

RAP AND A REFUGEE'S STRUGGLE: K'NAAN WAVIN FLAG

K'NAAN: Somali born refugee who fled with his mother to the United States and then to Canada to flee the Somali civil war.

*Please see attached BIO for more history on K'naan.

Waving flag video with lyrics:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iC8V8S_Rehk&feature=related

Waving flag video written lyrics:

<http://video.google.com/videosearch?client=safari&rls=en&q=k%20naan%20waving%20flag%20lyrics&oe=UTF-8&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=N&hl=en&tab=wv#q=k+naan+talks+waving+flag+lyrics+&hl=en&emb=0&client=safari>

Power-point with war images and acoustic version Wavin Flag for ideas for other "Protest Poetry":

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMT7o0yV3fo&feature=player_embedded#t=108

SYNOPSIS:

In this lesson students will deconstruct a rap and appreciate how poetry can be used as a form of social commentary. K'naan calls his rap "Protest Poetry". This particular song "WAVIN FLAG" is about K'naan's experiences growing up in Somalia as a young boy during the civil war and hoping and dreaming of a better life and future freedom. The rap is very real and very hopeful as K'naan's story is a story of survival and he has gone on to become a very successful international rap artist. Deconstructing this rap with students provides a very powerful and meaningful way for students to apply and further develop what they have been learning about the struggles of refugees. This lesson can easily be integrated with a Language Arts lesson on poetry as poetic devices such as simile, metaphor and rhyme patterns are in abundance in this song. (Example- Wavin Flag- a metaphor for freedom) and how musical poetry has and continues to be a compelling outlet for social commentary that can reach the masses.

Teacher should listen to and discuss the meaning behind the lyrics with students and how they relate to what students know about refugees ("fighting to eat, so many wars settling scores, bringing us promises, leaving us poor", patiently waiting for that fateful day" etc.) Encourage students to sing along and dance or move to the song as rhythm and movement are inextricably linked to lyrical rhyme.

After discussing the meaning of Wavin Flag and how it connects to refugees have students write their own "Protest Poetry Raps" in groups or pairs.

Option 1- teacher can have students stay within the topic of refugees and each group write a poem about the experiences of or from the perspective of a refugee.

Option 2- widen the scope and allow students to choose another topic for protest (bullying, racism, sexism, homophobia, children's rights, slavery, oppression of Aboriginal people etc.)

Brainstorm as a class a list of words for students to choose from that relate to refugees and write a couple of lines together as a whole class to provide modelling and guided practice for students. Have students perform their raps for the rest of the class or another class.



Some Curricular Connections:

Grade 6 Social Studies: Identity, Society and Culture

C4: compare individual and collective rights and responsibilities in Canada with those in other countries

Grade 7 Oral Language Speaking and Listening:

A3: listen critically to understand and analyze ideas and information by

- summarizing and synthesizing**
- interpreting the speaker's verbal and non-verbal messages, purposes and perspectives**

K'NAAN BIOGRAPHY

Born in Laasqoray, Somalia, K'naan spent his childhood in the district of Wardhiigleey ("The Lake of Blood") during the Somali Civil War, which began in 1991. K'naan is also a Muslim. His name, K'naan, means "traveller" in the Somali language.

K'naan grew up in a small village that was badly hurt during the Somali civil war. Many of K'naan's friends were forced to become child soldiers and fight in the war because they were kidnapped or orphaned (their parents died) K'naan lived with his mother Marian Mohammed who struggled and struggled to get a visa to the United States. She was taking care of K'Naan and his cousin but unfortunately she only had enough money to pay for two visa's. K'Naan's cousin was left behind. When he was 13 years old K'naan and his mother moved to New York city as refugees to live in Harlem, but quickly his mother decided life would be better for them in Canada and they moved to Toronto. Even though he spoke no English K'naan taught himself hip-hop and how to rap.

K'Naan's style is called "Protest Poetry". Introduce notion of poetry as Social Commentary- a way to express thoughts, ideas, opinions about things taken place in society that you do or do not agree with.

His voice and style have been compared to Eminem, but his subject matter is very different; according to K'naan, he makes "urgent music with a message", talking about the situation in his homeland of Somalia and calling for an end to violence and bloodshed.

His 2005 debut, *The Dusty Foot Philosopher*, won a Juno (Canadian Grammy) for Rap Recording of the Year in 2006.



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K'NAAN LYRICS: WAVING FLAG

When I get older, I will be stronger,
They'll call me freedom
Just like a Waving Flag.

[Chorus]

When I get older, I will be stronger,
They'll call me freedom, just like a Waving Flag,
And then it goes back, and then it goes back,
And then it goes back

Born to a throne, stronger than Rome
but Violent prone, poor people zone,
But it's my home, all I have known,
Where I got grown, streets we would roam.
But out of the darkness, I came the farthest,
Among the hardest survival.
Learn from these streets, it can be bleak,
Except no defeat, surrender retreat,

So we struggling, fighting to eat and
We wondering when we'll be free,
So we patiently wait, for that fateful day,
It's not far away, so for now we say

[Chorus]

Chorus]

When I get older, I will be stronger,
They'll call me freedom, just like a Waving Flag,
And then it goes back, and then it goes back,
And then it goes back

So many wars, settling scores,
Bringing us promises, leaving us poor,
I heard them say, love is the way,
Love is the answer, that's what they say,
But look how they treat us, Make us believers,
We fight their battles, then they deceive us,
Try to control us, they couldn't hold us,
Cause we just move forward like Buffalo Soldiers.

But we struggling, fighting to eat,
And we wondering, when we'll be free
So we patiently wait, for that faithful day,
It's not far away, but for now we say,

[Chorus] 2x

(Ohhhh Ohhhh Ohhhhh Ohhhhh)
And everybody will be singing it
(Ohhhh Ohhhh Ohhhhh Ohhhhh)
And you and I will be singing it
(Ohhhhh Ohhhhh Ohhhhh Ohhhhh)
And we all will be singing it
(Ohhh Ohh Ohh Ohh)

[Chorus] 2x

When I get older, when I get older
I will be stronger, they'll call me freedom
Just like a Waving Flag, just like a Waving flag
Flag, flag, Just like a Waving Flag

