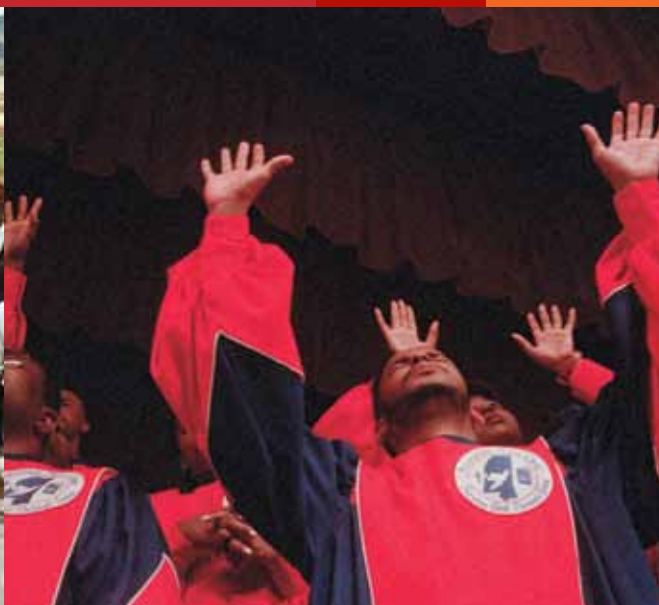


An Educational Program in Support of  
*HONOR! A Celebration of the African American  
Cultural Legacy* Curated by Jessye Norman



CARNEGIE HALL presents  
Perelman American Roots

A Program of The Weill Music Institute at Carnegie Hall

# AFRICAN AMERICAN SONG

Uniting Voices

Teacher Guide

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## USING YOUR TEACHER GUIDE

The teacher guide for *African American Song: Uniting Voices* includes questions for class discussion. These are indicated throughout the teacher guide in light yellow shading. Please note that these questions do not appear in the student guide.

Information sheets, worksheets, and choral arrangements appear in both the teacher and student versions of *Uniting Voices*. These materials have been indicated with a red square, providing the instructor with the corresponding page number in the student guide (SG).

In this year’s curriculum, we have identified two types of supplements to selected lessons, as detailed below.

### MUSICAL EXTENSIONS

These activity ideas are designed for music teachers who are implementing the full curriculum in their own music classrooms or who are helping to bring more music specialty approaches into an arts-integrated learning environment. These ideas emphasize skills-based learning approaches, and provide opportunities for collaboration between classroom teachers and music teachers.

### CREATIVE EXPLORATIONS

These activity ideas are designed for Teaching Artists or music specialists whose work supplements that of either social studies or choral classroom teachers. These ideas emphasize hands-on work that gives students a chance to creatively respond to relevant artistic and historical contexts.

Corresponding page number in the student guide (SG), where applicable

Questions to be discussed as a class

Musical Extension

Creative Exploration

SG 1

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**PRE-CURRICULUM SURVEY**

- How is music a part of your everyday life? \_\_\_\_\_
- What kinds of ideas are expressed in the music you listen to now? \_\_\_\_\_
- What are some occasions or events during which people sing? \_\_\_\_\_
- What does the word *united* mean to you? \_\_\_\_\_
- Can music unite a group of people or a society? If so, how? If not, why? Give at least one example to support your opinion. \_\_\_\_\_
- Who or what comes to mind when you think of African American song? \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 2: United by the Rhythms of Work

**AIM:** How can rhythm and music help people work together?

**OBJECTIVE:** Students gain an introduction to African and African American traditions of making music while working.

**STANDARDS:** NYS Social Studies—1.3, 2.1; Blueprint—Making and Music Literacy

**MATERIALS:** Perelman American Roots, Perelman American Roots CD, standard business-size envelopes (optional)

### PART 1: African Roots of Music and Work

In Africa, music permeates all aspects of life, including work. Discuss this question as a class:

- What are some chores or jobs people do that are boring or repetitive?
- Take a brief survey of your class:
  - How many of you listen to music when you do your homework? Why or why not?
  - Are there any other circumstances where you make music or listen to music while working?
  - Do any of you sing or drum rhythms with your hands outside of a performance situation?
  - Do you listen to music while you work out?
- Listen to “Postal Workers Canceling Stamps at the University of Ghana Post Office” [Track 3]. Discuss these questions as a class:
  - What do you notice about the power of music to unite people?
  - How would doing these jobs be different if there were no music?

**NOTE:** YouTube links of “Postal Workers Canceling Stamps at the University of Ghana Post Office” are listed in the Bibliography of this teacher guide.



Chain gang in North Carolina

## PART 2: Listening to African American Work Songs

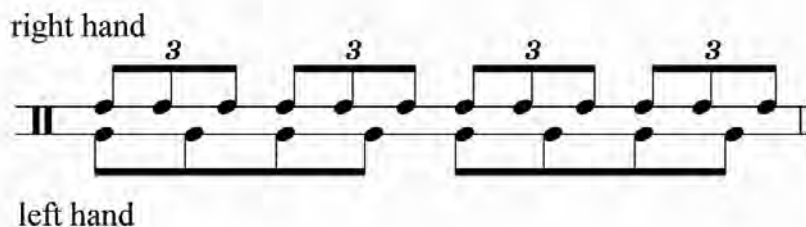
- Listen to “Tie Tamping Chant” [Track 4]—a work song sung by prisoners as they did manual labor. Discuss these questions as a class:
  - How is this song similar to or different from the recording of the postal workers in Ghana?
  - What impact do you think singing had on these men and their work?
  - How is unity expressed in this recording?
- Listen to “Rock Island Line” [Track 5]—a work song that was originally sung by men working on the railroad, but subsequently sung by farmers and folk singers. Compare and contrast this song to “Tie Tamping Chant” and to the postal workers in Ghana. Discuss this question as a class:
  - How is unity expressed in this recording?

## PART 3: Moving Together in the Rhythms of Work

- Discuss these questions as a class:
  - What kind of motions and sounds are involved in building a railroad?
  - This recording of “Rock Island Line” was not made while the singers were actually working, but if they were, how would the motions fit with the rhythm of this song? Experiment with moving together to this music.
  - How could this song help you work as a united team?

### MUSICAL EXTENSION

- One of the key ingredients in African music is polyrhythm (having more than one rhythm occur simultaneously).
- Teach your students to create a two-against-three polyrhythm by patting eighth notes with the left hand and triplets with the right hand.



**CREATIVE EXPLORATION #1**

- Think of a task or a job that requires physical labor or repetition.
- Once the task is determined, have the class mime the motions of the job, then come up with a rhythmic pattern or sounds that go with the motions.
- Create a short song or chant that goes with the rhythm, or have a volunteer free-style rap over it.

**CREATIVE EXPLORATION #2**

- Divide your class into small groups of three or four students.
- Tell them that they've been hired to work for the Ghana postal service and that their first job is to create an interesting new stamp-canceling beat with their team.
- Using fists and the palms of their hands, let each team create patterns and rhythms that would work for sorting and canceling letters. If desired, give students a few envelopes as props. Share as a class.
- Discuss these questions as a class:
  - What do students notice about each pattern?
  - Which groups would do the fastest job?
  - Which groups seemed to have the most fun with their patterns?
  - Which patterns would be the easiest for a new postal employee to learn?
- If time permits, try combining patterns, or let each group teach another group how to do their pattern.
- Musician Bobby McFerrin is famous for saying "Musicians play for a living." Discuss these questions as a class:
  - Compared to your usual school routine, did this activity feel more like work or more like play?
  - What are some jobs you do around the house or at school? How might you add music to lighten the work, or to create a sense of rhythm or community?