Lift Every Voice

How has "The Black National Anthem" influenced art forms?

Grades 3-5 Lesson: Lift Every Voice and Sing
Grade Band: 3-5
Arts Subject: Music
Other Subject: English Language Arts, History

SUMMARY

In this 3-5 lesson, students will develop a perspective about historical events through art, poetry, and music. Students will analyze Augusta Savage's sculpture, *The Harp*, and the poem, *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, by James Weldon Johnson. Students will apply elements of poetry to create original poems.

PREPARATION

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Analyze and make inferences about visual art.
- Describe historical and cultural messages from visual art.
- Research and gather information about "Lift Every Voice and Sing."
- Analyze and discuss the figurative language and imagery in a poem to derive meaning from significant, historical events.
- Describe the effect that music and rhythm have on written words.

Standards Alignment

National Core Arts Standards

VA:Re.7.2.3a Determine messages communicated by an image.
VA:Re.7.2.4a Analyze components in visual imagery that convey messages
VA:Re.7.2.5a Identify and analyze cultural associations suggested by visual imagery.
MU:Re7.2.3 Demonstrate and describe how a response to music can be informed by the structure, the use of the elements of music, and context (such as personal and social).
MU:Re7.2.4 Demonstrate and explain how responses to music are informed by the structure, the use of the elements of music, and context (such as social and cultural).
MU:Re7.2.5 Demonstrate and explain, citing evidence, how responses to music are informed by the structure, the use of the elements of music, and context (such as social, cultural, and historical).

Common Core State Standards

ELA-LITERACY.W.3.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.8 Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.

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ELA-LITERACY.W.4.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
ELA-LITERACY.W.4.8 Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.
ELA-LITERACY.W.5.7 Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
ELA-LITERACY.W.5.8 Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.
ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3.B Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations.
ELA-LITERACY.L.3.3.A Choose words and phrases for effect.
ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.B Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.D Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.D Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

Recommended Student Materials
Editable Documents: *Before sharing these resources with students, you must first save them to your Google account by opening them, and selecting "Make a copy" from the File menu. Check out Sharing Tips or Instructional Benefits when implementing Google Docs and Google Slides with students.*

- Slide: Augusta Savage
- Slide: African American History Timeline
- *Poem: Lift Every Voice and Sing*

Videos

- HBCU Concert Choir Video: "Lift Every Voice and Sing"
- Instrumental Video: Preservation Hall Jazz Band - "Lift Every Voice and Sing"

Websites

- African American History Timeline
- Timeline of African-American History
- The American Civil War
- James Weldon Johnson
- NAACP History: Lift Every Voice and Sing

Teacher Background

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Teachers should be familiar with the events leading up to the Civil War, the Civil Rights Movement in US history, Augusta Savage, and James Weldon Johnson. Preview the student resources and familiarize yourself with *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, "The Black National Anthem." Teachers can learn more about Augusta Savage from NPR's article or a 4-minute listen, *Sculpture Augusta Savage Said Her Legacy Was The Work Of Her Students*. To familiarize yourself with the cooperative learning, "Jigsaw," activity review this Jigsaw Description.

Student Prerequisites
Students should have general knowledge about African American history, civil rights in the U.S., and post-Civil War events to the early 1900s. Students should know how to construct a timeline, have experience analyzing and interpreting visual art, and be familiar with elements of poetry.

Accessibility Notes
Modify handouts, text, and utilize assistive technologies as needed. Enable screen-reading tools to describe the sculpture photographs in the Google Slide presentation. Provide preferential seating for visual presentations and allow extra time for task completion.

INSTRUCTION
Engage
1. Display the presentation, Slide: Augusta Savage, to examine the sculpted art, *The Harp*, but do not tell students the name of the sculpture. Have students examine and discuss the sculpture. Explain that this sculpture was displayed at the 1939 New York World's Fair and it stood about 16 feet high.

2. Divide students into pairs or small groups to examine the sculpture more in-depth. *Ask: What could you touch (nouns) on this sculpture if you were looking at it in person?* (e.g. man, God's hand, people, muscles, family, instruments.) *What are the things (abstract nouns, verbs, adjectives) you cannot touch?* (e.g. abstract nouns: strength, determination, pride, harmony, unity, hope; verbs: holding, lifting, balancing, singing, harmonizing things you hear, see, smell, taste, feel; adjectives: soft voices, strong, closeness.)

3. Engage students in a class discussion. *Ask students: Why do you think Augusta Savage chose to sculpt this particular image? What title would you give this sculpture? Why?* After students have a chance to generate their own title and explanation, tell students the sculpture was named, *The Harp*. She was inspired by the poem, written by James Weldon Johnson, *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, and the music composition written by his brother, J. Rosamond Johnson.

Build
1. Have students research and gather information about the events leading up to and surrounding the time the poem was written in 1900. Share the African American History

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Timeline, Timeline of African-American History, and The American Civil War with students. Allow time for students to build their background knowledge about the civil war and how the poem connects to history.

2. Divide students into six groups to participate in a timeline jigsaw. Have each group research significant historical events in African-American history for the following time frames: 1600 - 1649, 1650 - 1699, 1700 - 1749, 1750 - 1799, 1800 - 1849, 1850 - 1899. Students can record their findings on butcher paper, construction paper, or collaboratively in the Slide: African American History Timeline.

3. Each group should read about the event(s) during the time periods they receive, then record one or two paraphrased sentences summarizing the event(s) and placing it along the timeline. Students can also include illustrations or symbols representative of the event. Once students have completed the research, have them piece together the timeline. Leave space for the 1900s.

4. Add James Weldon Johnson to the timeline (1871-1938) in a contrasting color. *Ask students: What can you infer about James Weldon Johnson's experiences in the context of the historical events related to the timeline?*

5. Have students read about James Weldon Johnson and NAACP History: Lift Every Voice and Sing. Display Johnson's poem, *Lift Every Voice and Sing*. You can also print and distribute the poem to students.

6. Ask students to think carefully and describe what types of feelings the poem evokes. Explain that poems, like music, use words to affect the emotions of the audience. Model a "think aloud" with a line or stanza and then draw an inference about feelings, mood.

Apply

1. Engage students in a discussion about the music they listen to. *Ask the students: What is special about music that creates special feelings, memories, or meanings?*

2. Explain that the poet's brother, J. Rosamond Johnson, set the poem, *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, to music. Tell students that the words of a song are called lyrics. Have students examine how the poem's words take on a different level of meaning when set to music.

3. Play the musical version of *Lift Every Voice and Sing* by the National HBCU Concert Choir, or sing along to the instrumental version of Preservation Hall Jazz Band's, *Lift Every Voice and Sing*. Discuss the effect of the music paired with the poem. *Ask the students: How does the music affect the mood and emotion of the lyrics? What do you think the singer(s) wants listeners to feel when they hear the song? What emotions or feelings do you hear? How does one person singing (solo) compare to a group of people singing together? Why do you*

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think people sing together, such as in a choir? What role did the anthem's message play in unifying African Americans in their fight for equal rights in this country?

4. Discuss the rhythm in the music selection. *Ask the students: What is the tempo of the song? Do they prefer a fast tempo or a slow one? Why?*

5. Compare and contrast the words as a poem with the words set to music. *Ask the students: Which has more of an effect on them? Which do they prefer? Why?*

6. Analyze the poem for use of descriptive language. Tell students to identify keywords that create an image in their mind or establish feeling or mood. For example, "We have come over a way that with tears have been watered" or "Till earth and heaven ring, Ring with the harmonies of Liberty." Generate a list of these words on chart paper or an interactive board.

7. Have students visualize the poem. Model for students how to visualize the context of the poem, describing the imagery from the keywords they identified. For example, "I see African Americans marching with the hope that they will be treated with fairness and equality." *Ask the students: How did Johnson create imagery in his poem?*

Reflect

1. Display the presentation, Slide: Augusta Savage. Revisit *The Harp* photograph and select a noun from the list students created earlier in the lesson. The vocabulary the students brainstormed will provide rich content for them to create an individual stanza of a poem about the harp. Model for students how to write a line in a poem. Model a few more times, then put the lines together to make a stanza.

2. Divide students into groups. Have each group member individually write a line of poetry about *The Harp*. Then have group members put their lines together to form a stanza. Remind students that poems do not always have to rhyme.

3. Have students illustrate the imagery from their group's stanza on drawing paper. Students should then bring their images to a section of the wall and create a large picture mosaic. Explain that mosaics could be described as image poems.

4. Assess students' knowledge with a poetry reading. Allow time for students to read their poems and describe their artistic choices in their illustrations. Ask the class to think about what they visualize as their peers read the poems. *What images come to mind? Does the mosaic that they created reflect the images they think about when they read their poem? How can art reflect history? How does art influence culture and society?*

Credits

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