



## 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 5 of 5  
Songs that Bring Us Together

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 "The Concert of the Century for VH1 Save the Music" and has been adapted for use with "Say It Loud! A Celebration of Black Music In America"

### Objective

- Students will compose song as a classroom effort.
- Students will consider and choose musical elements to effectively convey a message.
- Students will choose songs to make up a medley, and be able to explain their choices.

#### **National Standards for Music Education**

Content Standard 4: Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines

Content Standard 6: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music

Content Standard 7: Evaluating music and music performances

Content Standard 9: Understanding music in relation to history and culture

## Materials

- VH1 Cable in the Classroom program “Say It Loud! A Celebration of Black Music In America”
- Television
- VCR
- Guitar or Piano
- Chalkboard

## Procedures

### Video Playing Time

1. Listen to Garth Brooks perform "Get Together," a 1960s song made popular by The Youngbloods. (The song is part of a medley including "Abraham, Martin & John/The Night They Drove Old Dixie down/Wonderful World/Get Together/American Pie")
2. Hand out the song's lyrics and discuss the theme (charity and love for people).

### Get Together

Love is but a song we sing, fears that we will die,  
You can make the mountains ring, or make the angels cry,  
Though the bird on the wing and you may not know why.

Come on people now smile on your brother.  
Everybody get together try to love one another right now.  
Come on people now, smile on your brother,  
Everybody get together, try to love one another right now

Some may come and some may go, he will surely be missed,  
When the one that left us here, returns for us at last.  
We hold but a moment's sunlight fading in the grass.

### Chorus:

If you hear the song I sing, you will understand, listen....  
You hold the key to love and fear, all in your trembling hands,  
Just one key unlocks them both, it's there at your command...

### Chorus:

- 3.1 Have students think about songs that bring people together or have social messages.
- 3.2 Write the titles on the chalkboard. (Accept any folk, protest, hymn, patriotic, or reasonable song such as "God

Bless America," "We Shall Overcome," and "This Land Is Your Land.")

4. Have students think about topics that bring people together. Write ideas on the chalkboard.

5. As a classroom project, choose one of the ideas above and write a poem with four iambic lines--each line consisting of four feet, each of one unstressed or short syllable followed by one stressed or long syllable.

6.1 When your class has come up with four lines, discuss music to fit the lyrics.

6.2 What type of music does it call for?

6.3 To discuss rhythm, you may ask the students to tap out a rhythm on their desks. Ask the students if they want a rhythm to match the topic of the lyrics. Would rubato, syncopation, or other rhythmic elements help the message or the sound?

6.4 In a similar way, discuss melody with your students. Ask the students if the melody should be lyrical or ragged. Should it move by steps or leaps?

6.5 For tone color, ask students if they think the song should be rough and angry or smooth and innocent.

7. Have the class chant the poem as you play one of the following chord progressions.

Rock--I V IV

Rock 'n' Roll--I vi IV V7

Blues--I I I I

IV IV I I

V IV I I

8. Ask for volunteers to sing the first line of the melody. While you play the chords, have the volunteer sing the first line. Continue in this manner until all four lines have been sung.

9. Have students sing the entire song. Ask your students for reactions. Would they make any changes? Incorporate any changes the group thinks should be made.

10. Have students think about various topics songwriters in 100 years might write about. Have students write a one-paragraph essay about "message" songs in 100 years and include three ideas for topics along with the style of music (such as folk, rock, blues, rap, etc.) that would match.

Extension:

11.1 Discuss with the students the concept of a "medley": a combination of songs to make up an artistically valid whole. Lead them in a critical evaluation of the songs chosen for this medley and ask them what musical criteria Garth Brooks might have used to construct it. Explain that "Abraham, Martin & John" is an ode to civil rights leaders, "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down" is a country song about the post-Civil-War South, and "American Pie" is a folk-rock song that captures a moment of American history in the mid-1970's.

11.2 Ask the students what criteria they would adopt in constructing their own personal "mixes" or medleys. Accept any reasonable responses and write them on the chalkboard, but encourage them to consider criteria

such as topic of the lyric, performer, tempo, rhythmic style, instrumentation, and key.

11.3 As a homework assignment, ask each student to list songs for a medley and provide a short explanation of the criteria used to select the songs.

(For additional ideas, please see *Composition in the Classroom: A Tool for Teaching*, by Jackie Wiggins (MENC, 1990).

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