAL STUDIES: Citizenship and Government**

*Civic Skills:* Identify ways people make a difference in the civic life of their communities, state, nation, or world by working as individuals or groups to address a specific problem or need.

*Civic Values and Principles of Democracy:* Explain the importance of civic discourse and the principles of majority rule and minority rights.

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### **SOCIAL STUDIES: Geography**

*Geospatial Skills:* Use maps and concepts of location to describe places in one's community, the state, the United States, or the world.

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### **SOCIAL STUDIES: History**

*Historical Thinking Skills:*

- Reference different time periods using correct terminology, including the terms decade, century, and millennium.
  - Examine historical records, maps, and artifacts to answer basic questions about times and events in history.
- 

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Key ideas and Details**

Determine the main idea(s) of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea(s).

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### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**

Use and interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively and demonstrate understanding of the text in which it appears.

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### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Writing Process: Production and Distribution of Writing**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

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### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

Recall relevant information from experience or gather relevant information from print and digital sources and sort evidence into provided categories.

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### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Comprehension and Collaboration**

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners.

Determine the main ideas and supporting details of, paraphrase, and/or summarize a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media formats.

## RESOURCES

Aschenbrenner, Joyce, Katherine Dunham: Dancing a Life, University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 2002

Clark, VèVè A., Sara E. Johnson, Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, WI, 2005

Dunham, Katherine, A Touch of Innocence: Memoirs of Childhood, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994

Perpener, John, O., African-American Concert Dance: The Harlem Renaissance and Beyond, University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 2001

Katherine Dunham, Wikipedia,  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katherine\\_Dunham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katherine_Dunham)

Katherine Dunham Centers for Arts and Humanities,  
<http://kdcah.org/>

### For Young People:

O'Conner, Barbara, Katherine Dunham: Pioneer of Black Dance, Carolrhoda Books, Minneapolis, MN, 2000

Donloe, Darlene, Katherine Dunham: Dancer, Choreographer, Holloway House Publishing, Los Angeles, CA, 1993

Greene, Carol, Katherine Dunham: Black Dancer, Children's Press, New York, NY, 1992

## LEARNING GOALS

Students will develop a fuller impression and understanding of Dunham's artistry when they view and respond to her work.

They will listen to a song important in Dunham's career, "Stormy Weather," and discuss its mood and metaphor. They will view Dunham's choreography and performance in "Stormy Weather," and:

- describe in writing the details of the dance sequence
- demonstrate an understanding of the connections between story, music, and movement by choreographing a movement sequence for another film score featuring rain music.

## MATERIALS

*The following are included in the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources*

- Audio recording of "Stormy Weather," sung by Billie Holiday
- Lyrics to "Stormy Weather"
- Film clip of Dunham's choreography from the 1943 film *Stormy Weather*
- Copies of the MOVIE TIME Organizer
- Katherine Dunham in *Stormy Weather*: A Reading for Teachers and Older Students
- Recording of "Singing in the Rain"
- Instructions for Creating a Dance Sequence to "Singing in the Rain"

## LESSON PLAN: KATHERINE DUNHAM CONNECTING THE ARTS

### INTRODUCTION

VocalEssence Teaching Artist, Roxane Wallace, named Katherine Dunham as an artist who influenced and inspired her life and career in dance.

In 1943, Katherine Dunham appeared in the movie *Stormy Weather*. Based on the 1933 hit song of the same name, Dunham choreographed the compelling dance sequence, and led her company in performing the work. Students will view the film scene, describe its artistic details, and speculate on its importance in the movie.



**Stormy Weather**  
Movie Advertisement Poster

### KEY TERMS

<b>Choreography:</b>	Creating/inventing the steps, patterns and movements which make up a dance or a dance routine
<b>Choreographer:</b>	The person who creates the dance steps and sequences
<b>Cutaway:</b>	A scene that interrupts the movie's flow; usually only peripherally related to the original scene
<b>Dance or Dream Sequence:</b>	Technique used in storytelling, usually in television and film, to set apart a brief interlude from the main story. (The interlude may consist of a flashback, a flashforward, a fantasy, a vision, a <b>dream</b> , or some other element.)

## PROCESS

### PART ONE

1. Introduce the lesson by listening to Billie Holiday's recording of the 1933 hit "Stormy Weather" and engage students in a Quick Write activity of their impressions. Here are some questions to prompt their responses.

*Is this a new song, or an old one? Who is performing? What is the mood of this song?*

- After writing, place students into pairs and share comments
  - Convene as a class to compare notes and discuss opinions
  - Provide information from the sidebar, "A 1933 Hit!" in your own words
2. Display the lyrics to "Stormy Weather" and ask students to read out loud phrases that catch their attention. What do they think **these** phrases might mean?

*"When he went away the blues walked in and met me"*

*"If he stays away old rockin' chair will get me"*

*"All I do is pray the Lord above will let me walk in the sun once more"*



Dunham (far right) in the opening of the cutaway just before the dream sequence

3. In 1943, the song "Stormy Weather" was the centerpiece of a film with the same name. Before viewing, tell students they will:
  - Watch the **dance sequence** clip twice; once to view the sequence, the second time to look at the details and write their observations on the MOVIE TIME Organizer. Encourage detailed written descriptions.
  - Pair up students and ask them to share observations with each other. Then reconvene as a class to discuss their impressions and thoughts about the performance, what they made of the dance sequence ballet, and other details from their MOVIE TIME Organizers.

Younger students can watch the clip, then describe details as a class.

### A 1933 HIT!

"**Stormy Weather**" was written in 1933 by Harold Arlen and Ted Koehler. Ethel Waters first performed the song at the famous Cotton Club Night Club in Harlem, New York, also in 1933.

The "Stormy Weather" song and night club show were big hits, so big that for the first time in history, the entire Cotton Club company of performers went on tour to other cities and states. They called their show the *Stormy Weather Revue*. The song went 'viral' (in a 1930s kind of way), covered in recordings in Germany and England. Many other singers recorded it; two of the most famous were Lena Horne and Billie Holliday. Ten years later "Stormy Weather" was featured in the 1943 film of the same name.



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Hollywood movie *Stormy Weather* was made in 1943. It was notable because it had an African American cast and included dozens of songs and performers audiences of the 1940s loved such as Lena Horne, Cab Calloway and his Band, Bill Robinson, Fats Waller, and **Katherine Dunham** and her dance company. Dunham was featured in a **cutaway dance sequence** she choreographed for the movie's signature song, "Stormy Weather."

## SETTING THE SCENE

In the film, the female lead, Lena Horne, is performing in a cabaret. Part of the song's staging has her looking out a window during an instrumental interlude of "Stormy Weather." Looking down at the street, the camera's focus moves past her and on to the street below. This is the start of the **cutaway** and Dunham's choreography. The people on the street (dancers from her company) are taking refuge from the rain under an elevated train platform. Moving amongst the pedestrians, Katherine Dunham looks up at the clouds and ignores the men trying to get her attention. As strong winds blow, the scene dissolves into a **dream sequence** performed by Dunham and her company.

## PART TWO: CREATE CHOREOGRAPHY FOR "RAINY" MUSIC

### FOR THE BOLD AND THE BRAVE!

Katherine Dunham was an outstanding **choreographer**. Students can experience the process of making movement choices and arranging them into their own dance sequence, based on "Stormy Weather." This activity can be done in small groups or as a class.

You will need:

- an audio recording of the music (from the WITNESS Online Resources)
- several sheets of blank chart paper and markers for note taking
- a clear, open space in which to move
- a device (cell phone? video recorder?) to record student ideas and/or final dance sequences

Organize into small groups of five to eight students and review the steps in the process. A printable version of the instructions is included in the WITNESS Online Resources; you may wish to provide a copy of the basic instructions for each group.

### Process for Creating a Dance Sequence:

1. Begin with stretching and move gently at first to warm up muscles and joints.
2. As a group, listen to the music all the way through twice. Describe what you hear and what it reminds you of. How it might look like through movement?
  - Select two group members to serve as "rehearsal" scribes. They will trade off so both can also move. Their job is to catch the ideas in words or sketches.
3. Think about unison and non-unison movement, using solos, duets, and trios, and variations on who is moving.
  - Start the recording, experiment with ideas, and notice each other.
  - Stop between short segments of music to trade ideas and try out each other's suggestions and experiment as a group. Play the recording from the beginning as students try out the movements.
4. Work on connecting your movements from phrases to phrase.
5. Work together and rehearse your dance phrases to make the movements flow from one to another seamlessly.
6. Continue with the whole piece. Remember to:
  - Listen closely to the music to make sure your movements express what you feel.
  - Try out ideas, then select movements that best fit the wishes

of the group. (You are working collaboratively.)

- Return often to movement phrases already in place and rehearse your way forward to make smooth transitions through the sequence of the piece.

7. Rehearse your dance several times to commit to your “muscle memory.”
8. Perform for another group or the whole class. Document your work via video.

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## ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS

- The work generated in the Quick Write activity provides evidence of students’ ability to frame thoughts and questions. This work plus the following conversation can be informally assessed.
- The completed MOVIE TIME Organizers also provide documented evidence of student’s ability to analyze and interpret a film clip. Teachers can develop a check list beforehand for a formal assessment, or use it as an informal assessment.
- The choreography created in PART TWO provides evidence of ability to generate and develop original ideas. Document students dance sequences with video and use a prepared checklist to assess their projects.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Find out more information about Katherine Dunham’s approach to dance, the Dunham Technique. Use the KEY TERMS to search the web for clues and information.

### What is the Dunham Technique?

Though most modern dancers and choreographers deliberately avoided classical ballet, Dunham “embraced it as a foundation for her technique.” By fusing classical ballet with research and practice in Afro-Caribbean dance, she created an “...entirely original technique characterized by classical lines, a torso capable of both isolations and undulations, and utilization of a wider range of tempos and rhythmical styles than most other Western concert dance forms of the time.”

-Joshua Legg, Dance Spirit website. Read more details at: <https://www.dancespirit.com/all-you-need-to-know-about-dunham-technique-2326050072.html>

- Who were Lena Horne, Cab Calloway, Bill Robinson, Fats Waller, who all appeared in the film *Stormy Weather*? What were they famous for? Search the web and write a short biographical paragraph for each. Photos or sketches could accompany the biographies.
- In the reading, Katherine Dunham in *Stormy Weather: A Reading for Teachers and Older Students*, it shares how Katherine Dunham had the agency to demand change. Ask students to read and discuss what Dunham was protesting.
- Lena Horne performed the version in the film, but Billie Holliday was famous for her interpretation of “Stormy Weather.” Listen to both and discuss with students which version they prefer and why. Recordings are listed in the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources.

## MINNESOTA STATE STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

### MUSIC AND DANCE: Foundations

Use foundational knowledge and skills while responding to, creating, and presenting artistic work.

### MUSIC AND DANCE: Respond

*Anchor standard #7:* Analyze and construct interpretations of artistic work.

*Anchor standard #8:* Evaluate artistic work by applying criteria.

### DANCE: Create

Generate and develop original artistic ideas.

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Speaking, Viewing, Listening, and Media Literacy: Comprehension and Collaboration

*Standard 2:* Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and format, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

## RESOURCES

### BOOKS

*Katherine Dunham: Pioneer of Black Dance* (2000) by Barbara O'Conner. Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books  
This book contains many photos and is suitable for middle school and high school.

### WEBSITES

- Three minute clip for the breakaway scene of “Stormy Weather” is at <http://projecthbw.blogspot.com/2011/09/remembering-stormy-weather-katherine.html> The information is good, but the video is not. Please use the video clip from the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources to watch the scene.
- Vogel, Shane. Performing “Story Weather”: Ethel Waters, Lena Horne, and Katherine Dunham. *South Central Review*, Volume 25, Number 1, Spring 2008. John Hopkins University Press. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/233345/summary>
- The 26-minute video traces Katherine Dunham’s life, artistic career and influence the community she chose to live in, East St. Louis, Illinois. Created 2005, shortly before her death at age 96, the profile includes what was likely her last interview. A good in-depth look at Dunham. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vyx6ue7K6o>
- Selections from the Katherine Dunham Collection, Library of Congress <https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/ihis/html/dunham/dunham-notes-stormyweather.html>
- Interesting YouTube video of KD talking to a group at Jacob’s Pillow in 2002 about encountering racism at the season in 1950 – and what she did. Feisty woman! [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R\\_h0PBtv5-c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_h0PBtv5-c)

# LESSON PLAN: PEARL PRIMUS

## BIOGRAPHICAL EXPLORATION

### INTRODUCTION

Many people work hard, and even struggle, to master a certain skill. Others seem to have a natural talent—a “gift.” In this lesson, your students will be introduced to Pearl Primus, who accidentally discovered her gift—dancing—and was, fortunately, given the opportunities to develop that talent. Students will learn that even though one may be naturally talented in a certain area, to truly excel, one must study and put in hard work to hone that skill. Students will also discuss taking negative criticism in stride. They will be inspired by a woman who, after finding her passion, pursued it with fearlessness, commitment, and joy.

### KEY TERMS

<b>Anthropology:</b>	The study of human beings in relation to their physical, social, and cultural characteristics
<b>Research:</b>	Carefully searching for, collecting, and analyzing information about a particular subject
<b>Choreographer:</b>	One who creates and arranges dance movements to produce an artistic composition
<b>Prejudice:</b>	Negative attitude, judgment, and action against another without just cause and respect for one's rights
<b>Heritage:</b>	Something passed down or received from those who existed or set an example in the past
<b>Ancestry:</b>	Family line of people linked together and traced back into the past
<b>Civil rights:</b>	Rights and personal freedoms guaranteed to the citizens of a country
<b>Activist:</b>	A person who is especially active, energetic, and forceful in support of or against a cause
<b>Legacy:</b>	Anything handed down from the past, as from a person, group of people, or event



Pearl Primus

### LEARNING GOALS

Students will learn about Pearl Primus and will consider what it means to be a multifaceted person. They will be asked to think about the importance of studying one's heritage. They will reflect on the lessons they learned from Primus' example of passion, diligence, and commitment.

### MATERIALS

*The following are included in the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources*

- Pearl Primus PowerPoint
- Multifaceted Pearl Primus Worksheet
- Pearl Primus' Travels Chronology and World Map Worksheet
- OMOWALE Poem Worksheet



## PART ONE: SOIL AND SEEDS

*For a garden to grow and flourish, you must start with seeds and soil. Part One of this lesson focuses on the “soil”—the world into which Pearl Primus was born and the early situations she encountered, and on the “seeds”—the choices Primus made as a young woman and the circumstances that were influential in her life.*

1. **SHOW:** Slide # 1 of Pearl Primus

2. **TELL:**

- PEARL PRIMUS was born on November 29, 1919 in Port of Spain, Trinidad.
- In the early 1920s, Pearl and her family moved to New York City. These images give you an idea of what life was like in the 1920s.

3. **SHOW:** Slide # 2 of life in the 1920s

- Women are given the right to vote in America.
- The first African American record company—*Black Swan Phonograph Corporation*—is formed.
- Baseball’s World Series is broadcast on the radio for the first time.
- African American inventor Garrett Morgan patents the first three-position traffic signal in America.
- 40,000 members of the racist organization called the Ku Klux Klan march in Washington, D.C.
- Charles Lindbergh is the first person to fly a plane across the Atlantic Ocean. It takes him 33 hours to fly from New York to Paris, France.
- The first “talking” movie—*The Jazz Singer*— is released in 1927.
- The first movie featuring Mickey Mouse—*Steamboat Willie*—is released in 1928.

4. **ASK:**

- *Would you like to have been a kid in the 1920s? Why? Why not?*
- *From the above list, what do you think was the most interesting or important event that happened during that time period? Why?*

5. **SHOW:** Slide # 3 with the question “WHAT KIND OF STUDENT WAS PEARL PRIMUS?”

6. **ASK:**

- *What kind of student are you?*
- *Why is it good to be interested in and to at least try many different activities?*



Pearl Primus on Graduation Day

7. **TELL:**

- The most important places in Pearl’s life as a child were **home, school, library,** and **church**.
- Pearl’s father and uncles liked to talk about their travels to **Africa**, and she vowed that she would travel there one day.
- Pearl went to Hunter College High School and then to Hunter College, where she graduated with a degree in **biology** and **medical science** with the goal of becoming a **doctor**.
- Pearl was also a very good **athlete**, especially in track-and-field.
- Pearl enrolled at Columbia University, where her studies were focused on **anthropology**.

8. **ASK:**

- *What kind of student was Pearl?*
- *Have you ever tried an activity for the first time and were surprised by how good you were at it and how much you liked it?*
  - **STORY:** Unable to find work in a laboratory that would hire blacks, Pearl applied to the government-run National Youth Administration and was assigned to the **costume department** for a dance group. One of the dance group’s advisors encouraged her to practice the **dances** just in case they might need a substitute. As it turned out, the main dancer could not perform one evening, Pearl was asked to step in, and she did an amazing job!

**9. SHOW: Slide # 4**

“The Multifaceted Pearl Primus”

**10. TELL:**

- Facet = a small plane surface
- Multifaceted = having many facets
- Discuss how a cut diamond is multifaceted, not like a flat piece of paper.

**11. ASK:**

- *How can a person be like a piece of paper or like a diamond?*

**12. DO:** Multifaceted Pearl Primus Worksheet

- Hand out the worksheet.
- Have student fill out the worksheet, first showing how Primus’ life was multifaceted. (*Tell them that they may learn about some other facets later in the lesson.*)
- Then have student think about their own diverse activities and interests—including interests they would like to pursue in the future. Have students share their multifaceted interests with each other.

**13. ASK:**

- *What kind of job(s) do you think Pearl had when she got older?*

## PART TWO: BUD AND BLOOM

*Over time, you will see how the plants, flowers, fruits, or vegetables in a garden are developing. Part Two of this lesson will consider how Pearl Primus’ talents and career developed during her journeys—both her literal travels and the course of her life.*

**1. SHOW: Slide # 5** with the question “WHAT KIND OF DANCER WAS PEARL PRIMUS?”

**2. TELL:**

- In 1941, Pearl received a scholarship join the *New Dance Group* in New York and was the only Black dancer in the studio. She was so new to dancing that when another dancer suggested that Pearl warm up before class, Pearl replied, “What do you mean warm up? I’m warm already. It’s not hot in here.”

- In 1943, Pearl danced professionally for the first time. The program was called *Five Dances*. She performed two dances, *Strange Fruit*, about a woman’s reaction to a lynching, and *Hard Time Blues*, about the living conditions that Blacks in the South were facing.

- o **SHOW: Slide # 6** – Video of Pearl Primus dancing (video is embedded into Slide # 6; be sure you are connected to the internet for the video to play)

**3. ASK:**

- *What kind of dancer was Pearl? What words would you use to describe it?*

**4. SHOW: Slide # 7** of quotation “Why do I dance? ...”

- *“Why do I dance? Dance is my medicine. It’s the scream which eases for a while the terrible frustration common to all human beings who because of race, creed, or color are ‘invisible.’ Dance is the fist with which I fight the sickening ignorance of prejudice.”*  
–Pearl Primus

**5. ASK:**

- *What do you think Pearl means?*
- *How can a dance be the “fist” to fight against prejudice?*

**6. SHOW: Slide # 8** with the question “HOW DO YOU REACT TO CRITICISM?”

**7. ASK:**

- *How do you react when you have worked hard on something, but it turned out not to be as successful as you expected?*
- *How do you react to criticism from others?*
- *If you feel you have done something very well, but others make negative comments that are not helpful, what might be the best way for you to respond?*
- *How can sincere, constructive criticism make us better at what we do?*

**8. SHOW: Slide # 9** of quotations about Pearl

- After her performance in 1943, one reviewer wrote that Pearl was a “remarkably gifted artist” and that he had not been as impressed with a new dancer since Katherine Dunham began her career.
- Another writer described one of Pearl’s performances this way: *“It is beautiful with undulating rhythms over deep-flowing currents of movement that wind into whirlpool spins... The pale sole flash, the brown toes clutch and grasp, the dark fingers spread wide, the whole body sings...”*
- Regarding a different performance, another reviewer wrote this: *“As a choreographer, weakness is a naïve literalism of gesture and an unrestrained, undisciplined throwing of herself about.”*



Pearl Primus midflight

**9. ASK:**

- How do you think Pearl reacted to the negative review?
- How would you react?

**10. TELL:**

- In 1944, Pearl put aside her performing, and decided to dig more deeply into the roots of African American dance.

**11. SHOW: Slide # 10** with the question “HOW DID PEARL PRIMUS USE DANCE AS MEDICINE?”

**12. ASK:**

- Is it important to you to learn about your personal and cultural roots? Why? Why not?
- Is it important to you to learn about the personal and cultural roots of others? Why? Why not?
- What can you learn from discovering your heritage and ancestry?

**13. DO:** Pearl Primus’ Travels Chronology and World Map Worksheet

- Hand out Worksheet.
- Help students read the chronology of events (on the worksheet) and have them chart Primus’ travels around the globe, drawing a line from one place to the next.

**14. ASK:**

- How did Pearl use dance as medicine?
- How can education help “heal” and “cure” problems in society?

## PART THREE: FRUIT AND FRAGRANCE

*When the garden has produced its plants, flowers, fruits, or vegetables, and the harvest season is over, what is left? Perhaps dried flowers and herbs, produce that has been frozen or canned, the memories and photographs of what was accomplished, and even seeds that were produced to create future gardens. Part Three of this lesson highlights Pearl Primus’ legacy—honors, lessons learned, and inspiration from her life and career.*

**1. SHOW: Slide # 11** with the question “WHAT IS PEARL PRIMUS’ LEGACY?”

**2. TELL:**

- Pearl Primus died on October 29, 1994, in New Rochelle, New York. But her legacy—through her writings, photographs, films, artistry, and actions—continues to live on, inspiring other scholars, dancers, and activists.

**3. ASK:**

- What is Pearl Primus’ legacy? What have you learned from her life that inspires you?

**4. SHOW: Slide # 12** of OMOWALE Poem Activity



Pearl Primus

## 5. TELL:

- When Pearl Primus traveled to Africa to do anthropological research into the roots of African American dance, the people she met were amazed, as she danced for and with them, at the similarities between her dancing and theirs.
- In Nigeria, people called her “Omowale” (Child Returned Home). Some even imagined she must have been some ancestral spirit returning to visit them!

## 6. ASK:

- *Have you ever visited a place for the first time and instantly felt comfortable and right at home?*
- *What made you feel that way?*
- *If we don't feel connected to the place where we are or the people we are with, what can we do to build that connection?*

**7. TELL:** Use what you have learned about Pearl Primus' life to create a poem that highlights her talents, fearlessness, joy, and her legacy.

## 8. DO: OMOWALE Poem Worksheet

*[NOTE: This activity can be used as an assessment to determine what your students have learned from the lesson.]*

- Hand out worksheet and have students work independently or in groups to write an acrostic poem.

*[It would be good to write your own poem beforehand to help your students generate ideas.]*

## 9. ASK:

- *If you could have interviewed Pearl Primus, what would you want to ask her?*
- [NOTE: this can also be used as an assessment. Encourage students to write down their questions and to do further research to see if they might find the answers to their questions.]*

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Students can hold a Pearl Primus Tribute Program, which would highlight Pearl Primus' life and career.

Students can:

- Create and prepare posters
- Create and prepare a presentation about African countries and their cultures
- Prepare dramatic readings (*perhaps their own poems*)
- Present a modern dance (*accompanied by music and/or by a student's poem*)

## RESOURCES

- Perpener, John, O., African-American Concert Dance: The Harlem Renaissance and Beyond, University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 2001
- Lloyd, Margaret, Borzoi Book of Modern Dance, A.A. Knopf, New York, NY, 1949
- Accelerated Motion: Toward a New Dance Literacy In America – Pearl Primus, <http://acceleratedmotion.org/artist-profiles/artist-profile-pearl-primus/>
- Schwartz, Peggy and Murray, The Dance Claimed Me: A Biography of Pearl Primus, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2011.
- Pearl Primus, Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pearl\\_Primus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pearl_Primus)

## For Young People

- Dunkin, Anne, How They Became Famous Dancers, CreateSpace, 2015



## MINNESOTA STATE STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

### **SOCIAL STUDIES: Citizenship and Government**

*Civic Skills:* Identify ways people make a difference in the civic life of their communities, state, nation, or world by working as individuals or groups to address a specific problem or need.

*Civic Values and Principles of Democracy:* Explain the importance of civic discourse and the principles of majority rule and minority rights.

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### **SOCIAL STUDIES: Geography**

*Geospatial Skills:* Use maps and concepts of location to describe places in one's community, the state, the United States, or the world.

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### **SOCIAL STUDIES: History**

*Historical Thinking Skills:*

- Reference different time periods using correct terminology, including the terms decade, century, and millennium.
  - Examine historical records, maps, and artifacts to answer basic questions about times and events in history,
- 

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Key ideas and Details**

Determine the main idea(s) of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea(s).

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### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**

Use and interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively and demonstrate understanding of the text in which it appears.

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### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Writing Process: Production and Distribution of Writing**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

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### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

Recall relevant information from experience or gather relevant information from print and digital sources and sort evidence into provided categories.

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### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Comprehension and Collaboration**

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners.

Determine the main ideas and supporting details of, paraphrase, and/or summarize a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media formats.

# LESSON PLAN: PEARL PRIMUS

## CONNECTING THE ARTS

### INTRODUCTION

Pearl Primus, dancer, choreographer, and anthropologist was VocalEssence Teaching Artist Karla Nweje's choice as an artist who influenced and inspires her as a dancer and educator. In a conversation with Karla, she said this about Primus: *"She turned me inside out as a dancer!"*

Primus was one of the first people to lead the way in studying traditional dance of African and Caribbean countries. She taught the authentic dances she learned to the dancers in her dance company. New works, choreographed by Primus, evolved from those traditional dances. Through her art, Pearl Primus became a leader in changing the myths of African American culture and heritage. She influenced people's attitudes from negative to neutral, to positive.

### KEY TERMS

<b>Choreograph:</b>	Creating/inventing the steps, patterns and movements which make up a dance or a dance routine
<b>Descriptive Review Protocol:</b>	An established process for meaningful and in-depth observation and reflection
<b>Jacob's Pillow:</b>	A dance center, school, and performance space located in Becket, MA. that sponsors the oldest dance festival in the U.S.
<b>Speculate:</b>	Make an educated guess, form theories, hypothesize, make suppositions



Primus takes flight

### LEARNING GOALS

Students will acquire a fuller understanding of Pearl Primus' artistic work when they view and respond to a photograph of the artist in mid-flight. Using the Descriptive Protocol to describe, analyze, and interpret the photograph, students convey their own ideas and understanding of Primus' skills and her passion for dance.

### MATERIALS

- Writing and drawing materials
- Chart paper

*The following are included in the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources:*

- Photograph of Pearl Primus, titled "Primus in Strange Fruit"
- Video clip of Primus' performance of "Give Me That Old Time Religion" from the work *Spirituals*

## PROCESS

Students will view an image of Pearl Primus and use the Descriptive Review Protocol to Describe what they see.

1. Display the image of Pearl Primus titled, “Primus in Strange Fruit.” Do not make comments about it; this is the students’ task. Please share only her name.
2. Lead students through an investigation of the image using questions from the Descriptive Review Protocol and capture their responses to each of the following steps on a chart or the board. Using a protocol can elicit a structured discussion and help students construct understanding about Pearl Primus. Their responses will vary depending on whether they have been introduced to Primus through the Pearl Primus Biographical Exploration lesson on p. 43.

### DESCRIPTIVE REVIEW PROTOCOL

#### STEP ONE: DESCRIBE

Ask students to look at the photograph and describe it in detail without offering opinions, speculations, or judgments. Use the following questions to guide the discussion:

- *Describe what you notice in this picture.*  
*What is going on?*
- *Tell me more about that?* (Ask for more details to encourage students to dig deeper.)
- *What else did you notice?*
- *Can anyone expand on that description; add to it?*
- *What did you see that made you say that?*  
(Use this question to redirect an opinion or speculation back to **describing**.)



Primus in “Strange Fruit”

#### STEP TWO: QUESTIONS AND WONDERING

Have students to look at the photograph again and ask them the following questions:

- *What questions do you have about this image?*
- *What do you want to know?*
- *What are you curious about?*
- *Finish the following statement: “I wonder...?”*

#### STEP THREE: SPECULATION AND MEANING

Have students speculate, to guess or make an educated guess based on evidence, and generate meaning behind the image. Ask students the following questions:

- *What does Pearl Primus want you to know, feel, or understand?*
- *What meaning or understanding is intended or conveyed?*

Take speculative comments from students and write them on the charts.

3. Select one or more of the activities below to anchor students' speculations. Direct students to consider their descriptions, questions, and speculations to complete a task with a partner. Choose one of these speculative tasks or create your own.
  - This artist is coming to your city with her dance company to perform a dance concert. You and your partner work for a local newspaper that is going to run this photograph in the next edition, and you must **write an “attention grabbing” title for the image and a caption** with more information. Use words and phrases from the descriptive charts.
  - **What do you think this person is expressing through her movements?** Discuss with a partner, and **write down** your thoughts.
  - Speculate with a partner about a possible story this image suggests. **Make up a short story and write it down.**
  - Imagine that this image is from a movie or play. **What is the play or movie about? Write it down.** Remember to use words from the charts.



Advertising Poster for  
London Performances

Reconvene and ask for volunteers to share their work.

4. Very few films still exist of Pearl Primus' performances. From the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources, download and view one of the few available videos of her dance skill and choreography. Made in 1950, Prius titled this work *Spirituals*. She is dancing to an old gospel song called "Give Me That Old Time Religion." It was first sung by the Fisk Jubilee singers around 1873.
5. See the **EXTENSION ACTIVITIES** on page 52 for a student choreography project to African American spirituals.

## ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS

- The layers of response in The Descriptive Review process provides group evidence of students' ability to observe, analyze and construct interpretations in both speaking and writing about the work. Student responses recorded on chart paper, or the board, will show evidence of their learning.
- The optional choreography project in the EXTENSION ACTIVITIES provides evidence of your students' ability to generate and develop original ideas. Document students dance sequences with video and use a prepared checklist to assess their projects.



## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Pearl Primus' choreography was as remarkable as her performances. Consider assigning students choreography projects to create steps and sequences for a familiar spiritual, in the spirit of Primus' "Give Me That Old Time Religion." Recordings of spirituals are readily available on the web. Use the process outlined in the Katherine Dunham lesson, **FOR THE BOLD AND THE BRAVE** on p. 40 of the Teacher Resource Guide.
2. For older students, provide more background for the photograph they used in the Descriptive Review activity. It is from a famous Primus performance of "Strange Fruit," sung by Billie Holiday. The song and Primus's stunning interpretation provide a significant story about how the arts can do more to change minds than laws can. The story in the song is about lynching, and it is a difficult song to hear, especially with Primus' interpretation. **Please use discretion after viewing these resources when deciding if they are suitable for your students.** Both videos are included in the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources:

- Video of Primus dancing to "Strange Fruit," sung by Billie Holiday  
<https://youtu.be/SJ1CLB0Okug>
- Video from PBS, "'Strange Fruit' a Song Born of Protest" tells the story about how the song shone a light on the horror of lynching in the United States.  
<https://tpt.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/bf09.socst.us.prosp.powersong/strange-fruit-a-song-born-of-protest/>

### SENSITIVE MATERIAL:

This resource contains material that may be sensitive for some students. Teachers should exercise discretion in evaluating whether this resource is suitable for their class.

## MINNESOTA STATE STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

### VISUAL ART & DANCE: Respond

*Standard #7:* Analyze and construct interpretations of artistic work.

### DANCE: Create

Generate and develop original artistic ideas.

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Production & Distribution

*Standard #4:* Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

## RESOURCES

### BOOKS

*The Dance Claimed Me: A Biography of Pearl Primus* (2011) by Peggy Schwartz, Yale University Press.  
This is a good biography with many images of Primus.

### WEBSITES

<https://www.gettyimages.ca/detail/news-photo/dancer-and-choreographer-pearl-primus-depicts-lynching-news-photo/613461522>  
The Getty Museum and Archives has photos of Primus

[http://www.vam.ac.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/image/0008/185786/2009by0061\\_pearl\\_primus\\_company\\_poster.jpg](http://www.vam.ac.uk/__data/assets/image/0008/185786/2009by0061_pearl_primus_company_poster.jpg)  
This is the source for the poster advertising Primus' appearances in London.

<http://new.danceheritage.org/html/primus.html>  
The Dance Heritage Coalition has information about Primus in the "100 Dance Treasures" section.

<https://danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/pearl-primus/spirituals/>  
This is a rare video of Primus dancing.

[https://vsainternational.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/descriptive\\_review\\_overview.pdf](https://vsainternational.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/descriptive_review_overview.pdf)  
This site explains the Descriptive Review Protocol in detail.

[http://perpich.mn.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/artful\\_HANDBOOK6\\_7.pdf](http://perpich.mn.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/artful_HANDBOOK6_7.pdf)  
This is the Artful Teaching & Learning Handbook download from Perpich Center for in depth information on Descriptive Review and other Learning Protocols.

## LESSON PLAN:

### DR. CHARLES “BABA CHUCK” DAVIS

#### BIOGRAPHICAL EXPLORATION



Dr. Charles “Baba Chuck” Davis

## INTRODUCTION

“Griot” is the word for a west African storyteller and musician who preserves tribal traditions and histories. Dr. Charles Davis, known to students as “Baba Chuck,” came to be called a griot as he directed his DanceAfrica festivals for over 35 years. In this lesson, your students will learn the story of how Baba Chuck became fascinated by the roots of African American dance and devoted his life to collecting, preserving, and teaching African traditions and dance to audiences and young dancers. He used dance to combat racism and inspired others by his commitment to peace, love, and respect for everybody.

## LEARNING GOALS

Students will learn about Dr. Charles “Baba Chuck” Davis and consider what it means to be a multifaceted person. They will be asked to think about the importance of studying one’s heritage. They will reflect on the lessons they learn from Baba Chuck’s life which include pursuing and achieving your goals and turning negatives into positives.

## MATERIALS

*The following are included in the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources*

- Dr. Charles “Baba Chuck” Davis PowerPoint
- Multifaceted Dr. Charles Davis Worksheet
- Dr. Charles Davis’ Travels Chronology and World Map Worksheet
- AGO! AME! Poem Worksheet

## KEY TERMS

<b>Courage:</b>	Mental and emotional strength to stand up to danger, difficulty, or fear
<b>Determination:</b>	The act of making a firm and definite decision to reach a desired goal
<b>Culture:</b>	Shared beliefs, traditions, attitudes, goals, and practices of a particular group
<b>Racism:</b>	The belief that racial differences produce natural superiority and inferiority
<b>Heritage:</b>	Something passed down or received from those who existed or set an example in the past
<b>Ancestry:</b>	Family line of people linked together and traced back into the past
<b>Civil rights:</b>	Rights and personal freedoms guaranteed to the citizens of a country
<b>Activist:</b>	A person who is especially active, energetic, and forceful in support of or against a cause
<b>Legacy:</b>	Anything handed down from the past, as from a person, group of people, or event

## PART ONE: SOIL AND SEEDS

*For a garden to grow and flourish, you must start with seeds and soil. Part One of this lesson focuses on the “soil”—the world into which Dr. Charles Davis was born and the early situations he encountered, and on the “seeds”—the choices Davis’ made as a young man and the circumstances that were influential in his life.*

1. **SHOW:** Slide # 1 of Dr. Charles Davis

2. **TELL:**

- DR. CHARLES DAVIS, known to students as “Baba Chuck”, was born on January 1, 1937 in Raleigh, North Carolina. These images give you an idea of what life was like in the 1930s.

3. **SHOW:** Slide # 2 of life in the 1930s

- The Great Depression began—banks fail; jobs are lost; people stand in line for food and work.
- Pluto is discovered.
- Clarence Birdseye patents a quick-freezing process to make frozen food.
- Construction of the Empire State Building is completed.
- Franklin D. Roosevelt is elected President of the United States.
- The Summer Olympic Games are held in Berlin, Germany. Jesse Owens wins four gold medals, which defies Adolph Hitler’s claims of white racial superiority.
- Marian Anderson sings at the Lincoln Memorial for an audience of 75,000.
- Nazi Germany invades Poland, which begins World War II.

4. **ASK:**

- *Would you like to have grown up in the 1930s? Why? Why not?*
- *From the above list, what do you think was the most interesting or important event that happened during that time period? Why?*

5. **SHOW:** Slide # 3 with the question “WHAT KIND OF STUDENT WAS DR. CHARLES DAVIS?”



Dr. Charles Davis dancing

6. **ASK:**

- *Do you have an interest in a hobby or activity that your family or friends don’t share?*
- *How can you explain to someone why you just have to pursue a certain interest, even if that person might not agree?*

7. **TELL:**

- Charles’ mother died when he was four years old. His father remarried, and his step-mother—a devout Baptist—believed it was wrong to dance except when “moved by the spirit” in church.
- After Charles graduated from J. W. Ligon High School in Raleigh in 1955, he enlisted in the **U.S. Navy** and served as a **medical assistant** at the Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland.
- When Charles was off-duty, he would often go to the Dunbar Hotel in Washington D.C. and enjoy watching the **Afro-Cuban dancing**. As Charles learned the music and dances, the hotel manager saw potential in him and asked Charles to join the show. Charles accepted the offer.
- In the late 1950s, Charles moved to Washington D.C. and worked at George Washington Hospital, where he cared for polio patients. Many of them were unable to move their arms or legs, and some could not speak. To help them, Charles got interested in learning **sign language**.
- At first, Charles tried to pursue his two interests—**nursing** and **dancing**; but dance won out. He enrolled in Howard University, where he took classes in **ballet, jazz, tap, and Caribbean** dance.

**8. ASK:**

- *What kind of student was Charles?*
- *How do you think Charles' step-mother felt about his interest in dancing?*
- *Do you think he told her? Would you? Why? Why not?*

**9. SHOW: Slide # 4** "The Multifaceted Charles Davis"

**10. TELL:**

- Facet = a small plane surface
- Multifaceted = having many facets
- Discuss how a cut diamond is multifaceted, not like a flat piece of paper.

**11. ASK:**

- *How can a person be like a piece of paper or like a diamond?*

**12. DO:** Multifaceted Dr. Charles "Baba Chuck" Davis Worksheet

- Hand out the worksheet.
- Have student fill out the worksheet, first showing how Davis' life was multifaceted. (*Tell them that they may learn about some other facets later in the lesson.*)
- Then have student think about their own diverse activities and interests—including interests they would like to pursue in the future. Have students share their multifaceted interests with each other.

**13. SHOW: Slide # 5** of quotation, *"I decided that dance was the prevention, and nursing was the cure. And I'd rather be part of the prevention than the cure."*

**14. ASK:**

- *What do you think Baba Chuck meant by these words?*
- *How can dancing be a cure for problems in society?*

## PART TWO: BUD AND BLOOM

*Over time, you will see how the plants, flowers, fruits, or vegetables in a garden are developing. Part Two of this lesson will consider how Dr. Charles Davis' talents and career developed during his journeys—both his literal travels and the course of his life.*

**1. SHOW: Slide # 6** with the question "WHAT LESSONS DID DR. CHARLES DAVIS LEARN IN HIS LIFE?"

**2. ASK:**

- *Have you ever had a task to complete that seemed impossible, but you were able to complete it?*
- *How did you feel and what did you learn about yourself after you completed the task?*
- *Have you ever watched someone else do an activity that you enjoy, and it motivated you to keep going and improving?*

**3. SHOW: Slide # 7** of Babatunde Olatunji, Davis, and dancers



Olatunji Dancers and Drummers at N.Y. World's Fair 1964-1954

**4. TELL:**

- In 1963, Babatunde Olatunji—a famous Nigerian-born drummer—saw Charles perform and asked him to join an African dance troupe in New York. He gladly accepted the offer. Charles arrived on a Tuesday, learned five dances between Wednesday and Friday, and performed on Saturday!
- As a member of the troupe, Charles not only had to learn authentic African dances, but also songs in the Yoruba language.
- In 1964, the World's Fair was held in Queens, New York. There was a section devoted to African culture. Not only did



Olatunji's dance troupe perform, but groups from various African countries were invited as well. "I'd never seen such fireworks on the stage," Charles said after watching dancers from Sierra Leone perform.

5. **SHOW: Slide # 8** – Video of African dancers at the 1964 World's Fair (video is embedded into Slide # 8; be sure you are connected to the internet for the video to play)

6. **ASK:**

- *What did Charles learn about himself as he became a member of Olatunji's dance troupe?*
- *How do you think watching the dancers from Sierra Leone motivated Charles?*

7. **SHOW: Slide # 9** of Macon, Georgia, Nabs, and milk

8. **TELL:**

- Charles toured and performed around the country with Olatunji's dance troupe.
  - **STORY:** One day they stopped at a store in Macon, Georgia. Charles went inside and asked the lady at the counter for his favorite snack—a package of Nabs (peanut butter and cracker sandwiches) and milk. The lady told him: "I can sell you *chocolate* milk, but I can't sell you no white milk." He was stunned and didn't know what to say. He just walked back to the bus without buying anything. Soon afterward, an elderly lady walked up to the bus window. She had seen what happened in the store. She gave Charles two packages of Nabs and a bottle of milk, and said, "Young man, everybody is not a fool."

9. **ASK:**

- *How would you have reacted to the lady at the counter?*
- *What causes some people to be prejudiced?*
- *Why is it good not to form an opinion about an entire race or culture from one or two negative experiences?*

- *What lesson did Charles learn from this experience?*

10. **TELL:**

- Charles' friends began calling him "Baba Chuck" (meaning Papa Chuck) and his motto became: "Peace. Love. Respect. For everybody." As he went through his life, Baba Chuck lived by those words. And he tried to help all who encountered him to live by them too.

3. **SHOW: Slide # 10** with the question "HOW WAS DR. CHARLES DAVIS A LIFE-LONG LEARNER?"

4. **ASK:**

- *Why should we never stop learning and trying new things and new ways of doing things?*
- *What are different ways that you can keep learning?*
- *How can you be generous with your knowledge?*
- *How can you learn more by teaching others?*

5. **SHOW: Slide # 11** of Baba Chuck's life

6. **DO:** Dr. Charles Davis' Travels Chronology and World Map Worksheet

- Hand out the worksheet.
- Help students read the chronology of events (on the worksheet) and have them chart Davis's travels around the globe, drawing a line from one place to the next.

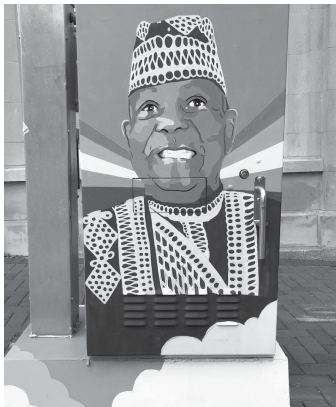
7. **SHOW: Slide # 12** – Video of Baba Chuck dancing and teaching (video is embedded into Slide # 12; be sure you are connected to the internet for the video to play)

8. **ASK:**

- *How did Baba Chuck show that he was a life-long learner?*
- *What do you think Baba Chuck learned from teaching others?*

## PART THREE: FRUIT AND FRAGRANCE

*When the garden has produced its plants, flowers, fruits, or vegetables, and the harvest season is over, what is left? Perhaps dried flowers and herbs, produce that has been frozen or canned, the memories and photographs of what was accomplished, and even seeds that were produced to create future gardens. Part Three of this lesson highlights Dr. Charles “Baba Chuck” Davis’ great legacy—honors, lessons learned, and inspiration from his life and career.*



Painting of Dr. Charles Davis that was displayed in Durham, North Carolina

1. **SHOW:** Slide # 13 with the question “WHAT IS BABA CHUCK’S LEGACY?”

2. **TELL:**

- Dr. Charles “Baba Chuck” Davis died on May 14, 2017 in Durham, North Carolina at the age of 80. His legacy—through his photographs, dances, teaching, artistry, and actions—continues to live on, inspiring other dancers, choreographers, leaders, and all who take on the role of helping others.

3. **SHOW:** Slide # 14 of AGO! AME! Poem

4. **TELL:**

- Anyone who has attended a DanceAfrica performance will have heard Baba Chuck call out, in his deep, booming voice: “Ago!” (pronounced: “Ah-GO”). It is a word from the Akan language in Ghana that means, “Attention!”

- The audience immediately responds: “Ame! (“Ah-MAY”), meaning, “I am listening!” [Practice this call and response with your students.]
- With that call and response, Baba Chuck begins the program and keeps everyone’s attention throughout the show, as he tells stories and introduces the performers.

5. **SHOW:** Slide # 15 with the quotation about African traditions

6. **ASK:**

- *Baba Chuck said that “African traditions are based on respect.” Do you feel that is true of this tradition [“Ago! Ame!”]? Why?*
- *How can traditions like this be a way of fighting against racism?*
- *How do we benefit from giving our “attention” to what others say or do and by “listening?”*

7. **TELL:**

- Use what you have learned about Baba Chuck’s life to create a poem that highlights his talents, courage, confidence, determination, and his legacy.

8. **DO:** AGO! AME! Poem Activity

*[NOTE: This activity can be used as an assessment to determine what your students have learned from the lesson.]*

- Hand out worksheet and have students work independently or in groups to write an acrostic poem.

*[It would be good to write your own poem beforehand to help your students generate ideas.]*

9. **ASK:**

- *If you could have interviewed Dr. Charles “Baba Chuck” Davis, what would you want to ask him?*

*[NOTE: this can also be used as an assessment. Encourage students to write down their questions and to do further research to see if they might find the answers to their questions.]*

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Students can hold a Dr. Charles “Baba Chuck” Davis Tribute Program, which would highlight Dr. Davis’ life and career.

Students can:

- Create and prepare posters
- Create and prepare a presentation about different African countries and their cultures
- Prepare dramatic readings (*perhaps their own poems*)
- Present a modern dance (*accompanied by music and/or by a student’s poem*)

## MINNESOTA STATE STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

### **SOCIAL STUDIES:**

#### **Citizenship and Government**

*Civic Skills:* Identify ways people make a difference in the civic life of their communities, state, nation, or world by working as individuals or groups to address a specific problem or need.

*Civic Values and Principles of Democracy:* Explain the importance of civic discourse and the principles of majority rule and minority rights.

#### **SOCIAL STUDIES: Geography**

*Geospatial Skills:* Use maps and concepts of location to describe places in one’s community, the state, the United States, or the world.

#### **SOCIAL STUDIES: History**

*Historical Thinking Skills:*

- Reference different time periods using correct terminology, including the terms decade, century, and millennium.
- Examine historical records, maps, and artifacts to answer basic questions about times and events in history.

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:**

#### **Key ideas and Details**

Determine the main idea(s) of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea(s).

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:**

#### **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**

Use and interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively and demonstrate understanding of the text in which it appears.

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:**

#### **Writing Process: Production and Distribution of Writing**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:**

#### **Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

Recall relevant information from experience or gather relevant information from print and digital sources and sort evidence into provided categories.

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:**

#### **Comprehension and Collaboration**

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners.

Determine the main ideas and supporting details of, paraphrase, and/or summarize a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media formats.

## RESOURCES

Fox, Margalit, "Chuck Davis, Who Brought African Dance Traditions to America, Dies at 80, The New York Times, May 15, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/15/arts/dance/chuck-davis-dead.html>

McDonald, Thomasi, "Transcendent, humbling period for dance titan Chuck Davis, The News & Observer, September 5, 2015, <https://www.newsobserver.com/entertainment/arts-culture/article34193025.html>

Baumgartner Vaughan, Dawn, "Peace, love and respect for Chuck Davis", The Herald Sun, May 20, 2017

Biographical Conversations with ... Chuck Davis – Part1, PBS, <https://www.pbs.org/video/biographical-conversations-charles-r-davis-dance-prevention/>

Biographical Conversations with ... Chuck Davis – Part2, PBS, <https://www.pbs.org/video/biographical-conversations-charles-r-davis-pursuing-authentic/>

Biographical Conversations with ... Chuck Davis – Part3, PBS, <https://www.pbs.org/video/biographical-conversations-chuck-davis-peace-love-and-respect/>

Chuck Davis, Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuck\\_Davis\\_\(dancer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuck_Davis_(dancer))





**Baba Chuck Davis**  
Photo by Alec Himwich

## LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Practice the “Ago/Ame” ritual for paying attention and become proficient and timely
- Sing a song inspired by West African culture and/or learn a polyrhythmic accompaniment or develop their own
- Read an article about West African griots, and identify Baba Chuck’s griot characteristics

## MATERIALS

- A variety of percussion instruments (from the music classroom or found sound instruments)

*The following are included in the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources:*

- Copies of the reading, “What is a Griot?”
- Short video of Baba Chuck’s “Ago/Ame” call
- Recording of “Fanga Alafia” from Kennedy Center
- Recording of “Jingo Ba”
- Baba Chuck Instructional Dance Video from the Kennedy Center
- Blank Grid for Creating a Polyrhythmic Arrangement

## LESSON PLAN:

### DR. CHARLES “BABA CHUCK” DAVIS CONNECTING THE ARTS

## INTRODUCTION

Dancer and VocalEssence Teaching Artist Patricia Brown credits Dr. Charles Davis, also known to students as Baba Chuck, as an artist who had a significant impact on her work in dance. Davis was a leader in promoting and supporting African and African American dance in the United States. He founded African dance companies and important dance festivals. He taught throughout the United States and the world.

Dancers Pearl Primus and Katherine Dunham are known and honored for paying homage to their African and Caribbean roots through their study of dance in those cultures. Baba Chuck is known and honored for bringing his students and audiences into an understanding of the deep roots and significance of African dance and its seamless presence in the life of West African people. His work put authentic African dance on this continent.

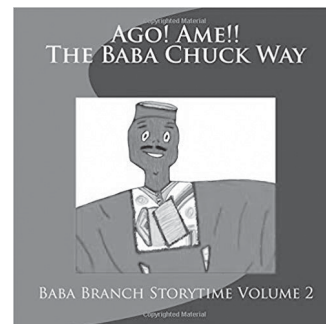
## KEY TERMS

<b>Accent:</b>	Place extra emphasis or stress on a note
<b>Beat:</b>	The basic unit of time in music; the pulse of a piece of music
<b>Call and Response:</b>	A succession of two phrases sung or played by different musicians, where the second phrase sounds like a comment or response to the first phrase; a musical conversation
<b>Found Sound Instruments:</b>	A variety of objects that can be used for making music: buckets of all sizes for drums, sticks, beans in a jar, a washboard and stick for scraping, be imaginative!
<b>Griot:</b>	In West African communities, the person who keeps traditions, language, culture, and music alive
<b>Ostinato:</b>	A rhythmic or melodic pattern repeated continuously
<b>Polyrhythmic:</b>	Two different rhythms played at the same time in music

## PROCESS

### PART ONE: BABA CHUCK'S CALL AND RESPONSE

1. Learn Baba Chuck's call and response ritual for bringing students and audiences to attention. It works best in elementary and middle school classrooms when students understand the cultural context. It is even worth trying in high school!
  - When working with a group, Baba Chuck would call out the first word in his booming voice:  
"Ago!" (*Ah-GO*), which means ATTENTION! in the Akan language of Ghana
  - The group would respond:  
"Ame!" (*Ah-MAY!*), which means "I am listening!"
  - Practice his "call and response" ritual until both you and your students get accustomed to stop whatever they are doing, show they are listening, and quietly focus on you and what comes next.
  - This could become a regular process in your classroom.



Volume Two of the Baba Branch Storytime Series

Watch Baba Chuck give the call out at the opening of the Baba Chuck's "Ago/Ame" call video.

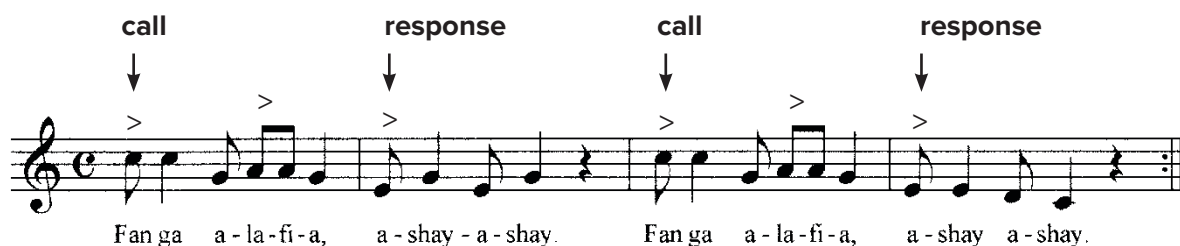
2. Why do people call Baba Chuck a griot? Ask students if they know what a griot is and what a griot does. Is it a compliment; a good thing to be?
  - Read the "What is a Griot?" article in class or ask students to read it before class.
  - Recall and discuss Baba Chuck's accomplishments. Ask students for their opinions about calling him a 21st century American griot.

### PART TWO: LEARN A SONG INSPIRED BY WEST AFRICAN CULTURE AND PLAY A POLYRHYTHMIC ACCOMPANIMENT

For younger and older students, "Fanga Alafia" works well to get instruments and voices going.

1. Learn to sing "Fanga Alafia" in two groups as a call and response song. Some may already know it. Provide information about the source of the song and the meaning of the words.

## Fanga Alafia



- **WORDS:** Teacher speaks the words in rhythm while patting the **BEAT** on their lap one measure at a time. Students pat the **BEAT** and echo teacher.
  - **MELODY:** Teacher pats the **BEAT** and sings the first two measures; students pat the **BEAT** and echo.
  - Tell students that the 1st and 3rd measures are the call, and the 2nd and 4th measures are the response. Divide into two groups; one small group to sing the call, and the rest to sing the response. Sing the whole song several times as a call and response as you keep the **BEAT** going.
2. When students can sing in two groups while keeping the **BEAT**, add something new: the **ACCENT**. Have students stand, sing, and stomp a foot on the **ACCENT**, while you keep the **BEAT** on your lap. Stomp one **ACCENT** for every two **BEATS**.
    - When the **BEAT**, and **ACCENT** are working together with the song, add instruments (real or found sound):
      - play the **ACCENT** on your largest or lowest instrument(s)
      - play the **BEAT** with claves or sticks
  3. Find a pattern, called an **OSTINATO**, to play over and over as you sing. A good place to look for an **OSTINATO** is in the word patterns of the song. Speak the lyrics and try out the **PATTERNS** that the words make. For example, “ashay ashay.” Speak and clap this **OSTINATO** until it sounds secure.
  4. Divide into four groups:
    - Group 1 plays the **ACCENT** on drums or desktops
    - Group 2 comes in with the **BEAT** on claves or sticks
    - Group 3 comes in with the **OSTINATO** on shakers or scrapers or beans in a jar
    - Group 4 sings the call (a single singer or small group). Everyone else responds, even if they are playing an instrument.
    - WOW! You sound great!

**“Fanga Alafia”** (or “Funga”) is a WELCOME song composed by African American drummer and dancer LaRocque Bey in Harlem (New York City) in 1959 or 1960. While the tune is based on the American Folk Song “Little Liza Jane,” the song is rooted in West African traditions. The words are based on the Yoruba language, but have been altered and changed as the song moved among different cultures. Loosely translated, the words mean “welcome, give us peace and good health. The word in the response, “ashay,” comes from the term “ah-shen,” which means “Amen” or “let it be so.”

## FOR OLDER STUDENTS

**“Jingo ba”** or **“Jingo”** is a song by Nigerian percussionist Babatunde Olatunji, featured on his first album *Drums of Passion* (1959). Olatunji was Baba Chuck’s good friend. He gave Baba Chuck his first job as a dancer. In Yoruba, Olatunji’s native language, “jingo ba” means, “Do not worry.”

1. Listen to the recording of “Jingo ba.”
  - Students can add “quiet” percussion as they listen, using hands, feet, or lap.
  - Encourage students to start singing phrases along with the recording as soon as they are able. They are learning the song aurally as they would in many world cultures.
  - Notice the phrase pattern. Sometimes they sing the full opening phrase; at other times small segments of the phrase. Challenge the students to plot the sequence on a chart. This could be a small group activity or homework. Here’s an example of the opening 30+ seconds.

Percussion	Jingo—jingo ba	Jingo—jingo ba	Jingo—jingo ba	Jingo—jingo ba	Jingo ba	Jingo ba etc.
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- Sing the song from the chart. Go back to the recording until students have a plan they like. As you learn the song, keep body percussion going to prepare for adding instruments. Try standing while singing and shifting your weight from one foot to the other, side to side.
- The recording is in an appropriate range for student voices and can assist in teaching “Jingo ba.”

2. Add an accompaniment in polyrhythmic layers using the grid approach. Here’s how the grid approach works:

- Draw a single line grid on the board divided into sections; eight work well for “Jingo ba.” *(The grid helps students know when and what rhythm patterns to play because they can see their part in relation to others.)*
- Count and clap from left to right. Each count represents one eighth note. Keep looping back to the beginning in a constant stream of rhythm.

Jin-	go					Jin-	go
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

- Eliminate some of the beats. Count all the beats but clap only on the ones with the number in the box. Keep looping.

1			4	5		7	8
---	--	--	---	---	--	---	---

- Try more patterns by eliminating some boxes and clapping for those left in place. Start singing the opening lines of “Jingo, Jingo ba” with the patterns.

3. You are ready to stack up layers of rhythm. Start with a simple set of three or four.

Here is a hypothetical arrangement to demonstrate how it works as you build up rhythms in layers.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1-shakers	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2-bucket drum	X			X				
3-claves/ sticks	X			X	X			
4-cowbell/tin can	X		X				X	X
5-guiro/scraper	X			X	X			X

—————→ = long scrape on the guiro or scrape across 2 eighth notes to fill in the missing eighth notes

4. Add the real instruments to the song. One group plays instruments as the rest of the class sings “Jingo ba.” Encourage students to keep counting in their heads.

- This is a sample. Students can figure out their own layers. Divide into small groups, each with a small collection of instruments and a copy of the Blank Grid for Creating a Polyrhythmic Arrangement. After each group plots and rehearses their own accompaniment for the song, reconvene and listen to the variety of accompaniments that students created.



- Find an audience for the students and have them perform their original polyrhythmic accompaniments for other teachers or visit a younger classroom in your school to showcase your students' accomplishments.

## ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS

- The group activities in teaching the "Ago-Ame" call and response, as well as learning a West African song and polyrhythmic accompaniment clapping and stomping **BEATS** and **ACCENTS** provide evidence of student learning; consider performing this for another class, or video recording the class working together.
- The work generated in the Creating a Polyrhythmic Arrangement provides evidence of students' ability to document their shared, collaborative ideas. This work, plus the following performance for the class, as well as any supporting conversation, can be assessed.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Find other West African songs to sing and create instrumental accompaniments. The Folkways "Folk Music of Ghana" is a good place to begin. A link to the Smithsonian Folkways website is referenced in the **RESOURCES** section. There is a set of lessons to accompany this album created by Karen Howard from the University of Washington.
- Learn some simple West African dance steps from this seven-minute dance instruction video from The Kennedy Center listed in **RESOURCES**.

## MINNESOTA STATE STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

### MUSIC: Create

*Standard #2:* Create original artistic work.

*Standard #3:* Revise and complete original artistic work.

### MUSIC: Perform

*Standard #5:* Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for performance.

*Standard #6:* Make artistic choices in order to convey meaning through performance.

### MUSIC: Connect

*Standard #10:* Understand that artistic works influence and are influenced by personal, societal, cultural, and historical contexts.

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Reading

*Standard #1:* Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inference from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

## RESOURCES

### BOOKS

Baba Chuck Dancer for Peace Baba Branch Storytime Volume One (2017) by Medina Ann Johnson

*Ago! Ame!! The Baba Chuck Way* Baba Branch Storytime Volume Two (2018) by Medina Ann Johnson

These two books are the first and second releases from the Baba Branch Storytime which are picture books designed to engage very young children.

### WEBSITES

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuck\\_Davis\\_\(dancer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuck_Davis_(dancer))

A website that includes Life and career facts and information for Dr. Charles "Baba Chuck" Davis.

<https://youtu.be/bHYC88VVh7U>

A recent short video of "Dance Africa" NYC dance festival.

<https://youtu.be/Ri6cuxDZU5s>

Learn some simple West African dance steps from this seven-minute dance instruction video from The Kennedy Center.

<https://www.sheetmusicnow.com>

Sheet music for the patterns in Olatunji's "Jingo ba" can be purchased here.

<https://folkways.si.edu/folk-music-of-ghana/world/album/smithsonian>

Folkways "Folk Music of Ghana" is an authentic collection of songs for upper elementary to middle school voices.



Aretha Franklin

### LEARNING GOALS

Students will learn about Aretha Franklin and consider what it means to be a multifaceted person. They will discuss the idea of singing with soul and appreciate the example Franklin set in shining, rather than cracking, under pressure.

### MATERIALS

*The following are included in the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources:*

- Aretha Franklin PowerPoint
- Multifaceted Aretha Franklin Worksheet
- Aretha Franklin's Travels Chronology and World Map Worksheet
- *RESPECT* Poem Worksheet

## LESSON PLAN: ARETHA FRANKLIN BIOGRAPHICAL EXPLORATION

### INTRODUCTION

What does it mean to sing with “soul?” If you look up definitions and read articles, you find such descriptions as “intensity of feeling,” “raw emotion,” and “personal testimony.” By any measure, Aretha Franklin certainly earned her title as the “Queen of Soul.” In this lesson, your students will follow Franklin’s journey to the “crown.” They will see how Franklin, who has become an inspiring figure to many, started out just like them—inspired by those who had made their mark before. They will see how determination, hard work, and courage can lead to great success.

### KEY TERMS

<b>Gospel:</b>	Christian music, tracing back to the 1600s and rooted in African American oral traditions
<b>R&amp;B:</b>	An abbreviation for “rhythm and blues,” a style of music originating in African American urban communities in the 1940s that highlighted the Black experience
<b>Pop:</b>	Music that originated in the U.S. and Britain in the 1950s, may borrow from various other music styles, and appeals to a wide audience
<b>Jazz:</b>	Music that originated in African-American communities in the late 1800s and early 1900s, with roots in blues and ragtime
<b>Blues:</b>	Music originated by African Americans living in the South in the late 1800s, with lyrics that often describe personal troubles
<b>Courage:</b>	Mental and emotional strength to stand up to danger, difficulty, or fear
<b>Determination:</b>	The act of making a firm and definite decision to reach a desired goal
<b>Legacy:</b>	Anything handed down from the past, as from a person, group of people, or event

## PART ONE: SOIL AND SEEDS

*For a garden to grow and flourish, you must start with seeds and soil. Part One of this lesson focuses on the “soil”—the world into which Aretha Franklin was born and the early situations she encountered, and on the “seeds”—the choices Franklin made as a woman and the circumstances that were influential in her life.*

1. **SHOW:** **Slide #1** of Aretha Franklin

2. **TELL:**

- ARETHA FRANKLIN was born on March 25, 1942 in Memphis, Tennessee. These images give you an idea of what life was like in the 1940s.

3. **SHOW:** **Slide # 2** of life in the 1940s:

- Bugs Bunny appeared in his first cartoon.
- The Tuskegee Airmen corps is formed.
- Cheerios cereal was invented (first called “Cheeri Oats”).
- Mount Rushmore was completed.
- The United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Germany and Japan surrender, and World War II ended.
- The first computer was built.
- Jackie Robinson became the first African American baseball player in the Major Leagues.
- China became a communist country.

4. **ASK:**

- *Would you like to have grown up in the 1940s? Why? Why not?*
- *From the above list, what do you think was the most interesting or important event that happened during that time period? Why?*

5. **SHOW:** **Slide # 3** with the question “WHAT KIND OF MUSIC DID ARETHA LIKE?”

6. **ASK:**

- *What is your favorite kind of music?*
- *What kind of music have you never listened to?*
- *Why might it be good to listen to music that is different from what you already like (at least a few times)?*

7. **TELL:**

- From an early age, Aretha liked to sing. She sang **gospel music** in her father’s church. She sang her first solo at the age of 10. Just a few years later a small record company released her first album—a collection of gospel songs entitled “Spirituals.”
- Aretha knew about another young lady—Ruth Brown—who started out singing spirituals in her father’s church, but became known as the “Queen of R&B.” Aretha began to think about becoming an **R&B singer** as well.
- A good friend of hers—Sam Cooke—also started out singing gospel music in church when he was a kid, but was becoming famous as a singer of **pop music**, maybe she could do the same.
- One of the most influential people of all in motivating Aretha to pursue a singing career was Ruth Jones. Like Aretha, Ruth played the piano and sang in church when she was a girl. When Ruth turned 18, she changed her name to Dinah Washington, and went on to become one of the great **jazz** and **blues** singers of her time.

8. **ASK:**

- *What kinds of music was Aretha interested in as a young person?*
- *What style of music do you think she **FIRST** became famous for singing?*

9. **SHOW:** **Slide # 4** “The Multifaceted Aretha Franklin”

10. **TELL:**

- Facet = a small plane surface
- Multifaceted = having many facets
- Discuss how a cut diamond is multifaceted, not like a flat piece of paper.

11. **ASK:**

- How can a person be like a piece of paper or like a diamond?

12. **DO:** Multifaceted Aretha Franklin Worksheet

- Hand out the worksheet.
- Have student fill out the worksheet, first

showing how Franklin's life was multifaceted. (*Tell them that they may learn about some other facets later in the lesson.*)

- Then have student think about their own diverse activities and interests—including interests they would like to pursue in the future. Have students share their multifaceted interests with each other.

**13. ASK:**

- *Is there someone whose life or work you would like to imitate? Why?*

## PART TWO: BUD AND BLOOM

*Over time, you will see how the plants, flowers, fruits, or vegetables in a garden are developing. Part Two of this lesson will consider how Aretha Franklin's talents and career developed during her journeys—both her literal travels and the course of her life.*

**1. SHOW: Slide # 5** with the question “WHAT KIND OF SINGER WAS ARETHA FRANKLIN?”

**2. ASK**

- *What kind of music do you like the best?*
- *What kind of music do you NOT like to listen to?*
- *What is different about singing, playing, or dancing to music that you really like and doing those things with music that you feel is just OK?*

**3. TELL:**

- When Aretha was 16 years old, she toured around the country with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He would preach and speak to audiences about freedom and equality, and Aretha sang **gospel** songs as part of the program.
- Two years later, when Aretha turned 18, her mind was made up. She left home, and headed for New York City with the goal of becoming a successful **blues and jazz** singer, just like her idol, Dinah Washington.

- It didn't take long for Aretha to get noticed by record producers. She signed a contract with Columbia Records and started working on making an album.

**4. SHOW: Slide # 6** of the album cover Aretha



Aretha Franklin sings in the studio during her early career at Columbia Records

**5. TELL:**

- At the age of 19, she released her first professional album—*Aretha*—in 1961.
  - **PLAY** a sample from “Over the Rainbow.” (Video is embedded into Slide # 6; be sure you are connected to the internet for the video to play)

**6. ASK:**

- *What kind of singer was Aretha?*

**7. TELL:**

- After the release of her first album, Aretha spent the rest of the year on tour, going from jazz club to jazz club, around the country.

**8. SHOW: Slide # 7** with the Album cover *I Never Loved a Man the Way I Love You*

**9. TELL:**

- Her next several albums were good, but it was not until around 1967, after Aretha started working with a different record company and began recording songs like “I Never Loved a Man (The Way I Love You)” and “Respect,” that she was allowed to be herself and sing in a new and powerful way.
  - **PLAY** a sample from “Respect.” (Video is embedded into Slide # 7; be sure you are connected to the internet for the video to play)



- At the 1968 Grammy Awards, Aretha won in two categories: best rhythm & blues recording and best rhythm & blues solo vocal performance by a female.
- By the end of the 1960s, Aretha had come to be called “The Queen of Soul.”



Aretha accepting Grammy Award

**10. ASK:**

- *How is “Respect” different from “Over the Rainbow?”*
- *What do you think it means to sing with “soul?”*
- *Why do you think Aretha started winning awards with her new songs?*

**11. TELL:**

- Over the next 50 years, Aretha recorded hundreds of songs (some of which she wrote)—songs that showed every kind of emotion possible.
- She traveled around the globe, performing in a variety of places and to different types of audiences.
- As her career grew, Aretha was also a social activist. She refused to perform for segregated audiences, and she supported others who fought for civil rights.
- In 1970, when Angela Davis—a professor and Black Power activist—was arrested, Aretha offered to pay the bail money to get her out of jail.

**12. SHOW: Slide # 8** with quotation “*You got to disturb the peace when you can’t get no peace.... I’m going to see her free if there is any justice in our courts ... because she’s a black woman and she wants freedom for black people. I have the money ... and I want to use it in ways that will help our people.*”

**13. ASK:**

- *What do you think Aretha meant by saying that you have to disturb peace to get peace?*
- *What are different ways of being a civil rights activist?*

**14. SHOW: Slide # 9** with the question “HOW DID ARETHA FACE CHALLENGES?”

**15. ASK:**

- *What was the most nervous you have ever been when you had to do something in front of a group?*
- *What helped you do well, in spite of the nervousness and stress?*

**16. SHOW: Slide # 10** with photos of Franklin’s performances

**17. DO:** Aretha Franklin’s Travels Chronology and World Map Worksheet

- Hand out Worksheet.
- Help students read the chronology of events (on the worksheet) and have them chart Franklin’s travels around the globe, drawing a line from one place to the next.

**18. ASK:**

- *Which do you think was the most challenging performance for Aretha to give? Why?*
- *How do you think she was able to perform so well in that situation?*

## PART THREE: FRUIT AND FRAGRANCE

*When the garden has produced its plants, flowers, fruits, or vegetables, and the harvest season is over, what is left? Perhaps dried flowers and herbs, produce that has been frozen or canned, the memories and photographs of what was accomplished, and even seeds that were produced to create future gardens. Part Three of this lesson highlights Aretha Franklin's legacy—honors, lessons learned, and inspiration from her life and career.*



Time Magazine Cover Artwork

1. **SHOW:** Slide # 11 with the question  
“WHAT IS ARETHA FRANKLIN’S LEGACY?”

2. **TELL:**

- Aretha Franklin died on August 16, 2018 in Detroit, Michigan at the age of 76. But her legacy—through her recordings, photographs, videos, artistry, and actions—continues to live on, inspiring other singers and song writers, and anyone who has big dreams.

3. **ASK:**

- *What is Aretha Franklin’s legacy?  
What have you learned from her life that inspires you?*

4. **SHOW:** Slide # 12 of the *RESPECT* Poem Activity

5. **TELL:**

- Aretha was not the first or the only singer to record the song “Respect,” but her version is, by far, the most well-known.

- In the song, a wife asks her husband to show her the respect she deserves when she comes home from a hard day’s work.
- “Respect” went on to become a kind of anthem for women’s rights and the civil rights movement.

6. **ASK:**

- *What does it mean to show respect for someone else?*
- *Why do we all deserve respect?*
- *How can you still show respect for someone else, even if you don’t agree with them?*

7. **TELL:**

- Use what you have learned about Aretha Franklin’s life to create a poem that highlights her talents, courage, confidence, determination, and her legacy.

8. **DO:** *RESPECT* Poem Worksheet

*[NOTE: This activity can be used as an assessment to determine what your students have learned from the lesson.]*

- Hand out worksheet and have students work independently or in groups to write an acrostic poem.

*[It would be good to write your own poem beforehand to help your students generate ideas.]*

9. **ASK:**

- *If you could have interviewed Aretha Franklin, what would you want to ask her?*

*[NOTE: this can also be used as an assessment. Encourage students to write down their questions and to do further research to see if they might find the answers to their questions.]*

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Students can hold an Aretha Franklin Tribute Program, which would highlight Aretha Franklin’s life and career.

Students can:

- Create and present posters
- Prepare a presentation about spirituals, gospel, R&B, jazz, or soul
- Prepare dramatic readings (perhaps their poems)
- Present a vocal concert of Aretha’s most famous songs

## MINNESOTA STATE STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

### **SOCIAL STUDIES: Citizenship and Government**

*Civic Skills:* Identify ways people make a difference in the civic life of their communities, state, nation, or world by working as individuals or groups to address a specific problem or need.

*Civic Values and Principles of Democracy:* Explain the importance of civic discourse and the principles of majority rule and minority rights.

### **SOCIAL STUDIES: Geography**

*Geospatial Skills:* Use maps and concepts of location to describe places in one's community, the state, the United States, or the world.

### **SOCIAL STUDIES: History**

*Historical Thinking Skills:*

- Reference different time periods using correct terminology, including the terms decade, century and millennium.
- Examine historical records, maps, and artifacts to answer basic questions about times and events in history.

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Key ideas and Details**

Determine the main idea(s) of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea(s).

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**

Use and interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively and demonstrate understanding of the text in which it appears.

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Writing Process: Production and Distribution of Writing**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

Recall relevant information from experience or gather relevant information from print and digital sources and sort evidence into provided categories.

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Comprehension and Collaboration**

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners.

Determine the main ideas and supporting details of, paraphrase, and/or summarize a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media formats.

## RESOURCES

Bego, Mark. Aretha Franklin: The Queen of Soul, Skyhorse Publishing Company, Inc., 2012

Ritz, David. Respect: The Life of Aretha Franklin, Little, Brown and Company, New York, NY, 2014

O'Hagan, Sean, "Aretha Franklin: a life of heartbreak, heroism, and hope", The Guardian, August 19, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2018/aug/19/aretha-franklin-life-of-heartbreak-heroism-hope>

Aretha Franklin, Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aretha\\_Franklin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aretha_Franklin)

### **For Young People**

Medina, Nica. Who Was Aretha Franklin?, Penguin Random House, New York, NY, 2018

MacAvoy, Jim. Aretha Franklin, Chelsea House Publishers, 2001

# LESSON PLAN: ARETHA FRANKLIN

## CONNECTING THE ARTS

### INTRODUCTION

Aretha Franklin has been a strong influence in VocalEssence Teaching Artist Ginger Commodore's life as a singer for many years. One of Commodore's best memories is of the day she met Aretha in person. The famous singer came to Minneapolis to perform at the annual summer event, Aquatennial. Students will hear the story about Commodore's lucky day when she met the "Queen of Soul."

### KEY TERMS

- Redemption:** Making up for a fault or mistake; deliverance; rescue; salvation.
- Gospel:** African American musical genre originating in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. See the article titled "Gospel Song: The Spirit Rising in Music" included in the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources
- Soul:** African American musical genre from the 1960s. See the article titled "Soul: The Sound of Change" included in the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources

### MATERIALS

- Large H chart on the board, chart paper, or Smart Board
- The following are included in the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources:*
- Photograph to display of Aretha and Ginger
  - Copies of the H chart
  - Copies of readings "Soul: The Sound of Change" and "Gospel Song: The Spirit Rising in Music"
  - Audio recording of "Sealed in the Day of Redemption" sung by Clara Ward
  - Audio recording of "Oh Happy Day" sung by the Northern California Youth Choir with composer Edwin Hawkins
  - Audio recording of "Bring it on Home to Me" sung by Sam Cooke
  - Audio recording of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" from Franklin's first album
  - Video using the original recording of "Respect" (1967) with photos of young Franklin
  - Video of Ginger Commodore singing



### LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Hear a story about the day Ginger Commodore met Aretha Franklin
- Observe and identify key characteristics of soul and gospel music through listening, reading, processing, and discussing these two genres of African American music
- They will link this information to Aretha Franklin's musical career; rooted in Gospel, blooming in Soul



## "The Day I Met Aretha Franklin!"



Aretha Franklin with VocalEssence  
Teaching Artist, Ginger Commadore



Clara Ward (1924-1973) was an  
American gospel artist who achieved  
great artistic and commercial success  
during the 1940s and 1950s, as leader  
of The Famous Ward Singers.

## PROCESS

### A memorable meeting

1. Display the photo of Aretha Franklin and Ginger Commadore. Ask students to DESCRIBE what they see and SPECULATE about the two individuals in the picture.
2. Affirm that Aretha Franklin is on the right. The person on the left is 16-year-old Ginger Commadore. Here is the story:

*Ginger's Grandmother, Helen Wilson, was a very active volunteer. One year, Ms. Wilson was on the Reception Committee for the Minneapolis Aquatennial Celebration. One of her responsibilities was to pick up important visitors and performers at the airport and deliver them downtown. The day Aretha Franklin came to town, Ms. Wilson was ready to go. She could take two guests with her to greet Ms. Franklin. Ginger and her aunt, Carolyn Hamilton, were the very excited extras. They met Ms. Franklin in a private area at the Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport. A staff photographer snapped the picture and sent a copy to Ginger's home sometime later. The picture was enlarged to approximately 24 X 36, which Aretha autographed for Ginger several years later.*

*Ginger looks like she is bursting with joy and excitement! Notice the Aquatennial button on Ginger's shirt.*

3. Ginger Commadore will sing "You Are the Music" at the VocalEssence WITNESS Young People's Concert. Play "You Are the Music" for the students.

### Gospel and Soul

1. Introduce the lesson with a short story about the first time Aretha Franklin sang in public.

*Aretha Franklin was called the "Queen of Soul," but her roots were in Gospel music. Her father was the minister of the New Bethel Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan. As a small child, she heard gospel music every Sunday in her father's church. She sang her first solo in 1952 when she was ten years old. The gospel song she sang was "Sealed in the Day of Redemption," a song about a person whose life was a rocky road, but knew that someday they would find redemption when they started down the right path.*

*Aretha stood on a chair in front of the choir because as a ten-year-old she was too short to be seen.*

Listen to an audio clip of the Ward Singers performing “Sealed in the Day of Redemption.” Refer to it as a gospel song.

2. Place an H chart diagram on the board or on a large paper poster. Note that Aretha’s career began as a gospel singer. Probe for prior knowledge, which will vary from group to group:
  - Ask what students know about gospel music. Place their comments in the left side of the H chart.
  - Ask if anyone has ever heard Aretha called “The Queen Soul?” What do you know about soul music? Place comments on the right side of the chart.
  - Ask volunteers to read the comments out loud. Ask if they think any of the characteristics belong to both genres. Place those in the connecting bar of the H chart.
3. Learn more about the two musical styles by listening, reading, and discussing new information. Organize into groups and distribute an H chart to each student. Students will read the articles, discuss them within their group, listen to two songs, and add new thoughts to their H Charts.
  - Read and search the article “Gospel: The Spirit Rising in Music,” then discuss what they learned about gospel. As new information emerges, they will support each other in articulating what they learned.
  - Play “Oh Happy Day” sung by the Northern California Youth Choir with composer Edwin Hawkins. Ask students to describe the gospel characteristics they notice in the music. Refer to information they learned from the reading. Write new thoughts and information on the charts.
  - Complete their discussion and check the H charts for any new details.

Take a moment for students to finish writing.

- Repeat the process while listening and reading about soul music. Listen to Sam Cooke sing “Bring it on Home to Me” and then read the article “Soul: The Sound of Change.”

- After the small groups complete adding information to their H Charts, reconvene and ask them to look at their notes and decide what should be added to the large chart.
  - Finally, ask them this question: What characteristics do gospel and soul have in common? Discuss their thoughts about commonalities. Write them on the center bar of the Large H chart. Students can also complete their personal chart.
4. Apply concepts to a song. Sing a spiritual such as “This Little Light of Mine.” Refer to the H chart information and discuss what it would take to make it sound like a gospel song. Write ideas down, then practice and perform the gospel version. Could be a small group or whole class activity. Then do the same activity making “This Little Light of Mine” sound like a soul song.

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## ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS

- Informally assess the written information students collect on their charts and what they included in discussion to assess the level of foundational knowledge about music.
- Informally assess the discussion about musical examples as students draw upon and apply their new knowledge about gospel and soul music.
- Use the final activity as an assessment; what did they do to transform an old spiritual into a gospel or soul song.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Students can apply and refine what they learned by listening to other gospel and soul music. A good example for gospel is the Staple Singers performance of “Swing Low Sweet Chariot” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vyLVjgic3oE> or “Let Me Ride” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RTBnWGw8DRA>.
- Students can watch a vintage video of Aretha Franklin as an out of class assignment. The video from the 60’s has Aretha receiving awards in Detroit. Titled “Aretha Franklin and Gospel Influences,” it is an excerpt from ABC News CloseUp. Includes other songs: “You Make Me Feel Like a Natural Woman” excerpt, the gospel song, “Precious Lord Take My Hand,” and a gospel choir. This video is 25 minutes long and is part of lesson plan at Teach Rock. <https://teachrock.org/lesson/aretha-franklin-soul-music-and-the-new-femininity-of-the-1960s/>
- Listen to more music recorded by musicians mentioned in this lesson.

## MINNESOTA STATE STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

### MUSIC: Foundations

*Standard #1:* Use foundational knowledge and skills while responding to, creating, and presenting artistic work.

### MUSIC: Respond

*Standard #7:* Analyze and construct interpretations of artistic work

*Standard #8:* Evaluate artistic work by applying criteria

### MUSIC: Connect

*Standard #10:* Understand that artistic works influence and are influenced by personal, societal, cultural, and historical contexts...

## RESOURCES

### BOOKS

*African American Music: An Introduction* (2015 second edition). Burnim, Mellonee V. and Portia K. Maultsby. Routledge Publishers.

A collection of seventeen essays surveying major African American genres, sacred and secular. It includes a CD of examples.

*I See the Rhythm of Gospel* (2010). Igus, Toyomi and Michele Wood. Zonderkids Publishers.

Wonderfully illustrated story of how Gospel music came to be, and the many varieties of Gospel in the USA. Created by the same partnership that produced *I See the Rhythm*. This is a helpful resource for teachers and students.

*Who Was Aretha Franklin?* (2018), Medina, Nico. Penguin Workshop, an imprint of Penguin Random House.

A recent addition to the WhoHQ? series of biographies for students. No explosive material, but does note some of the rocky parts of her life. This is appropriate for Middle School age students.

### WEBSITES

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EsurW9O9qPw>  
An audio recording of “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” from Aretha Franklin’s first album.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6FOUqQt3Kg0>.  
A video using the original recording of “Respect” (1967) with photos of young Aretha Franklin.

<https://teachrock.org/lesson/aretha-franklin-soul-music-and-the-new-femininity-of-the-1960s/>  
A 25-minute video overview of Aretha Franklin’s early career in the 1960s.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diwF1-xJwZM>  
A video of award program, near end of her life, singing and playing piano, “You Make Me Feel Like a Natural Woman.” The Obamas are in the audience—Barack is tearful—which displays the depth of the respect shown for Aretha.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Q6LYPdX9-8>  
These film and sound clips display the evolution of Aretha Franklin’s voice and style over the course of her career.

<https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/6312215/aretha-franklin-musical-timeline-biggest-moments-past-60-years>  
The website, Aretha Franklin: A Look Back at 60 Years of the Diva’s Biggest Musical Moments includes text, photos, video, and audio of some of the milestones in Aretha Franklin’s career.

### FILM AND VIDEO

The movie, “Amazing Grace,” released in 2018, is a documentary about the making of Franklin’s gospel album of the same name. It was filmed live in 1972 at the New Temple Missionary Baptist Church in Los Angeles.

# LESSON PLAN: BERNICE JOHNSON REAGON BIOGRAPHICAL EXPLORATION

## INTRODUCTION

One could say that it has been Bernice Johnson Reagon's mission in life (from youth through adulthood) to educate, elevate, and eradicate—to help others have better understanding and insight, lift others up through her words (spoken and sung), and work fearlessly to root out the wrongs she sees in society. In this lesson, your students will examine Reagon's life-long passion for justice and equality. They will see how she “discovered her voice” through adversity and how she has used history and music as forces for change.

## KEY TERMS

<b>Convictions:</b>	Strong beliefs
<b>Courage:</b>	Mental and emotional strength to stand up to danger, difficulty, or fear
<b>Culture:</b>	Shared beliefs, traditions, attitudes, goals, and practices of a particular group
<b>Racism:</b>	The belief that racial differences produce natural superiority and inferiority
<b>Heritage:</b>	Something passed down or received from those who existed or set an example in the past
<b>Ancestry:</b>	Family line of people linked together and traced back into the past
<b>Civil rights:</b>	Rights and personal freedoms guaranteed to the citizens of a country
<b>Activist:</b>	A person who is especially active, energetic, and forceful in support of or against a cause
<b>Legacy:</b>	Anything handed down from the past, as from a person, group of people, or event



Bernice Johnson Reagon

## LEARNING GOALS

Students will learn about Bernice Johnson Reagon and consider what it means to be a multifaceted person. They will discuss how courage and sacrifice are needed to stand up for one's convictions and they will come to appreciate the power that the study of history adds to art and life.

## MATERIALS

*The following are included in the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources:*

- Bernice Johnson Reagon PowerPoint
- Multifaceted Bernice Johnson Reagon Worksheet
- Bernice Johnson Reagon's Travels Chronology and World Map Worksheet
- SONGTALKER Poem Worksheet



## PART ONE: SOIL AND SEEDS

*For a garden to grow and flourish, you must start with seeds and soil. Part One of this lesson focuses on the “soil”—the world into which Bernice Johnson Reagon was born and the early situations she encountered, and on the “seeds”—the choices she made as a young woman and the circumstances that were influential in her life.*

1. **SHOW:** **Slide # 1** of Bernice Johnson Reagon

2. **TELL:**

- BERNICE JOHNSON REAGON was born on October 4, 1942 in Dougherty County, Georgia. These images give you an idea of what life was like in the 1940s.

3. **SHOW:** **Slide # 2** of life in the 1940s

- Bugs Bunny appeared in his first cartoon.
- The Tuskegee Airmen corps is formed.
- The T-shirt was invented.
- The United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- Germany and Japan surrender, and World War II ended.
- Jackie Robinson became the first African American baseball player in the Major Leagues.
- The first computer was built.
- China became a communist country.

4. **ASK:**

- *Would you like to have grown up in the 1940s? Why? Why not?*
- *From the above list, what do you think was the most interesting or important event that happened during that time period? Why?*

5. **SHOW:** **Slide # 3** with the question “WHAT KIND OF STUDENT WAS BERNICE JOHNSON REAGON?”

6. **ASK:**

- *What are the interests and talents at which you excel?*
- *Why is it good to not just be good at something but to teach what you know to others?*

- *Why is it good to be interested in and to at least try many different activities?*

7. **TELL:**

- Bernice’s father was the chaplain of the Albany Movement (and organization devoted to voting rights and desegregation) and a church pastor. Along with **school**, the **church** was a major part of her life as a child.
- Bernice started school at age 3. She went to a red, one-room schoolhouse, where she excelled. By the time she was in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, she was asked to tutor younger students at her school.
- In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that segregation was illegal. But that did not bring about changes in the South automatically.
- Reagon was also good at **public speaking** and reciting **poetry**. One time, she won first place in a school contest, even beating out older students, with a recitation of Langston Hughes’ “The Negro Speaks of Rivers.”
- Like her father, Bernice was also active in **civil rights** issues. And even at a young age, she proved to be a good **organizer** and **leader**. When Bernice was a senior in high school, she became secretary of Albany, Georgia’s first youth branch of the NAACP.

8. **ASK:**

- *What kind of student was Bernice?*
- *What kind of young person was Bernice?*

9. **SHOW:** **Slide # 4** “The Multifaceted Bernice Johnson Reagon”

10. **TELL:**

- Facet = a small plane surface
- Multifaceted = having many facets
- Discuss how a cut diamond is multifaceted, not like a flat piece of paper.

11. **ASK:**

- *How can a person be like a piece of paper or like a diamond?*

**12. DO:** The Multifaceted Bernice Johnson Reagon Activity

- Hand out the worksheet.
- Have students fill out the worksheet, first showing how Reagon's life was multifaceted. (Tell them that they may learn about some other facets later in the lesson.)
- Then have students think about their own diverse activities and interests—including interests they would like to pursue in the future. Have students share their multifaceted interests with each other.

**13. ASK:**

- *What kind of job(s) do you think Bernice had when she got older?*

## PART TWO: BUD AND BLOOM

*Over time, you will see how the plants, flowers, fruits, or vegetables in a garden are developing. Part Two of this lesson will consider how Bernice Johnson Reagon's talents and career developed during her journeys—both her literal travels and over the course of her life.*

**1. SHOW:** Slide # 5 with the question  
“HOW DID BERNICE SHOW COURAGE AND CONVICTION?”

**2. ASK:**

- *What are some problems (in school, your neighborhood, the city, state, country, world) that you feel need to be solved?*
- *How can you bring the problem to people's attention?*
- *Would you be willing to go to jail for standing up for your convictions?*

**3. TELL:**

- In 1959, Bernice enrolled at Albany State College and focused her studies on music.
- Bernice also joined with other students in the **Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)**, which worked on registering Blacks to vote and supported

activists in their efforts to integrate public buses in Albany.

- As a member of the SNCC, Bernice helped lead several **peaceful protest** demonstrations and was often put in jail because of it.
- In jail, Bernice would lead the other cellmates in song and realized the power of her voice—both as a singer and as an activist.
- Because of her participation in the protests, Bernice was suspended from Albany State College. In response to that, Spelman College in Atlanta gave Bernice a full scholarship to study there.
- After one year at Spelman, Bernice took a break to join the **SNCC Freedom Singers**, a quartet that toured around the country, like a “singing newspaper”, educating audiences about the conditions that Blacks in the South were facing.



Freedom Singers Quartet,  
Bernice on the right

**4. SHOW:** Slide # 6 Slide of Freedom Singers

- **PLAY:** “Woke Up This Morning.”

**5. ASK:**

- *If you were a “singing newspaper,” helping people know about some problem or injustice happening today, what would you sing about?*
- *How can music be a powerful tool for giving people strength and for education?*
- *Imagine you are a “singing newspaper” fifty years from now. What will you be singing about?*

**6. SHOW:** Slide # 7 with the question  
“WHAT IS THE MOST POWERFUL INSTRUMENT?”

**7. ASK:**

- *What would you say is the most powerful instrument? Why?*
- *How is the human voice unique among all instruments? [Can combine words with music]*

**8. SHOW:** Slide # 8 of Harambee Singers and Sweet Honey in the Rock

**9. TELL:**

- In 1966, Bernice returns to her studies at Spelman and switches her major from music to **history**. But she also helps form the Harambee Singers, which is an all-female group that also sings about civil rights issues.
- In 1973 Bernice forms a group that comes to be called **Sweet Honey in the Rock**. Its name comes from a religious tale about a land so naturally rich, if you cracked open rocks, honey would pour out.
  - **PLAY:** Video from a Sweet Honey in the Rock performance (in the WITNESS Online Resources)

**10. ASK:**

- *What do you notice that the group does NOT have? Do you find the sound of voices by themselves, without instruments, more powerful? Why? Why not?*
- *Do you think that the name of the group fits? Why? Why not?*
- *If you formed a singing group, what would its name be? Why would you choose that name?*

**11. SHOW:** Slide # 10 with quotation about bringing people together with song

**12. ASK:**

- *Do you agree with Bernice's statement?*
- *How can singing together bring people together?*
- *Remind students the tagline of VocalEssence is "Together We Sing!"*

**TELL:**

- Over the next 46 years, Bernice and her group would go on to bring together hundreds of thousands of listeners around the world. Along with the human voice, Bernice used other powerful "tools" to entertain, enlighten, and inspire.

**13. SHOW:** Slide # 11 with the question "WHAT 'TOOLS' DOES BERNICE JOHNSON REAGON USE?"

**14. ASK:**

- *Why do you think it is important to know about your history, whether it's about your family, your culture, your country, or the world?*
- *What can happen to our future if we forget about the past?*

**15. DO:** Bernice Johnson Reagon's Travel Chronology and World Map Worksheet

- Hand out the Worksheet.
- Help students read the chronology of events (on the worksheet), and have them chart Johnson Reagon's travels around the globe, drawing a line from one place to the next.

**16. ASK:**

- *Even though Bernice has a great interest in music, what other interest is equally important to her?*
- *How can culture, history, music, and words become tools that you can use to make the world a better place?*

## **PART THREE: FRUIT AND FRAGRANCE**

*[When the garden has produced its plants, flowers, fruits, or vegetables, and the harvest season is over, what is left? Perhaps dried flowers and herbs, produce that has been frozen or canned, the memories and photographs of what was accomplished, and even seeds that were produced to create future gardens. Part Three of this lesson highlights Bernice Johnson Reagon's legacy—honors, lessons learned, and inspiration from her life and career.]*



Sweet Honey in the Rock

1. **SHOW:** Slide # 13 with the question “WHAT IS BERNICE JOHNSON REAGON’S LEGACY?”

2. **TELL:**

- Bernice Johnson Reagon continues to use her powerful voice to reach her listeners’ minds and hearts. And her legacy — through her recordings, photographs, videos, lectures, artistry, and actions— continues to inspire other singers, song writers, scholars, historians, and activists.

3. **ASK:**

- What is Bernice Johnson Reagon’s legacy? What have you learned from her life that inspires you?

4. **SHOW:** Slide # 14 of SONGTALKER Poem Activity

5. **TELL:**

- On Bernice’s website, she writes about the word “songtalker,” which she uses to describe herself as a performer and speaker.
- “In 1978, when I formed my music company, I naturally named it Songtalk Publishing Company and used it to describe what I do and who I am when I rise as singer/orator/poet: I rise with communication in mind, a dialogue, weaving talk and song into an offering to those who gather in the sound of my voice.”
- Use what you have learned about Bernice Johnson Reagon’s life to create a poem that highlights her talents, her convictions, courage, commitment to education, and her legacy.

6. **DO:** the SONGTALKER Poem Activity.  
[NOTE: This activity can be used as an assessment to determine what your students have learned from the lesson.]

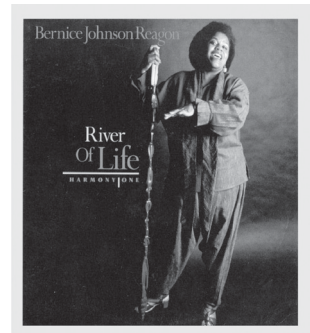
- Hand out worksheet and have students work independently or in groups to write an acrostic poem.  
*[It would be good to write your own poem beforehand so as to help your students generate ideas.]*

7. **ASK:**

- If you could interview Bernice Johnson Reagon, what would you want to ask her?

[NOTE: this can also be used as an assessment.

Encourage students to write down their questions and to do further research to see if they might find the answers to their questions.]



Album cover for *River of Life: Harmony One*

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Students can hold a Bernice Johnson Reagon Tribute Program, which would highlight Bernice Johnson Reagon’s life and career.

Students can:

- Create and present posters
- Prepare a presentation about the Albany Movement or the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)
- Prepare dramatic readings (perhaps their own poems)
- Present a vocal concert of songs arranged, composed, or performed by Bernice Johnson Reagon



## MINNESOTA STATE STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

### **SOCIAL STUDIES: Citizenship and Government**

*Civic Skills:* Identify ways people make a difference in the civic life of their communities, state, nation, or world by working as individuals or groups to address a specific problem or need.

*Civic Values and Principles of Democracy:* Explain the importance of civic discourse and the principles of majority rule and minority rights.

### **SOCIAL STUDIES: Geography**

*Geospatial Skills:* Use maps and concepts of location to describe places in one's community, the state, the United States, or the world.

### **SOCIAL STUDIES: History**

*Historical Thinking Skills:*

- Reference different time periods using correct terminology, including the terms decade, century, and millennium.
- Examine historical records, maps, and artifacts to answer basic questions about times and events in history.

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Key ideas and Details**

Determine the main idea(s) of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea(s).

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**

Use and interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively and demonstrate understanding of the text in which it appears.

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Writing Process: Production and Distribution of Writing**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

Recall relevant information from experience or gather relevant information from print and digital sources and sort evidence into provided categories.

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Comprehension and Collaboration**

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners.

Determine the main ideas and supporting details of, paraphrase, and/or summarize a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media formats.

## RESOURCES

Hopkinson, Natalie, "Rock Solid", *The Crisis*, September-October, 2003

Bernice Johnson Reagon: Civil Rights song leader, Smithsonian Folk Ways Recordings, <https://folkways.si.edu/bernice-johnson-reagon-civil-rights-song-leader/african-american-struggle-protest-folk/music/article/smithsonian>

Bouchard, Fred, Bernice Johnson Reagon on Freedom Fighting, *Berklee*, 2009, <https://www.berklee.edu/news/634/bernice-johnson-reagon-on-freedom-fighting>

Bernice Johnson Reagon Website, <https://www.bernicejohnsonreagon.com/>

Interview with Bernice Johnson Reagon for *Eyes on the Prize*, Blackside, Inc.,

Moyers, Bill, *The Songs Are Free: Interview with Bernice Johnson Reagon*, February 6, 1991, <https://billmoyers.com/content/songs-free/>

Bernice Johnson Reagon, Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernice\\_Johnson\\_Reagon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernice_Johnson_Reagon)

Reagon, Bernice Johnson, *We Who Believe in Freedom*, Anchor Books, New York, NY, 1993

Reagon, Bernice Johnson, *If You Don't Go, Don't Hinder Me*, University of Nebraska Press, 2001

## LESSON PLAN:

### BERNICE JOHNSON REAGON

### CONNECTING THE ARTS

#### INTRODUCTION

VocalEssence WITNESS Teaching artists, T. Mychael Rambo and Anita Ruth, together named **Bernice Johnson Reagon** as an artist who inspires their work. Reagon is a musician, song leader, composer, scholar, and social activist. She is known for her research into the history of African American music and special projects for the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. She was the Chair of the Fine Arts Department at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, and has written several books and articles. Two of her major works are *Wade in the Water: African American Sacred Music Traditions* and *Africans in America: America's Journey Through Slavery*. She was also a founding member of the female singing group, Sweet Honey in the Rock.

#### KEY TERMS

<b>Deep Listening:</b> (applied to music)	Listening with a willingness to not judge, but just receive what you hear. Requires concentration to make meaning of the music
<b>Freedom Singers:</b>	Originally a quartet of singers formed at Albany College by SNCC. They sang and taught others to sing the stirring Civil Rights songs
<b>Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC):</b>	A college organization formed during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s



Bernice Johnson Reagon

#### LEARNING GOALS

Students will develop a significant connection to one of Reagon's arrangements through deep listening, followed by a creative response.

Students will also learn of her early years as a Freedom Singer during the Civil Rights Movement through reading and discussion.

#### MATERIALS

*The following are included in the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources:*

- Bernice Johnson Reagon's recording of "The Sun Will Never Go Down"
- Lyrics to "The Sun Will Never Go Down"
- Chanticleer's recording of "The Sun Will Never Go Down"
- Deep Listening Log
- Student Worksheet
- Song notation for "The Sun Will Never Go Down"
- "Bernice Johnson Reagon and the Freedom Singers," a Reading for Teachers and Older Students

## PROCESS

### PART ONE: DEEP LISTENING

1. After learning about Reagon and her place in African American song and culture, engage students in a Deep Listening activity to her singing her version of “The Sun Will Never Go Down.”
  - Explain how students should use the Deep Listening Log. While they listen, their task is to not just ‘hear’ the music, but to go deeper—to listen and think at a different level. You want them to absorb the song. Perhaps imagine that their brain is surrounded by sound and they are taking in the music as a sponge takes up water. Listen to her voice and how it sounds as well as to the words she sings.
  - Quiet the room and dim the lights to encourage deep listening. Play the recording once. Take some time for reflection and writing/sketching, then play it again.
  - Ask for volunteers to share some of their work out loud. What did they write? Draw? Eventually, hang them on the wall for others to read.

#### “The Sun Will Never Go Down”

Bernice Johnson Reagon arranged this version of the song, an old spiritual passed down through the years. She recalled her mother singing it to her brothers at bedtime, perhaps as a lullaby.

In 1961, ethnomusicologist, Alan Lomax, recorded a version by Bessie Jones who learned it in her Gullah community in the Georgia Sea Islands. Jones called it “Where the Sun Never Goes Down.” It was also recorded by Sweet Honey in the Rock on their very first album, *Sweet Honey in the Rock*.

The song’s lyrics include a phrase from the Bible, Isaiah 60:20: *Your sun will never again go down, or your moon keep back her light: for the Lord will be your eternal light, and the days of your sorrow will be ended.*

2. Probe for more insights by asking questions about the song, “The Sun Will Never Go Down.”
  - Is this an old song or a new one? What makes you say that?
  - What words are repeated? Why do you think they are?
  - What do you think this song is for? What is its purpose? What is it about?

Wrap up with by providing information about the song and listening again. Students can sing along with Reagon.

- Sing the song. Challenge students to be mindful of the song’s meaning as they sing.

### PART TWO: THE POWER OF SONG

As a young college student, Bernice Johnson Reagon became well-acquainted with the power of a song.

1. Ask students if they think it’s possible for music to change people’s minds. Have they ever witnessed or heard a story about a time when a song drew people together and/or changed the course of an action or event? If they seem eager to share experiences, have them pair up with another student to discuss this idea.
2. Bernice Johnson Reagon’s life has been filled with such experiences. Through her energy and work, she created such moments for many others. Students can read about Reagon’s activities with the Freedom Singers to learn more about her story as an activist musician.
3. After reading “Bernice Johnson Reagon and the Freedom Singers” bring the idea of the power of a song closer to home.
  - Ask students if they have ever experienced music or song that brought people together? When and where? One St. Paul School has an end of the week song that they sing at their Friday Gatherings each week. The song is a Zulu melody called “Go Well and Safely.”

It has become a school tradition.

- Have you been to an event where everyone stands up and many sing the “Star Spangled Banner?”
- Have you been to a VocalEssence WITNESS Concert in the past where everyone sang?
- Can you give examples when you’ve been in a place where a large group sang together or suddenly burst into song? Have you ever sung around a campfire with a group of friends? Or in the back seat of a car when traveling a long ways? Does your family have a song they like to sing together?
- What are the issues in your school, neighborhood, or community that might do better if people could sing together?
- What other examples can students share?
- Younger students (and maybe older ones too) could choose a class song that belongs to them.



**Bernice Johnson Reagon (far left) with Sweet Honey in the Rock**

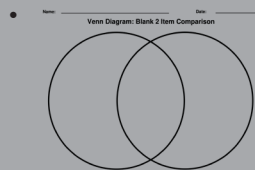
Bernice Johnson Reagon is a founding member of Sweet Honey in the Rock, an a cappella vocal group made up of African American women. Formed in 1973, the group became internationally known far beyond their base in Washington, D.C. Their music embodies messages of hope and positive change as they raise their voices to address multiple social concerns. Their harmonies express their stories and histories through song, dance, and ASL (American Sign Language.) They received a nomination for a Grammy Award three times. Their name, Sweet Honey in the Rock, is a reference to an image from the Bible, Psalm 81. It says that God will provide nourishing honey flowing from a rock as the children of Israel await deliverance. Though the members have changed over four decades, their mission remains the same.



## ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS

- Informally assess the students' Deep Listening Log and discussions about "The Sun will Never Go Down" for evidence of foundational knowledge about music and use of musical vocabulary.

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES



- Compare and contrast Bernice Johnson Reagon's version of "The Sun Will Never Go Down" with a different arrangement, sung by the vocal group, Chanticleer. Use a VENN diagram to collect responses.
- Try the Deep Listening exercise with other pieces of music or during a poetry recitation, using the Deep Listening Log to record student responses.

## MINNESOTA STATE STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

### MUSIC: Foundations

*Standard #1:* Use foundational knowledge and skills while responding to, creating, and presenting artistic work.

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Reading (Key Ideas and Details)

*Standard #1:* Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

## RESOURCES

### BOOKS

"Freedom Song: Young Voices and the Struggle for Civil Rights" (2009) by Mary C. Turck. Chicago Review Press. A history of the Civil Rights Movement and the songs that energized those who stood together.

"We Shall Overcome: A Song that Changed the World" (2010) by Stuart Stotts, Clarion Books.

The book tells the story not only of the most famous protest song, but also of how important songs were in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

### WEBSITES

<https://www.bernicejohnsonreagon.com/>  
Bernie Johnson Reagon's website

<https://billmoyers.com/content/songs-free/>  
"The Songs Are Free."

Bernice Johnson Reagon is interviewed by Bill Moyers. She talks at length about the songs that African Americans have sung through the years to express the passion for freedom and their connectedness.

<https://folkways.si.edu/bernice-johnson-reagon-civil-rights-song-leader/african-american-struggle-protest-folk/music/article/smithsonian>  
"Bernice Johnson Reagon: Civil Rights Song Leader"

### MUSIC

<https://folkways.si.edu/sing-for-freedom-the-story-of-the-civil-rights-movement/african-american-music-american-history-historical-song-struggle-protest/album/smithsonian>

## LESSON PLAN:

### AHMIR “QUESTLOVE” THOMPSON

#### BIOGRAPHICAL EXPLORATION

## INTRODUCTION

While many people struggle to figure out what they want to do with their life, Ahmir Thompson’s path seemed laid out for him from birth. His grandfather and parents were professional musicians. From the moment he sat down at a set of toy drums at age two, he never looked back. This lesson will introduce your students to Ahmir Thompson, also known as “Questlove,” whose band *The Roots* went from performing on street corners to winning Grammy awards to becoming the house band for *The Tonight Show* to performing at the White House. Your students cannot help but be inspired by his talent, intelligence, hard work, and creativity.

## KEY TERMS

<b>Old-fashioned:</b>	Relating to a time period in the past; no longer in style
<b>Hip-Hop:</b>	A cultural movement created by African-Americans in the late 1970s that has included dance, graffiti art, DJ-ing, music, and rap
<b>Square root:</b>	The factor of a number that when ‘squared’ (multiplied by itself) gives the number
<b>Quest:</b>	A search; an investigation; an adventurous journey
<b>Culture:</b>	Shared beliefs, traditions, attitudes, goals, and practices of a particular group
<b>Heritage:</b>	Something passed down or received from those who existed or set an example in the past
<b>Ancestry:</b>	Family line of people linked together and traced back into the past
<b>Creativity:</b>	The ability to make something through imagination and skill
<b>Legacy:</b>	Anything handed down from the past, as from a person, group of people, or event



Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson

## LEARNING GOALS

Students will learn about Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson and will consider what it means to be a multifaceted person. They will discover what it’s like to strike out on your own path and see how a person who is not yet 50 years old has already created an amazing legacy.

## MATERIALS

*The following are included in the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources:*

- Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson PowerPoint
- Multifaceted Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson Worksheet
- Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson’s Travel Chronology and World Map Worksheet
- *CREATIVITY* Poem Worksheet

## PART ONE: SOIL AND SEEDS

*For a garden to grow and flourish, you must start with seeds and soil. Part One of this lesson focuses on the “soil”—the world into which Ahmir Thompson was born and the early situations he encountered, and on the “seeds”—the choices Thompson made as a young man and the circumstances that were influential in his life.*

1. **SHOW:** **Slide # 1** of Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson

2. **TELL:**

- AHMIR THOMPSON was born on January 20, 1971 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. These images give you an idea of what life was like in the 1970s.

3. **SHOW** **Slide # 2** of life in the 1970s

- Cigarette companies were banned from advertising on television.
- Disney World opened in Orlando, Florida.
- Barbara Jordan and Andrew Young became the first African-American members of the House of Representatives elected in the South since 1898.
- The United States government brought all its soldiers home from fighting in Vietnam.
- President Richard Nixon resigned, and Vice President Gerald Ford became President.
- Arthur Ashe became the first African-American to win the Men’s Singles tennis tournament at Wimbledon in London, England.
- The first Star Wars movie opened.
- The Sugarhill Gang recorded its 15-minute-long hip-hop classic “Rapper’s Delight.”

4. **ASK:**

- *Would you like to have been born in the 1970s? Why? Why not?*
- *From the above list, what do you think was the most interesting or important event that happened during that time period? Why?*

5. **SHOW:** **Slide # 3** with the question “WHAT KIND OF CHILDHOOD DID AHMIR THOMPSON HAVE?”

6. **ASK**

- *How would you like it if your parents brought you to work with them every day?*
- *What part of your parent’s job could you help with at your age now?*
- *Would you like to do the job that your parents do when you are older? Why? Why not?*

7. **TELL:**

- Ahmir’s grandfather, father, and mother were all professional singers.
- As his parents toured around the country and performed at different nightclubs, instead of leaving their son with babysitters, they took little Ahmir with them.
- Ahmir began drumming when he was two years old.
  - **STORY:** His earliest memory is of Christmas Eve 1973. He walked downstairs to find his parents sitting on the couch listening to music and a toy drum set, xylophone, keyboard, and toy guitar by the tree. The instruments had not been wrapped yet, but his parents said he could check them out. He immediately went to the **drums**. As Ahmir later wrote: “Drums and I found each other just like that—BOOM!”



“Questlove” began his musical studies at an early age

- Ahmir started taking drum lessons when he was five. By this time, he became the **navigator** (reading **maps**) for his parents as they drove from town to town.

- By age seven, he became a **performer**, drumming on stage as part of his parents' show. Ahmir had also learned how to take care of the **costumes**. By age nine, he was running the **light system** for the shows.
- A few years later, Ahmir was promoted to controlling the **sound equipment** for the shows.

**8. ASK:**

- *What kind of childhood did Ahmir have?*
- *Would you like to have had a childhood like his? Why? Why not?*

**9. SHOW: Slide # 4** "THE MULTIFACETED AHMIR THOMPSON"

**10. TELL:**

- Facet = a small plane surface
- Multifaceted = having many facets
- Discuss how a cut diamond is multifaceted, not like a flat piece of paper.

**11. ASK:**

- *How can a person be like a piece of paper or like a diamond?*

**12. DO:** The Multifaceted Ahmir Thompson Activity

- Hand out the Worksheet.
- Have student fill out the worksheet, first showing how Thompson's life was multifaceted. (Tell them that they may learn about some other facets later in the lesson.)
- Then have student think about their own diverse activities and interests—including interests they would like to pursue in the future. Have students share their multifaceted interests with each other.

**13. ASK:**

- *What kind of job(s) do you think Ahmir had when he got older?*

## PART TWO: BUD AND BLOOM

*Over time, you will see how the plants, flowers, fruits, or vegetables in a garden are developing. Part Two of this lesson will consider how Ahmir Thompson's talents and career developed during his journeys—both his literal travels and over the course of his life.*

**1. SHOW: Slide # 5** with the question "HOW DID AHMIR THOMPSON FIND HIS OWN PATH?"

**2. ASK:**

- *What is something that your parents do that you like to do differently?*
- *What is something that your parents like to do that you feel is "old fashioned?"*
- *What is something that you like to do (or wear, watch, or listen to) that your parents don't understand why you like it?*

**3. SHOW: Slide # 6** Album cover of Lee Andrews and the Hearts

**4. TELL:**

- Ahmir's father was Arthur Lee Andrews Thompson, who led a singing group called Lee Andrews & the Hearts. They were famous in the 1950s and 1960s.
- Their style of music was called "Doo-Wop."
  - **PLAY:** "Teardrops" by Lee Andrews and the Hearts (embedded into **Slide # 6**; be sure you are connected to the internet for video to play)

**5. ASK:**

- *How would you describe this song?*
- *Why do you think this style of song was called "Doo-Wop?" (While the lead singer sings the lyrics, the others provide harmonic background, singing various sounds, sometimes including, literally, "doo-wop.")*

**6. SHOW: Slide # 7** Philadelphia School for the Creative and Performing Arts and the young Roots



## 7. TELL:

- Ahmir's parents enrolled their son in the Philadelphia School for the Creative and Performing Arts during his elementary school, junior high, and part of his high school years.
- By the time he graduated, Ahmir and his friend Tariq Trotter started a band called The Square Roots.



Up until 1992, the group went by the name The Square Roots

- At first, the two friends would perform on the street corners, with Ahmir beating out rhythms on plastic buckets and Tariq rapping.

## 8. SHOW: Slide # 8 album cover of The Roots

- Other musicians were added to the band, which in 1992, dropped the "Square" from the name.
  - PLAY:** "The Roots Is Comin'" (from Organix; link embedded into Slide # 8; be sure you are connected to the internet for video to play)

## 9. ASK:

- How would you describe this song?*
- How would you compare "The Roots Is Comin'" to "Teardrops?"*
- What do you think Ahmir's father thought of hip-hop music?*

## 10. TELL:

- Ahmir and his father were constantly arguing over the artistic value of hip-hop. His father would hear a few seconds of hip-hop music and say, "Ugh! You think that's art?"
- A new hip-hop band—"A Tribe Called Quest"—started recording in 1990. Ahmir liked their music so much that a few years later, he took on the name "Questlove."

- Starting out from performing on street corners, Questlove has become internationally famous for his music with The Roots and a lot more.

## 11. SHOW: Slide # 9 with the question "WHAT KIND OF LIFE HAS QUESTLOVE HAD?"

## 12. ASK:

- What has been the most exciting or important moment in your life so far? Why was it exciting or important?*
- What would be the ultimate event that you could imagine yourself experiencing?*
- Of any person alive today, who would you most want to meet and spend time with? Why?*

## 13. SHOW: Slide # 10 of Questlove's life

## 14. DO: Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson's Travel Chronology and World Map Worksheet

- Hand out the Worksheet.
- Help students read the chronology of events (on the worksheet) and have them chart Thompson's travels around the United States and the globe, drawing a line from one place to the next

## 15. ASK:

- What kind of life has Questlove had?*
- Which aspect of his life do you think is the most interesting? Why?*

## PART THREE: FRUIT AND FRAGRANCE



*When the garden has produced its plants, flowers, fruits, or vegetables, and the harvest season is over, what is left? Perhaps dried flowers and herbs, produce that has been frozen or canned, the memories and photographs of what was accomplished, and even seeds that were produced to create future gardens. Part Three of this lesson highlights Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson's legacy—honors, lessons learned, and inspiration from his life and career.*

1. **SHOW: Slide # 11** with the question  
“WHAT IS QUESTLOVE’S LEGACY?”

2. **TELL:**

- Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson continues to use pursue a wide variety of interests. His legacy—through his performances with The Roots, film music, acting, Broadway musicals and recordings for other musicians that he has produced, college courses, and books—continues to inspire anyone who has the dream of sharing their creativity with the world.
- Questlove has written five books—about the television show *Soul Train*, about his personal and family history, and about chefs and entertainers and the food they like to create.
- In his books, he often reflects on culture, heritage, and history—regarding himself, music, African Americans, and society.
  - **STORY:** He was a guest on the television show *Finding Your Roots*, and learned not only the names of his great-great-great grandparents but also that they were among the last known group of enslaved people who came to the United States from Africa, and that the name of the ship they arrived on was called the Clotilda. Not many African Americans are able to trace their ancestry that far back with such detail.

3. **ASK:**

- *Why do you think knowing more about his ancestry and heritage is important to Questlove?*
- *Would you like to know more about your ancestry? Why? Why not?*

4. **SHOW: Slide # 12** of *CREATIVITY* Poem Activity

5. **ASK:**

- *Questlove has written a book about being more creative. What does it mean to be creative?*
- *Questlove enjoys the creating more than the creation (the journey over the destination). What about you? Why might he feel that way?*

- *Questlove writes that some ways to be more creative are to pay attention to the world around you, start with the end in mind, failure can be good, and do the things that scare you. How might these ideas help you to be more creative?*

6. **TELL:**

- Use what you have learned about Questlove’s life to create a poem that highlights his talents, his convictions, courage, and commitment to education, and his legacy.

7. **DO:** The *CREATIVITY* Poem Worksheet

*[NOTE: This activity can be used as an assessment to determine what your students have learned from the lesson.]*

- Hand out worksheet and have students work independently or in groups to write an acrostic poem.  
*[It would be good to write your own poem beforehand so as to help your students generate ideas.]*

8. **ASK STUDENTS:**

- *If you could interview AHMIR “QUESTLOVE” THOMPSON, what would you want to ask him?*  
*[NOTE: this can also be used as an assessment. Encourage students to write down their questions and to do further research to see if they might find the answers to their questions.]*

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Students can hold an Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson Tribute Program, which would highlight Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson’s life and career. Students can:

- Create and present posters
- Prepare a presentation about hip-hop, doo-wop, or any other musical style related to African American culture
- Prepare dramatic readings (perhaps their own poems)
- Prepare an original artistic creation (accompanied by music and/or by a student’s poem)

## MINNESOTA STATE STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

### SOCIAL STUDIES:

#### Citizenship and Government

*Civic Skills:* Identify ways people make a difference in the civic life of their communities, state, nation, or world by working as individuals or groups to address a specific problem or need.

*Civic Values and Principles of Democracy:* Explain the importance of civic discourse and the principles of majority rule and minority rights.

### SOCIAL STUDIES: Geography

*Geospatial Skills:* Use maps and concepts of location to describe places in one's community, the state, the United States, or the world.

### SOCIAL STUDIES: History

*Historical Thinking Skills:*

- Reference different time periods using correct terminology, including the terms decade, century, and millennium.
- Examine historical records, maps, and artifacts to answer basic questions about times and events in history.

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:

#### Key ideas and Details

Determine the main idea(s) of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea(s).

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Use and interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively and demonstrate understanding of the text in which it appears.

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Writing Process: Production and Distribution of Writing

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:

#### Research to Build and Present Knowledge

Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

Recall relevant information from experience or gather relevant information from print and digital sources and sort evidence into provided categories.

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:

#### Comprehension and Collaboration

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners.

Determine the main ideas and supporting details of, paraphrase, and/or summarize a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media formats.

## RESOURCES

Thompson, Ahmir "Questlove", Ben, Greenman, Mo' Meta Blues, Grand Central Publishing, New York, NY, 2013

Hiatt, Brian, 5 Tips from Questlove on How to Be More Creative, Rolling Stone, May 31, 2018

Questlove, Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Questlove>

The Roots, Wikipdeia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Roots](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Roots)

Ahmir Thompson Reflects on His 'Roots', NPR interview, 2009, <https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=101868609>

Questlove On Prince, Doo-Wop and the Food Equivalent of the Mona Lisa, NPR interview, 2016, <https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=475721555>

The Roots, Encyclopedia.com, 2004, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/people/literature-and-arts/music-popular-and-jazz-biographies/roots>

Democracy Now Videos Questlove on His Musical Upbringing, Hip-Hop's 40th, Soul Train and New Memoir, "Mo' Meta Blues"—parts 1 & 2, Democracy Now, 2013, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Znj6Jw\\_cHsE;](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Znj6Jw_cHsE;)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTiWdReQW2E>

## LESSON PLAN:

# AHMIR “QUESTLOVE” THOMPSON CONNECTING THE ARTS

## INTRODUCTION

Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson was VocalEssence Teaching Artist Brandon Commodore’s choice as an artist who influences and inspires his life and work in music.

Thompson is a multi-faceted musician, music journalist, songwriter, author, and producer. He founded the band called The Roots with Tariq “Black Thought” Trotter when they both attended the Philadelphia High School for the Creative and Performing Arts. In the early days, Tariq and Ahmir would busk on street corners with Ahmir playing bucket drums and Tariq rapping over his rhythms. Today, The Roots are a famous hip-hop group, performing as the house band for *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon* and touring all over the country playing gigs and concerts. They are known for their jazzy and eclectic approach to hip hop played by live musical instruments.

## KEY TERMS

- Hip hop:** Hip hop is both a genre of music that features rhythmic rhyming lyrics and an artistic subculture influenced by hip hop music. Songs in hip hop are spoken from personal experience. They are usually mixed with other genres of music like rock and classical (piano), or with record players. “Hip-hop is based in rhythm, repetition, and perfect time,” says Questlove.
- Music Video:** A video recorded performance of a recorded song, usually accompanied by dancing, visual images, interesting settings, and other special effects to interpret the lyrics
- Rap:** A musical style with a spoken vocal delivery that includes rhyming words, rhythmic speech, and street lingo and it is usually performed over a back beat or instrumental accompaniment
- R&B:** Short for Rhythm & Blues, a genre of popular music that originated in African American communities in the 1940s; includes a soulful vocal style and improvisation



Questlove at a Barnes & Noble book signing

## LEARNING GOALS

Students will develop a fuller impression and understanding of Questlove’s musical artistry when they see, hear, and examine examples of his work. They will view, listen, describe and analyze the messages in a music video, “Wake Up Everybody,” to understand that videos deliver messages as well as music.

## MATERIALS

- Chart paper

*The following are included in the VocalEssence WITNESS Online Resources:*

- Copies of the Video Viewing Log
- Music video “Wake Up Everybody”
- Lyrics for “Wake Up Everybody”
- Questlove and Grover play the drums
- The Roots and Jimmy Fallon perform “Can You Tell Me How to Get to Sesame Street?”
- *Note: links to resources for the optional lesson for “It Ain’t Fair” and the movie, “Detroit” are on p. 94*



## PROCESS

### PART ONE: “WAKE UP EVERYBODY” MUSIC VIDEO: WHAT’S THE MESSAGE?

A music video is a short film that integrates a song with imagery. Music videos can promote an artist or group, have a specific artistic purpose, or send a message.

1. Introduce the activity.

Music videos entertain viewers but are also designed to convey messages to the viewers. The messages are sometimes clear and straightforward, but can also be vague, puzzling, or hidden. Students will apply this idea to a video made by The Roots.

They will:

- Watch a video that features Questlove and The Roots performing “Wake Up Everybody.” This R&B song was written by John Whitehead, Gene McFadden, and Victor Carstarphen.
- Take descriptive notes using a Video Viewing Log to focus on the content and the messages sent by the video. The Log will direct students’ attention to various details in the video and help them capture these details.
- Find the answer to the BIG Question: **What message(s) is this video sending?**

**Younger Students** can view the video and look for the messages in a class discussion. Use the Video Viewing Log questions to guide the discussion, and determine what messages the video is sending.

2. Distribute the Video Viewing Log. Read through the prompts to make sure they understand the questions and to clarify their viewing tasks. In addition to words, they can diagram or sketch responses that help them remember information. They will refer to their Logs during discussion. An option is to have a pair of students work on a single Viewing Log.

- Watch once to enjoy the song, find Questlove, and get a sense of the whole video.
- Watch again to pay attention and write responses to the prompts in their logs. After the second viewing allow time for students to complete their observations and comments.

3. Divided into small discussion groups, students will share their information, ideas, and insights they noted in the video. Place special focus on the message or messages, and the details that supports their thinking. Expect there to be diverse opinions. Near the end of the time for discussion, remind groups to summarize key insights, what they agree or disagree on as the message(s) in the video, and other comments for a report back to the full class.
4. Reconvene and share insights and comments. Write the heading: **What Messages is “Wake Up Everybody Sending” to Us?** As students make their points, summarize them on the board. Here are a few guiding questions for a wrap up:
- Overall, what did the people who made this video want us to know, feel, and understand?
  - Did they achieve their goals? Yes-No-Maybe?
  - What’s the main “take away” message?
5. Watch the video once more.

## PART TWO: LET'S RAP



The Roots

### QUESTLOVE ON SESAME STREET For Younger Students (and maybe older ones, too)

Questlove frequently  
appears on Sesame Street.

In one episode, Grover gives him a beginner's  
lesson on how to play the drum.

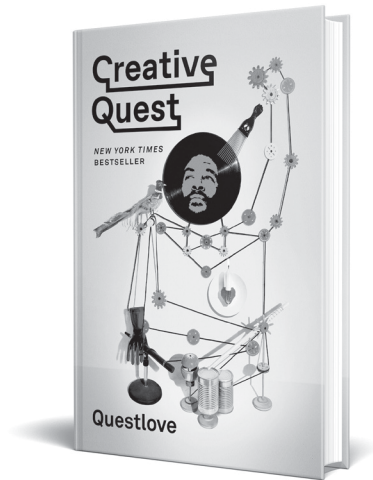


Grover

On another, The Roots band members and  
Jimmy Fallon join in playing and singing the  
Sesame Street theme song, "Can You Tell Me  
How to Get to Sesame Street," on school music  
instruments. See if you can find Questlove.

## AUTHOR QUESTLOVE

Questlove is the author of four books.  
His most recent is *Creative Quest*.



Questlove's book *Creative Quest*

*Rolling Stone* called it "...an indispensable  
resource for anyone looking to understand  
the impulse, psychology and spark behind  
creative ideas."

And *BookPage* had this to say: "Powered by the  
pistons of Questlove's ever-curious mind and his  
decades of experience in varied artistic projects  
with top entertainers, thinkers and creators,  
this book feels fresh and personal. Credible  
research is buttressed by "here's how it played  
out for me stories," and his humor and geniality  
shine through."

## OPTIONAL LESSON FOR OLDER STUDENTS: “IT AIN’T FAIR” FROM THE MOVIE, *DETROIT*

**TEACHERS:** Please Review this material before presenting it to students.

Some of the facts, ideas and language in “It Ain’t Fair” are inappropriate in many educational settings. Please use your academic judgement and your community’s standards to decide if you will use this material.

Filmmakers asked Questlove and The Roots to create a piece for the soundtrack of the 2017 movie, *Detroit*. The song they created was “It Ain’t Fair.”

1. Before viewing the clip of the opening of the movie *Detroit*, listen to a 25-minute interview with Questlove and Black Thought (Tariq) about the creation of “It Ain’t Fair.” The interview covers interesting information about how the song and lyrics were created, the delivery, and the passion expressed in the song by Bilal, the artist performing the lyrics. One point of interest is a reference to the death of Philando Castile. It is a long interview; consider putting the link on your class website and making it a homework assignment. The link is: <http://songexploder.net/the-roots>.
  - In class, encourage students to respond to what they heard/learned in the interview. Ask if any students have seen the movie; what did they think?
  - Also ask if they know about the Detroit riots of the late 1960s.
2. After hearing and responding to the audio interview, students will watch the scene together with the soundtrack. After viewing, discuss their reactions and thoughts about the song and the movie’s opening. What are the messages in this song?
  - The opening of the film with soundtrack of “It Ain’t Fair” is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFMfMGYW8kc>.
  - The clip includes movie footage, song lyrics printed on the screen, and the song sung by Bilal.
  - Song lyrics can be found at <https://genius.com/The-roots-it-aint-fair-lyrics>.

## **Detroit Plot Synopsis**

In the summer of 1967, rioting and civil unrest starts to tear apart the city of Detroit. Two days later, a report of gunshots prompts the Detroit Police Department, the Michigan State Police and the Michigan Army National Guard to search and seize an annex of the nearby Algiers Motel. Several policemen start to flout procedure by forcefully and viciously interrogating guests to get a confession. By the end of the night, three unarmed men are gunned down while several others are brutally beaten.

It ignited the **1967** riots, a series of violent confrontations between residents of predominantly African American neighborhoods and the city’s police department. Beginning on July 23, 1967, the riots lasted five days and resulted in the deaths of 43 people, including 33 African Americans and 10 whites.

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## **ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS**

- The Video Viewing Log plus discussion provides evidence of student writing.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- View other music videos from the perspective of searching for the message(s) contained within them. Consider this a media homework assignment. Students select a video from a list the teacher provides (in order to avoid inappropriate content), and analyze it in detail.
- Obtain a copy of the book *Creativity Quest* by Questlove and read and discuss excerpts in class.

## RESOURCES

### BOOKS

Thompson, Ahmir with Ben Greenman. *Creative Quest*, Harper Collins Books, New York: 2018.

Questlove explores and explains his own ideas about creativity, lessons he learned from his father, his collaborators, and other artists, in an enthusiastic and friendly book.

### WEBSITES

Questlove, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Questlove>

“Questlove: Questlove On Prince, Doo-Wop And The Food Equivalent Of The ‘Mona Lisa’”  
<https://www.npr.org/2016/04/27/475721555/questlove-on-prince-doo-wop-and-the-food-equivalent-of-the-mona-lisa>

Interviews that fill in more of the many things Questlove loves, including food and his culinary accomplishments.

“Wake Up Everybody” music video featuring John Legend, Melanie Fiona, and The Roots band, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJgxJ6JrPkc>

Sesame Street featuring the Letter M with Questlove & Grover, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9DUOi2O\\_08g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9DUOi2O_08g)

The Sesame Street Theme Song with The Roots, Sesame Street Puppets and Jimmy Fallon, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHogg7pJI\\_M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHogg7pJI_M)

## MINNESOTA STATE STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

### MUSIC: Foundations

*Standard 1:* Use foundational knowledge and skills while responding to, creating, and presenting artistic work.

### MUSIC: Respond

*Standard #7:* Analyze and construct interpretations of artistic work  
*Standard #8:* Evaluate artistic work by applying criteria.

### MUSIC: Create

*Standard #2:* Generate and develop original artistic ideas  
*Standard #3:* Create original artistic work.

### MEDIA: Respond

*Standard #7:* Analyze and construct interpretations of artistic work  
*Standard #8:* Evaluate artistic work by applying criteria.

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Reading

*Standard #1:* Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inference from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: Speaking, Viewing, Listening, and Media Literacy: Comprehension and Collaboration

*Standard #2:* Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and format, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.



# IMAGE CREDITS/SOURCES

## COVER:

**Photo Montage:** Created by Lora Aadalen Joshi, incorporating the following images: AdobeStock\_180038502, iStock-485031012, and iStock-183358965

## PART 1:

**Robert Graham:** Caroline Wood  
**VocalEssence Chorus:** Krivit Photography & Bruce Silcox  
**Joanna Cortright:** Joanna Cortright  
**Dwight Scott:** Dwight Scott  
**Philip Brunelle:** Krivit Photography  
**G. Phillip Shultz, III:** Caroline Wood  
**WITNESS Artist Workshops:** Stephen Maturen  
**VocalEssence Singers Of This Age:** Bruce Silcox  
**Orchestra Hall:**  
[http://www.minnesotaorchestra.org/images/rentals/rental\\_overview\\_header.png](http://www.minnesotaorchestra.org/images/rentals/rental_overview_header.png)

## PART 2:

### BLOOMING WITH CREATIVITY: Meet the VocalEssence WITNESS Teaching Artists and their Inspirational Figures

**Quote from Tanner Christensen, author of  
“The Creative Challenge”**  
<http://www.hilarysutton.com/blog/2016/8/16/conversation-with-a-creative-meet-creativity-expert-facebook-product-designer-tanner-christensen>

**Timothy Berry:** Novelli Jurado  
**Patricia Brown:** Novelli Jurado  
**Brandon Commodore:** Novelli Jurado  
**Ginger Commodore:** Novelli Jurado  
**Karla Nweje:** Novelli Jurado  
**T. Mychael Rambo:** Novelli Jurado  
**Anita Ruth:** Novelli Jurado  
**Roxane Wallace:** Novelli Jurado

## PAUL ROBESON

**Paul Robeson**  
<https://lightsmellsloud.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/paulrobson.jpg>

**Paul Robeson as a student at Rutgers**  
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**Paul Robeson in *The Emperor Jones*** [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Emperor\\_Jones\\_\(film,\\_1933\)#/media/Fichier:Paul\\_Robeson\\_in\\_The\\_Emperor\\_Jones.jpg](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Emperor_Jones_(film,_1933)#/media/Fichier:Paul_Robeson_in_The_Emperor_Jones.jpg)

## Here I Stand Book Cover

<https://www.amazon.com/Here-I-Stand-Paul-Robeson/dp/0807064459>

## Paul Robeson speaking to an audience

<https://static.independent.co.uk/s3fs-public/thumbnails/image/2014/11/19/12/paul-roberson.jpg?width=1368&height=912&it=bounds&format=pjpg&auto=webp&quality=70>

## Paul Robeson

<http://moralheroes.org/paul-roberson/>

## Keyboard image

<http://www.publicdomainpictures.net/pictures/50000/nahled/piano-keyboard-clipart.jpg>

## KATHERINE DUNHAM

### Katherine Dunham

<https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/ruth-page-katherine-dunham/Content?oid=69265415>

### Katherine with her brother Albert, ca. 1920

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/200128777165412486>

### Katherine Dunham’s Journey to Accompong

<https://www.oldimprints.com/pages/books/54375/jamaica-anthropology-dance/katherine-dunhams-journey-to-accompong>

### Katherine Dunham with her daughter

<https://picryl.com/media/katherine-dunham-and-her-daughter-marie-christine-board-an-airplane-in-new?zoom=true>

### Stormy Weather Movie Advertisement Poster

[https://images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/I/71EFkHTxxEL.\\_SY679\\_.jpg](https://images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/I/71EFkHTxxEL._SY679_.jpg)

### Dunham in the opening of the cutaway just before the “dream” sequence

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-x0LIAtv7Ez0/Tnd\\_wRoJTwl/AAAAAAAAANw/9h6nYGksmyQ/s1600/dunhamstormy2.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-x0LIAtv7Ez0/Tnd_wRoJTwl/AAAAAAAAANw/9h6nYGksmyQ/s1600/dunhamstormy2.jpg)

### Katherine Dunham, photographed by Marcus Blechman ca. 1950. Museum of the City of New York. 76.20.245

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## PEARL PRIMUS

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<https://cellcode.us/quotes/pearl-and-katherine-primus-dunham.html>

### Pearl Primus on Graduation Day

<https://in.pinterest.com/pin/836051118302226478>

### Pearl Primus Dancing

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### **Pearl Primus, Negro Freedom Rally Poster**

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### **Primus Takes Flight**

<http://new.danceheritage.org/html/primus.html>

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<https://www.gettyimages.ca/detail/news-photo/dancer-and-choreographer-pearl-primus-depicts-lynching-news-photo/613461522>

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## **DR. CHARLES “BABA CHUCK” DAVIS**

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<https://www.dancemagazine.com/goodbye-baba-chuck-2412970727.html>

### **Still-frame from Video, Charles Davis Dancing**

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### **Macon, Georgia**

<http://i.4pcdn.org/tg/1395734605963.jpg>

### **City Artwork of Charles Davis**

<https://twitter.com/durhamnc/status/1044605486371409920>

### **Dr. Charles “Baba Chuck” Davis**

<https://myemail.constantcontact.com/Baba-Chuck-Davis-Memorial-Celebration.html?soid=1116258586297&aid=V-s2Ct-g4u6U>

### **Baba Chuck Davis, Photo by Alec Himwich**

<https://www.self-help.org/updates/sh-blog/blog/2017/06/07/honoring-the-late-great-chuck-davis>

### **Image of Book Cover**

<https://www.amazon.com/Ago-Baba-Chuck-Branch-Story-time/dp/1724578383>

**A Griot performs, Diffa, Niger, West Africa, playing a Ngoni or Xalam** [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/25/Diffa\\_Niger\\_Griot\\_DSC\\_0177.jpg/640px-Diffa\\_Niger\\_Griot\\_DSC\\_0177.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/25/Diffa_Niger_Griot_DSC_0177.jpg/640px-Diffa_Niger_Griot_DSC_0177.jpg)

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## **ARETHA FRANKLIN**

### **Aretha Franklin**

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### **Aretha Franklin Singing into Microphone**

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### **Aretha Accepting Grammy Award**

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### **Time Magazine Cover Artwork**

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### **Aretha Franklin’s Hollywood Star**

<https://www.udel.edu/udaily/2018/august/aretha-franklin-david-suisman-cultural-impact/>

### **Aretha Franklin with WITNESS Teaching Artist, Ginger Commodore: Photo courtesy of Ginger Commodore**

### **Clara Ward**

<http://www.northernsoultrain.co.uk/artists/claraward.html>

### **Thomas Dorsey (1899-1993), “Father of Black Gospel Music”**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_A.\\_Dorsey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_A._Dorsey)

### **Mahalia Jackson, 1911-1972**

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### **Sam Cooke**

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### **The Queen of Soul**

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## **BERNICE JOHNSON REAGON**

### **Bernice Johnson Reagon**

<https://alchetron.com/Bernice-Johnson-Reagon/>

### **SNCC Freedom Singers**

[https://yukj0bmjp0-flywheel.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/prodimages/files/SNCC\\_Freedom\\_Singers.jpg](https://yukj0bmjp0-flywheel.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/prodimages/files/SNCC_Freedom_Singers.jpg)

### **Sweet Honey in the Rock**

<https://seatgeek.com/images/performers-landscape/sweet-honey-in-the-rock-fc5803/1730/1920x1200.jpg>

### **Bernice Johnson Reagon’s *River of Life* album cover**

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### **Bernice Johnson Reagon**

<https://www.trinitywallstreet.org/video/bernice-johnson-reagon-concert>

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**AHMIR “QUESTLOVE” THOMPSON****Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson**

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**“Questlove” began his musical studies at an early age**

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**Questlove at a Barnes & Noble book signing**

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**Creative Quest Book Cover**

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IMAGE COURTESY OF TA-COUMBA AIKEN



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