



music studio

LESSON PLAN

VH1 Legends: Aretha Franklin

**VH1 Music Studio
Cable in the Classroom**

**Lessons for Middle-Level and High School General Music Classes
Cross Curricular Applications to History/Social Studies Curriculum Covering the Civil Rights
Movement**

A Voice for the Times

Lesson 4 of 4

Objective

Students will identify popular music as a reflection of the culture
Students will consider the effectiveness of music to communicate ideas
Students will identify some songs made popular by Aretha Franklin and make connections with events of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s

National Standards for Music Education
9-Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

Materials

VHS VCR Player
VHS VCR Player
Television
VH1 Cable in the Classroom program VH1 Legends: Aretha Franklin
Web-based lesson materials
Paper and pencil

Procedures

1. Tell students they are going to view a videotape on the musical career of Aretha Franklin, the Queen of Soul. Briefly inform them that Franklin was born in 1946 in Memphis, Tennessee and raised in Detroit by her father, the Rev. C. L. Franklin of the New Bethel Baptist Church. During her formative years, segregation was prevalent in the United States with separate public schools for blacks and whites and, in the South, restaurants, restrooms and water fountains labeled for “Whites Only” or “Colored.” It was during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s that Aretha Franklin rose to popularity as a rhythm and blues, or soul, singer of immense following among all races.
2. Ask students to define the Civil Rights movement in the United States. (Accept reasonable answers, but bring out the African American struggle for personal liberties guaranteed to U.S. citizens by the 13th and 14th Amendments. African Americans joined in nonviolent protest across the country often led by leaders in the African American church.)
3. Have students take out a piece of paper and pencil. As students view the video, have them write down mention in the program of the segregation, discrimination, the Civil Rights movement, and ways that Aretha Franklin and her musical talents gave voice to the African American experience.
4. Show program
5. Lead students in a discussion of some of Aretha Franklin’s experiences of segregation, discrimination and the Civil Rights movement. Scenes from the video include:
 - exclusion from restaurants and hotels while traveling with her father’s revival meetings--Aretha is quoted as saying “We never went hungry except when we were on the road.”
 - Martin Luther King, Jr., a family friend, visited the home frequently
 - singing “Precious Lord, Take My Hand,” at King’s funeral
 - the legendary falling out between Ted White, her first husband, and Atlantic Records
 - producer Jerry Wexler as Aretha recorded “I Never Loved a Man” with studio musicians who were not African American but were playing R&B music.
 - Aretha’s trademark song “Respect,” quickly became a clarion call expressing in which African Americans identified with
5. Ask students what positive roles they think African American musicians played in the Civil Rights movement.
6. Ask students to name songs popular during this time that mirrored what was going on in the culture. (“We Shall Overcome,” James Brown’s “Say It Loud, I’m Black and I’m Proud,” “Respect,” Dion’s “Abraham, Martin, and John,” etc....)
7. Discuss with students why they think “Respect” was a song that reflected the goals of the Civil Rights movement. You could also open the idea to them that “Respect” gave a voice to the women’s rights movement of the same era. While during this time female vocalists often sang songs of heartbreak, the female singing “Respect” was not heartbroken, she was speaking out for what she desired and deserved.

8. Discuss with students how Aretha Franklin responded to the assassination of Martin Luther King in April, 1968 by singing at his funeral. (Later, she also wrote and performed the song “Think”--a song that discourages violent behavior and actions in favor of giving serious thought to the consequences of one’s actions to society.)
9. Place students in groups of two or three. Ask them to imagine that Aretha Franklin will be performing a concert celebrating Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday in your community. Have students write a short report that includes:
- deciding what overall message will Aretha’s songs and presence convey
 - selecting four songs from her repertoire she will perform
 - writing Aretha’s opening remarks for the concert and a short verbal introduction for each of the songs
 - choosing a musical group from your school to perform at the concert and decide what musical selection will be performed (It doesn’t have to be part of Franklin’s repertoire.)
10. In another class period, have students share their reports in the class.

VH1, in partnership with Cable in the Classroom, collaborated with MENC: The National Association for Music Education to develop this series of lessons

National Standards for Music Education

- 1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.**
- 2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.**
- 3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.**
- 4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.**
- 5. Reading and notating music.**
- 6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.**
- 7. Evaluating music and music performances.**
- 8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.**
- 9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.**