



MUSIC IN OUR SCHOOLS MONTH® 

Music In Our Schools Month® General Music: 4th Grade, 2020–2021

“I Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round” (African-American Civil Rights Song)

Civil Rights and Recorder Lesson

Library of Congress link: <https://folkways.si.edu/the-freedom-singers/i-aint-gonna-let-nobody-turn-me-round/african-american-music-documentary-struggle-protest/track/smithsonian>

Recording: The Freedom Singers, “I Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around,” *Voices of the Civil Rights Movement*, Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 1997.

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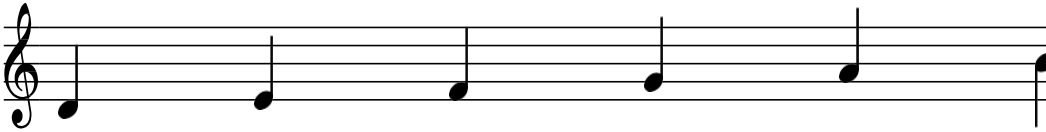
Overview: Throughout these lesson plan Launching Points, students will explore the historical context of music in the American civil rights era, improvise while playing recorder, connect music with cultural and historic events, and compare and contrast different versions of the same song.

Prerequisite Skills

For students to be successful in this unit they will need knowledge of and experiences with the following:

- Reading basic music notation, including quarter notes, eighth notes, and syncopated rhythms, as well as pitches D4–B4, where D4 is the D a whole tone above middle C.

- Ability to play recorder notes D4–B4:



- Basic understanding of music vocabulary.
- Prior experience with improvising.
- Demonstrate good singing technique by using a head voice, supportive posture, good diction, and breath control
- Background knowledge of the American civil rights era is helpful.

Instructional Goals/Objectives

Launching Point 1: Students will analyze how the structure and context of varied musical works inform the response.

Launching Point 2: Students will improvise on recorder using B, A, G, and E.

Launching Point 3: Students will compare and contrast two versions of the song “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around.”

National Core Arts Standards (2014)

CREATING

Anchor Standard 1

Essential Question: How do musicians generate creative ideas?

Enduring Understanding: The creative ideas, concepts and feelings that influence musician’s work emerge from a variety of sources.

MU:CR1.1.4a

Improvise rhythmic, melodic and harmonic ideas and explain connection to specific purpose and context (such as social and cultural).

RESPONDING

Anchor Standard 7

Essential Question: How do individuals choose music to experience?

Enduring Understanding: Individuals selection of musical works is influenced by their interests, experiences, understandings, and purposes.

MU:Re7.1.4a

Demonstrate and explain how selected music connects to and is influenced by specific interests, experiences, purposes, or contexts.

CONNECTING

Anchor Standard: 11

Essential Question: How do the other arts, other disciplines, contexts, and daily life inform creating, performing, and responding to music?

Enduring Understanding: Understanding connections to varied contexts and daily life enhances musicians' creating, performing, and responding

MU:Pr4.2.4c

Explain how context (such as social and cultural) informs a performance.

Assessments

Exit ticket
3-2-1 Form
Compare and contrast form

Materials and Library of Congress Resource Links for the Unit

- <https://folkways.si.edu/the-freedom-singers/i-aint-gonna-let-nobody-turn-me-round/african-american-music-documentary-struggle-protest/track/smithsonian>
- markers/marker board to write down ideas, examples from students
- exit tickets, 3-2-1 forms, compare and contrast forms clip boards, pencils
- anchor chart posters for recorder fingerings B, A, G, E and D.
- recorders (or barred instruments)

Teacher Talk—To the Teacher (Historical and Cultural Information)

Launching Point 1

Song History:

- The song “I Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around” may have begun as a spiritual by the name “Don’t Let Nobody Turn Me Around” or “Don’t You Let Nobody Turn You Around.” There are versions included in a 1927 publication called *Forty Negro Spirituals* by Clarence Cameron White and the 1940 book *Negro Folk Songs* edited by John W. Work. However, the earliest known recording predates that. The Dixie Jubilee Singers recorded it in 1924. In myriad different settings, the African-American community has been singing the tune for a century.

Griffith, S. (2014, February 5) Retrieved from

<http://www.stephengriffith.com/folksongindex/aint-gonna-let-nobody-turn-me-around/>

- Ralph Abernathy introduced it to a crowd at Mount Zion Baptist Church in Albany, Georgia, in summer 1962 during a time of mass arrests and demonstrations. It caught on quickly and became widely used in demonstrations, marches, protests, and gatherings.

Carawan, G. & Carawan, C. (2007). *Sing for Freedom: The Story of the Civil Rights Movement Through Its Songs*. NewSouth, Inc.

- In the version of the song by the Freedom Singers, there are verses about Chief Pritchett, Mayor Kelly, and Uncle Tom. Chief Laurie Pritchett was the police chief in Albany, Georgia from 1959-1966 who imprisoned many civil rights protesters, including Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ralph Abernathy. He decided to use non-brutal methods of arresting protesters to avoid negative attention. Asa Kelly was the Mayor of Albany, Georgia. He obtained a restraining order against civil rights demonstrators which led to 160 African Americans getting arrested. Uncle Tom is a reference to a character in the book *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe that depicts life under slavery.

“Laurie Pritchett,” n.d. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laurie_Pritchett

Civil Rights Digital Library. (April 21, 2020). WALB news film clip of mayor Asa D. Kelley retrieved from http://crdl.usg.edu/export/html/ugabma/walb/crdl_ugabma_walb_walb00054.html

Civil Rights Definitions:

- **Demonstration:** tactics used by protesters which may include marches, rallies, picketing, sit-ins and other forms of protest.
- **March:** A protest or demonstration with a large gathering of people who walk from an assembly point to a predetermined destination, usually culminating in a political rally.

- **Protest:** (*verb*) To express an objection to what someone has said or done. o publicly demonstrate an objection to (a policy or course of action). (*noun*) A statement or action expressing disapproval of or objection to something.

Civil Rights Timeline:

- May 17, 1954: *Brown v. Board of Education* —a U.S. Supreme Court case that ended legal segregation in schools. Many schools continued to remain segregated.
- August 28, 1955: Emmet Till was murdered for looking at a white woman.
- December 1, 1955: Rosa Parks refused to give up a seat on the bus to a white man. This led to the Montgomery bus boycott.
- January 10–11, 1957: Martin Luther King Jr. and other pastors and civil rights leaders meet in Atlanta, Georgia, to coordinate nonviolent protests.
- September 4, 1957: The Little Rock Nine are blocked from integrating into Little Rock School.
- February 1, 1960: The Greensboro sit-in at Woolworth’s whites-only counter was when four African-American college students refused to leave.
- November 14, 1960: Ruby Bridges, six years old, is escorted by federal marshals into William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans.
- Throughout the year of 1961, Freedom riders took bus trips through the American south to protest segregated bus terminals, restrooms, and lunch counters.
- August 28, 1963: The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom took place. Approximately 25,000 people were at the Lincoln Memorial to hear Martin Luther King Jr. give his “I Have a Dream” speech.
- September 15, 1963: A bomb exploded at 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, killing four young girls and injuring other.
- September 15, 1963: President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act, which bans employment discrimination.
- February 21, 1965: Malcolm X is assassinated during a rally.
- March 7, 1965: “Bloody Sunday”—Six hundred civil rights marchers were attacked on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, protesting black voter suppression.
- March 21, 1965 3,200 marchers set out on a 54 mile route from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. They walked twelve miles each day and slept in fields each night. By the time they reached the capitol on March 25, there were 25,000 marchers.
- August 6, 1965: President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
- April 4, 1968: Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.
- April 11, 1968: The Fair Housing Act was signed by President Johnson.

History.com editors (January 16, 2020). *Civil Rights Movement Timeline*, <https://www.history.com/topics/civil-rights-movement/civil-rights-movement-timeline>

National Park Service. (retrieved May 5, 2020). <https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/al4.htm>

Rappaport, D. (2006). *Nobody Gonna Turn Me Around: Stories and Songs of the Civil Rights Movement*. Candlewick Press.

Launching Point 2

- Improvising is a musical skill in which the performer combines performance with communication of emotions and instrumental technique as well as responding to other musicians.
- Improvising is frequently found in African-American musical art forms such as jazz, blues and gospel music.
- Although the song, “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around” is in a minor key, it is pentatonic and contains no half steps between the notes B, A, G and E. Therefore, it will allow students to be successful in the sound they create while improvising.

Launching Point 3

- The song has been recorded by Hall Johnson (1930), Jimmy Davis (1936), The Freedom Singers (1963), Pete Seeger (1965), Joan Baez (1976), Aretha Franklin (variation 1967), Sweet Honey in the Rock (2000), The Roots (2012) Howard College (2017) and many more.
- Although I suggest listening to the Roots version of the song in the lesson, you may choose to provide a different version or multiple versions for your students.
- If you choose to show the video from the documentary *Soundtrack for a Revolution*, preview it carefully. There is footage of a man being struck at the Woolworth’s counter during a sit-in and a fire hose being used to spray people.
- While researching this information, I reached out to African-American leaders in my school community and in the music world. Their thoughts are integrated throughout this lesson. I am grateful for the perspective and expertise they shared.
- The compare and contrast lesson in Launching Point 3 and the civil rights information and timeline in Launching Point 1 were shared with my students in May 2020 via distance learning. I compiled historical information and pictures into Google slides interspersed with video choices for students to compare and contrast. Although I was concerned this may not be the best lesson for distance learning, the students’ responses were very positive. They were asked to fill out a Google form with the same questions from the assessment for launching point three. Their responses, though short, were very powerful. The adjectives they used to describe the music and their feelings and thoughts surrounding the civil rights era conveyed to me they enjoyed the lesson and learned a great deal from the information.

Launching Point 1

Objective: Students will respond to the song “Ain’t Nobody Gonna Turn Me Round” by discussing the Civil Rights Era historical context within the lyrics.

Essential Question: How do individuals choose music to experience?

Specific Performance Standard: MU:Re7.1.4a. Demonstrate and describe how selected music connects to and is influenced by specific interests, experiences, or purposes.

Procedure

1. Ask students if they know anything about the civil rights movement. (Perhaps they might remember learning about Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., or the march in Selma.)
2. The civil rights movement took place in the United States between the mid-1950s through the 1960s. Although slavery had been abolished, African Americans were still suffering the devastating effects of racism and segregation.
3. What role do you think music played in the civil rights movement? Can anyone name a song that may have been a part of this time period?
4. Students will listen to the song “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around” by the Freedom Singers. Teacher can play the recording found here: <https://folkways.si.edu/the-freedom-singers/i-aint-gonna-let-nobody-turn-me-round/african-american-music-documentary-struggle-protest/track/smithsonian>. Many recorded performances of the song that can be found online..
5. Students will react to the song by finishing the sentence frame “I noticed _____.”
6. Listen again to all 8 verses. Ask students to recall the verses of the song. (The verses may change depending on the version you listen to. There are many variations depending on the performer and the year it was recorded.)
 1. Ain’t gonna let nobody turn me around.
 2. Ain’t gonna let segregation turn me around.
 3. Ain’t gonna let no jailhouse turn me around.
 4. Ain’t gonna let no nervous Nellie turn me around.
 5. Ain’t gonna let Chief Pritchett turn me around.
 6. Ain’t gonna let Mayor Kelly turn me around.
 7. Ain’t gonna let no Uncle Tom turn me around.
 8. Ain’t gonna let nobody turn me around.
7. Why are these specific people and things listed? (Check the Teacher Talk section for more information.)
8. Explain to students that this song was taught by Ralph Abernathy who introduced it to a crowd at Mount Zion Baptist Church in Albany, Georgia, in the summer of 1962 during a time of mass arrests and demonstrations. The song caught on immediately and became widely used in demonstrations, marches, protests, and gatherings.

9. What were the people protesting about? See the teacher talk section if you need more information.
10. Students will sing the song.

Assessment

Students will fill out an Exit Ticket: If you could add a verse to the song of a hardship that you will not let stop you, what would it be? I ain't gonna let no _____ turn me around.

Extension

There are many possible extensions dealing with information regarding the Civil Rights Era. Listen to or watch performances of people singing civil rights era songs such as “We Shall Overcome,” “We Shall Not Be Moved,” “Keep Your Eyes on the Prize,” “I’m Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table,” “Oh Freedom,” and others.

Read a poem by Langston Hughes such as “Dreams” or a children’s book such as *Rosa* by Nikki Giovanni and Bryan Collier.

Watch clips from documentaries, such as *Soundtrack for a Revolution* (2009); *American Experience: Freedom Riders* (2011), which contains a segment dedicated to the music of the movement; or *Selma, Lord, Selma* (containing a movie clip of a little girl singing “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around”).

Launching Point 2

Objective: Students will improvise on recorder using B, A, G and E.

Essential Question:

How do musicians generate creative ideas?

Specific Performance Standards: *MU:CR1.1.4a*

Improvise rhythmic, melodic and harmonic ideas and explain connection to specific purpose and context (such as social and cultural).

Procedure

1. Listen to the Howard Gospel Choir perform “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around.”
2. Ask students if this version is the same or different from the Freedom Singer’s version.
3. List some of the differences on the board together. It is likely that the students will notice that the lyrics have changed and there is more improvisation. Explain that improvisation is making up music on the spot.
4. The song “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around” was based on a gospel song or spiritual. The style, lyrics and purpose changed when it went from a place of worship to marches and demonstrations, to protests and jail cells.
5. Look at the recorder music together (page 14). Notice there are two parts.
6. Play through the melody on recorders, part 1.
7. Play through the harmony on recorders, part 2.
8. Teacher will demonstrate improvising on B, A, G and E.
9. Teacher will choose volunteers (2–4 at a time) to improvise on B, A, G and E while other students play part 2.
10. Have volunteers choose new volunteers, and repeat the process. Keep playing until all students have an opportunity to improvise.

Assessment

Students will fill out a 3-2-1 Form (p. 13):

- 3 Things I Learned.
- 2 Words that describe how I felt while improvising.
- 1 Question I have.

Extension

There are two chords in the song “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around.” The version I arranged for recorders would have E-minor and B7 chords. It would be possible to add barred instruments or to play chords on ukuleles in whatever key you choose.

If your students do not have access to these instruments, it would also easily be adaptable to improvise on whatever rhythm instruments you have available.

There are many great examples of improvisation that can be found in gospel music. More information and recordings can be found in the Library of Congress collection at <https://www.loc.gov/collections/songs-of-america/articles-and-essays/musical-styles/ritual-and-worship/african-american-gospel>

Launching Point 3

Objective: Students will compare and contrast two versions of the song “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around.”

Essential Question: How do the other arts, other disciplines, contexts, and daily life inform creating, performing, and responding to music?

Specific Performance Standard: MU:Pr4.2.4c. Explain how context (such as social and cultural) informs a performance.

Procedure

1. Students will review the vocabulary words on the compare and contrast form such as style, tempo, mood, dynamics, and lyrics.
2. Ask a student to explain what is meant by “compare and contrast.”
3. Students will be asked to compare and contrast two different versions of the song “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around.”
4. Teacher will pass out compare and contrast forms, clipboards, and pencils.
5. Students will listen to the Freedom Singers’ version of the song (which they heard in Launching Point 1) and the Roots’ version of the song. There are videos of these performances of Freedom Singers performing at the Whitehouse and the Roots performing for the documentary Soundtrack for a Revolution. As they are listening, they will write their observations on the compare and contrast form.

Assessment

Compare and Contrast Form (page 15)

Extension

Students may want to compare and contrast different versions of the song independently. There are many variations of the song performed by a variety of singers and groups.

Exit Ticket

Student Name _____

If you could add a verse to the song of a hardship that you will not let stop you, what would it be?

Ain't gonna let no _____ turn me around.

Exit Ticket

Student Name _____

If you could add a verse to the song of a hardship that you will not let stop you, what would it be?

Ain't gonna let no _____ turn me around.

Exit Ticket

Student Name _____

If you could add a verse to the song of a hardship that you will not let stop you, what would it be?

Ain't gonna let no _____ turn me around.

Exit Ticket

Student Name _____

If you could add a verse to the song of a hardship that you will not let stop you, what would it be?

Ain't gonna let no _____ turn me around.

3-2-1 Form

Student Name _____

3 Things I Learned	1. 2. 3.
2 Words that Describe How I Felt While Improvising	1. 2.
1 Question I Have	1.

3-2-1 Form

Student Name _____

3 Things I Learned	1. 2. 3.
2 Words that Describe How I Felt While Improvising	1. 2.
1 Question I Have	1.

Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around

Civil Rights song

$\text{♩} = 84$ Recorder part 1

Ain't gon-na let no - bo - dy turn me a-round, turn me a-round,

Recorder part 2

5

turn me a-round. Ain't gon-na let no - bo - dy turn me a-round I'm gon-na

8

keep on a-walk - in', keep on a - talk - in', march-ing up to free - dom land.

Compare and Contrast Form

Student Name _____

1. "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around"

Version 1	Version 2
Performer:	Performer:
Performed in year:	Performed in year:
Voices I hear:	Voices I hear:
Instruments I hear:	Instruments I hear:
Style of the music:	Style of the music:
Lyrics that stand out are:	Lyrics that stand out are:
Dynamics are:	Dynamics are:
Tempo is:	Tempo is:
This music made me feel:	This music made me feel: