EME Lesson Plan 4

Kathleen Sewell

Grade: 9-12

Subject: Social Studies

Strand: American History

Benchmark number: SS.912.A.1.7

Benchmark description: Describe various socio-cultural aspects of American life including arts, artifacts, literature, education, and publications.

Standard: Use research and inquiry skills to analyze American history using primary and secondary sources.

Group size: Whole class, groups of 2-3

Learning Objectives: After completing this lesson, students will be able to articulate how protestors use music to express their circumstances, suffering, and desires.

Guiding Question: How did slaves express their circumstances, suffering, and desires through music and encoded lyrics? How did anti-war protestors use music to express their desires during the Vietnam War?

Materials:

* Projector
* Computer
* Audio- or video-editing software (i.e. Audacity, iMovie)

Introduction:

Protest songs have been used by a number of social movements as an emotional outlet and to try to effect social change. The songs express the circumstances of the social group, convey their suffering, and communicate their forbidden desires.

This lesson will introduce students to the protest songs written and sung by slaves in the antebellum period and by anti-war protestors in the era of the Vietnam War. Students will analyze protest songs, and then be asked to write their own protest song based on a current social issue. Prior to this lesson, students will already be familiar with the antebellum period and the Vietnam War. This lesson will take two class days to complete, and the homework will be due three weeks later.

Procedures:

1. Students will respond in their journals to the following questions: How important is music in your life? What purposes does music have?
2. Volunteers will discuss their responses.
3. Discuss the purposes of music, including entertainment, relaxation, and social commentary.
4. Discuss how music can be a reflection of the experiences of a social group. Introduce the concept of a protest song.
5. Hand out copies of the lyrics to protest songs from slaves in the antebellum period. Songs will include “Canaan” and “Let My People Go.” The teacher will aid the class in analyzing the meanings behind the lyrics.
6. Listen to protest songs from the Vietnam War era. Songs will include “Draft Dodger Rag” and “Give Peace a Chance.” The students will lead the discussion on the meanings behind the lyrics.
7. Play the following video as an example for the students: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZfRaWAtBVg
8. Ask students to assemble into groups of two or three. Each group must compose a song of two verses and a chorus. The song should be in protest against a current issue that matters to the students. (The teacher must approve the issue.) The group must record the song, but may choose to record it as a video or just audio. Each group must be prepared to present and explain their songs to their classmates.