



Teaching with Primary Sources - Civil Rights Fellowship

Spirituals and Hip-Hop Lesson Plan

Frances Meetze and Joye Taylor

Overview

Title: Slavery, Spirituals and Hip-Hop: How do they connect?

Overview: In this lesson, students will connect slave spirituals with both slave narratives from the WPA project AND hip-hop songs.

Understanding goal: One of the themes of AP United States History is American and National identity. This lesson will allow students to explore how slave spirituals impact our American identity through music and through primary source analysis. Students will follow the spirituals from the times of slavery through their impact on hip-hop music of today.

Objectives: TSWBAT:

- 1) Make connections between the lyrics of slave spirituals to the slave narratives recorded by the WPA in the 1930s.
- 2) Analyze primary sources to determine an underlying theme on the reactions of the enslaved people to slavery.
- 3) Evaluate the impact that slave spirituals have had on American identity and culture over time.

Investigative question: How do spirituals connect to modern hip-hop/rap to show continuity and change over time of the African American Experience in our country?

Grades: 11-12

Subjects: This lesson can be taught in United States History, AP United States History, and/or African American Studies. It could also be used in an upper level English class. This lesson was written to teach at the AP level. This could be taught at the beginning of the course during the colonial period or during the unit on Antebellum America.

Standards

Standards: South Carolina Standards:

- ***USHC.1.CO** Analyze the development of the American identity through the founding principles and social and economic development of the Northern and Southern colonies from 1607–1763 using a comparative analysis.
- ***USHC.4.CX** Contextualize changes in American culture within new migration patterns, participation in global conflict, and capitalist business cycles.

AP United States History Standards:

***Unit 2, Objective G:** Explain how enslaved people responded to slavery.

***Unit 4, Objective L:** Explain the continuities and changes in the experience of African Americans from 1800 to 1848.

Materials: Chart paper and markers for each group of 3-4 students; paper copies of each primary source for students to annotate; Black sharpie markers

Resources: The following are links to the primary sources given to the students:

* [Ezra Adams Reflections](#) - starts on page 8

* [Estate Sale Advertisement](#) - Camden Weekly Journal, Jan. 17, 1860

* [Nobody Knows](#) - African American Spiritual Recording ([Lyrics](#))

* Kendrick Lamar - [Alright lyrics](#) (edited for school use)

* [loc.gov](#) - for student research of spirituals and other primary

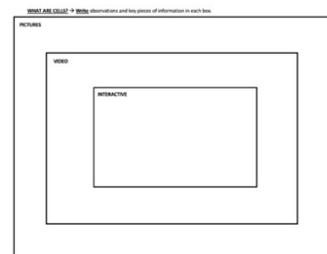
sources

Procedure

Procedure/Action:

1) Building Background Knowledge (BBK):

- A) Students are broken into groups of 3 or 4.
- B) Each group is given a piece of chart paper and markers and they are asked to draw nested boxes as shown.
- C) On the board, write the question, "How did enslaved people react to their enslavement?"
- D) To begin, give students a copy of the Estate Sale advertisement. In the middle box, students write their reactions and thoughts to the primary source.
- E) After students discuss the first source, give students a copy of Ezra Adams reflections to read. In the next box, students write their new learning and their connections between the two primary sources.
- F) Next, give students the lyrics to the spiritual, *Nobody Knows*, and play the song for them. Students will then fill in the last open space on the chart paper with new learning, connections, and thoughts after seeing all three primary sources.
- G) As a group, students answer the questions, "How did enslaved people react to their enslavement?" and "What do these primary sources show about the African American experience?"
- H) Display BBKs around the room and have students present their chart and answers to the questions.



2) Students return to their seats in preparation for whole group instruction.

- A) Distribute copies of Kendrick Lamar's *Alright* lyrics.
- B) Students read through lyrics to determine the theme of the song as it relates to the overarching question: "How do spirituals connect to modern hip-hop/rap?"
- C) Students do a "Think/Pair/Share" to discuss the song lyrics and its connection to the spiritual *Nobody Knows*.

3) Students will then work independently to choose a modern hip-hop/rap song from [list](#).

4) Students use loc.gov to find spirituals and a primary source to match the theme in their modern

song.

- 5) Students create a poem of their choice using the lyrics to the 2 songs to show continuity and change over time. (See evaluation section)

Evaluation

Evaluation: Students will create a poem of their choice based on their research that shows the continuity and change of African American culture through music. It must be paired with another primary source that covers the same theme. Students will write a reflection in which they answer the question “How do spirituals connect to modern hip-hop/rap?,” explain their thought process for their poem, and explain the connection between their poem and primary source.

- 1) A black-out poem of a modern hip-hop/rap song and the spiritual
- 2) A concrete poem
- 3) A ballad
- 4) Student choice - open ended

[Rubric](#)

Extensions: One extension could be to have students analyze a different theme of the spirituals as they connect to modern music, as well as music throughout American history (jazz, etc).

Credits

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