



## Say It Loud! A Celebration Of Black Music In America

VH1 Music Studio  
Cable in the Classroom

Lessons for High School Music and Social Studies Classes

### Episode 1: Keep On Pushin'

Lesson 4 of 5  
Conveying Message Through Musical Composition

The Following Lesson Plan was originally written in collaboration with MENC: The National Association for Music Education to correspond with the VH1 Music Studio episode "Behind The Music 1968" and has been adapted for use with "Say It Loud! A Celebration of Black Music In America"

### Objective

- Students will choose a theme for a song
- Students will write a short topic-related poem
- Students will compose music for their poem

#### National Standards:

- Content Standard 1: Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Content Standard 2: Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Content Standard 4: Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines
- Content Standard 5: Reading and notating music
- Content Standard 6: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
- Content Standard 7: Evaluating music and music performances

## Materials

- VHS VCR Player
- Television
- VH1 Cable in the Classroom program “Say It Loud! A Celebration of Black Music In America”
- Web-based materials
- piano and some knowledge of playing basic chords
- lyrics of protest songs

## Procedures

1. If your classroom has keyboards and students have experience with them, arrange students in cooperative groups of three or four. If not, work with the class as a whole. You know your students best and in what arrangements they work best.
2. Tell students they are going to make up, or compose, a song.
3. Review the different songs and topics the class viewed earlier in viewed program.
4. Ask the class for suggestions on what messages they would like their song to communicate. List acceptable topics on the chalkboard. (Topics can be adjusted according to the age/maturity of students.)
5. Have the class (or songwriting groups) vote to decide on which topic they will use.
6. Ask students to come up with several good first lines that introduce their topic. If you are working with the class as a whole, write the suggestions on the chalkboard. If the class is divided into groups, pass out large "brainstorming" paper for them to write suggestions on. Tell students to consider many suggestions.
7. Tell students that while they may have written many different types of poems, this one will have four lines, words that rhyme, and phrases that are balanced.

For example: Some things are easy  
Some things are breezy  
For you it's not tough  
But for me, it is rough.

8. Write the finished lyrics of the topic your students chose on the chalkboard or, if students are in small groups, have each group write their lyrics on a large sheet of paper. ( This is the end of the first part of the lesson.)
9. Tell students that now that they have lyrics, they are going to make up, or compose, the music.

10. Present the class with a selection of accompaniment patterns that vary in mood, tempo, meter, mode, and style.

For example, you might demonstrate:

(Ilia – insert same chart as lesson 4 of Sesame Street)

Rock Ôn' Roll. This generally follows the progression I-vi-IV-V7 or I-vi-ii-V7.

Blues. I I I I IV IV I I V IV I I

11. Students vote on the accompaniment style they think is appropriate for their lyrics.

12. Play the selected accompaniment on the piano and speak or chant the text in an appropriate rhythmic pattern. Recite the words in a way that will fit into a four-measure phrase. Your chord progression should fit the length of the line. Use rests to improve awkward lines. There is no one correct way to do this. If your students are working in small groups, have each group work in the same way as above after you have demonstrated the method.

13. Have students ( or small groups) chant the words as you (or the designated group member) play the accompaniment.

14. Ask students to sing what they just changed as the accompaniment pattern is played again. Tell students they can expect to hear many melodies at first. As this is continued a second and third time, one melody will emerge.

15. Play the accompaniment several times, as the students sing the melody.

16. If your class is working in small groups, have each group play and sing their song for the class. Extension If your students have experience in notating, during another class period have them notate the melody and accompaniment line on staff paper. Have them write in the lyrics.

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*The lesson uses composition ideas presented in *Composition in the Classroom: A Tool for Teaching*, by Jackie Wiggins. 1990 ( MENC: Reston, Va.).*



**Music First**<sup>®</sup> in partnership with Cable in the Classroom, collaborated with MENC: The National Association for Music Education to develop this series of lessons for VH1 Music Studio