

Song Analysis

Activity Outline

Name: _____ Date: _____

Introduction

This activity is related to the Underground Railroad and the analysis of messaging in old African-American folklore. "Follow the Drinking Gourd" was originally curated in the 1920s, and music has drastically changed since then. Students will examine and listen to two songs, then compare and contrast the differences of the 1920's folklore and their personal music taste.

Activity 1: Song Analysis

Required Materials:

- Copies of "Follow the Drinking Gourd" Lyrics
- Audio Device (Laptop, Smartboard, TV, etc)

Instructions:

1. Introduce conversation about the students' understanding of music
 - a. Students can converse with groups (or as a class) on their favorite genres of music, their favorite artists, etc.
 - i. "What kind of genres of music do you listen to? Why?"
 - ii. "What's your favorite song by your favorite artist? Why?"
2. Students receive copies of "Follow the Drinking Gourd"
 - a. Ask initial question to the group: "Do any words stand out to you?"
 - i. Do we use the same language today?
 - ii. What do you think is the message of the lyrics?
 - iii. What kind of messages do you get from current music?



Activity Outline

3. Listen to the audio with the students twice. Once to listen and enjoy, another to focus on word choice.
4. Ask about the innate aspects of the folklore, compare to language in present-day music
 - a. Analyze the lyrics and possible underlying meanings of the song
 - i. "After listening, what do you think the underlying message is of the song"?
 - ii. What are the main tones of the songs you listen to?
 - iii. What is the tone of the folklore? Happy, Sorrowful, Serious, etc
 - b. Relate underlying meanings in the old song to the student's favorite songs



"Follow the Drinking Gourd" – Arranged by Lee Hays

VERSE 1

When the sun comes back,
and the first quail calls,
Follow the drinking gourd
The old man is a-waitin' for to carry you to freedom
If you follow the drinking gourd.

CHORUS

Follow the drinking gourd,
Follow the drinking gourd,
For the old man is a-waitin' for to carry you to freedom
If you follow the drinking gourd.

VERSE 2

The river bank will make a mighty good road
The dead trees show you the way
Left foot, peg foot, traveling on
Following the drinking gourd.

CHORUS

VERSE 3

The river ends between two hills,
Follow the drinking gourd,
There's another river on the other side,
Follow the drinking gourd.

CHORUS

VERSE 4

Where the great big river meets the little river
Follow the drinking gourd
The old man is a-waitin' for to carry you to freedom
If you follow the drinking gourd.

