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Title: Sing for Freedom, Freedom to Sing

Final Project

Proposal Abstract: The focal point will be the book When Marian Sings, and Marian Anderson's concert at the Lincoln Memorial. Students 2-6 will learn the songs she performed, along with appropriate dances and games. Students will be read the book twice, in class. Each time they will be asked questions related to what they've learned, and given time to respond to the questions and give their own thoughts and opinions. They'll also be asked to think about the type of singing they enjoy, and why they think Marian Anderson's singing was considered the best of her generation. The band and chorus will also learn to play and sing level- appropriate repertoire that Marian Anderson performed. This will culminate in a reader's theatre performance, with one fourth grade class performing it for a school wide meeting complemented by musical performances of her material by the band and the chorus.

Grade Levels: 2- 6

Seminar impact: Before this seminar, my focus for next year was going to be completely different. I was going to focus on Leonard Bernstein and his impact on theater, film scoring, classical music, and music education. However, this seminar has brought me to explore a different person, Marian Anderson, who already has kid- friendly material written about her, lots of primary and secondary source material available, and more level- appropriate music for all my kids to learn from and participate in. I'm excited about how this focus will impact my students this year, and I probably wouldn't have thought of it if it wasn't for this seminar!

### Central Questions

- Why wasn't Marian allowed to sing at the Lincoln Memorial?
- Was she able to accomplish her goals? Why?
- How did her experience help other African Americans?

### Challenge Questions

- One of Marian Anderson's favorite activities was singing. What is your favorite activity? What would you do if you were not allowed to do it in public for or with others?
- Who is your favorite singer, and what do you like about their singing that makes them your favorite? Why do you think Marian Anderson was considered by so many as their favorite singer?
- Marian almost didn't perform at the Lincoln Memorial because she was afraid. Did you ever decide to do something you were afraid to do at first? Were you glad you did?

### Lesson Length

My material will be presented and taught from September- March. Program preparation will start in early April, and the final presentation will be on June 1. The class readings and discussions will be forty minutes each, and the chorus and band music will be rehearsed during regular rehearsal time from late March until they're ready for performance.

### Learning Outcomes

- Students will learn about the discrimination faced by many African Americans including Marian Anderson.
- Students will listen to one of our country's great singers and discuss what makes a singer outstanding and how she epitomized that.
- Students will gain a better understanding of this time in American history and an appreciation for it.

## Key Ideas

- The songs Marian Anderson sung can be and are sung by everyone.
- Marian Anderson wasn't allowed to perform in public because of the color of her skin.
- Other people made sure she could sing in public, and she proved to the public that she had a voice that they would enjoy hearing for years to come.
- When we help others fight against discrimination, we all benefit.

## National Music Standards

- Standard 1 Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
- Standard 9 Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

## Vermont Grade Expectations

### A1-2:5 Grades 1-2

Students PERFORM/ COMMUNICATE through music

by...

- Singing alone and in unison, using developmentally appropriate repertoire in rhythm, maintaining a steady beat.

### A3-4:5 Grades 3-4

Students PERFORM/ COMMUNICATE through music

by...

- Singing alone and with others, using developmentally appropriate repertoire, on pitch, in rhythm, maintaining a steady beat, singing simple two part literature (e.g., ostinato, canons, partner songs).

A5-6:5 Grades 5-6

Students PERFORM/ COMMUNICATE through music

by...

- Singing and playing ensemble and solo experiences with a varied repertoire of music at a degree of difficulty of level 1-2 (see NYSSMA Manual).
- Singing and playing musical instruments employing expressive elements.
- Responding to the cues of the conductor (e.g., steady beat, tempo, start and stop, dynamics, cues).

Preparation for Teaching

Obtain a copy of Marian Anderson's concert program of the songs she performed on Easter Sunday, 1939; copies of the songs she sang; choral arrangements and band arrangements of some of her music; copies of the book When Marian Sang; archival photos and documents related to the book; preparation for a whole school performance centering on the book and her music.

Activities

- Read the book When Marian Sang to the entire school at the beginning of the year so they all have exposure to Marian Anderson and the book. I will do this without the audio book so they all get to form their own ideas of what things sound like during this time.
- Have a discussion about Marian Anderson's singing ability and the discrimination she faced.
- Participate in lesson activities which help assess what students have learned and get them thinking about what they learned, such as fill-in-the-blank questions and matching the right word with a statement based on facts from the book, and discuss how it is different and/or the same from contemporary singing.

- Sing and play the music Marian Anderson performed in classes and with the chorus and band.
- Go to the Metropolitan Opera web site to understand what she did through sound clips, critic reviews, and pictures;
- Put on a performance that includes a reading of the book *When Marion Sings* along with performances of her music. Select a class to do a reader's theater of the book and have the band and chorus perform.
- Read the audio book version of *When Marian Sang* to grades 2-6.

Procedure: Ask students the question "Who is your favorite singer? What qualities of their singing do you like?" After they answer the question, I say something like, "Marian Anderson was many peoples' favorite singer during her lifetime. Let's look at and hear her story." I then share the book with them, and while the story is being told I take them to a photo of Marian performing at the Lincoln Memorial (I use the Smart board in my room to show them) when the book is telling them about that event, and then I take them to photos of Marian's rehearsal and performance of her first opera with the Metropolitan Opera at the last section of the book. We then do an activity I prepared on the Smart board, and then I let them view various primary sources (letter, picture) that I downloaded are mentioned in the book. I assess them on the activity by using a checklist.

#### Assessments

- Checklist
- Final Performance, June 1, time TBA

## Annotated Resources

### Primary Sources:

- Bella Abzug: How One Tough Broad from the Bronx Fought Jim Crow and Joe McCarthy, Pissed Off Jimmy Carter, Battled for the Rights of Women and Workers, Rallied Against War and for the Planet, and Shook Up Politics Along the Way. An oral history  
Levine, Suzanne Thom, Mary, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007

Bella Abzug was loud, opinionated, and could rub people the wrong way, but her name became forever associated with many social movements, especially the women's movement. While I wouldn't use this book with my students, it gave me a better understanding of how to use primary sources to present a compelling portrait of a historical figure.

- My Lord What A Morning: An Autobiography

Marion Anderson, University of Illinois Press, 2002

This is a primary source written by Marian Anderson herself. In it, she retells her life in a quiet, dignified fashion. The book is very illuminating and sheds light on the life she lived and the relationships she had, such as her relationship with Eleanor Roosevelt. It includes 11 photographs and a touching forward by her nephew, James DeWitt. This can definitely be used in the classroom.

- [www.metoperafamily.com](http://www.metoperafamily.com)

This website is the Met's site on Marian Anderson. It is very comprehensive and contains items of interest for both students and adults. The archival photos give a glimpse of what it's like to prepare and perform at the Met,

and there are reviews, interviews, and recordings you can access on this site. While this is a commercial site, I do trust the material on this site and would allow students to use it as a source in their research into Marian Anderson's musical career.

#### Secondary Sources:

- A History of US: All the People  
Hakim, Joy, Oxford University Press, 2006

Joy Hakim is a great narrative writer, and her narrative ability shines through in history class. This volume is very readable, and tells the story behind history. Throughout the book you read accounts of how people are affected by and help change history. This is a great work to use to be able compare the different types of protest.

- Civilities And Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom

Chafe, William, Oxford University Press, 1980

This book is a comprehensive exploration into the history of Greensboro, NC and its struggle for equal rights. This volume is not for the elementary classroom, but would be a great reference book for those who teach about the civil rights movement. The people important to the happening in Greensboro are explored. Readers will gain a better understanding of the grassroots movement that Greensboro went through to provide a community that was as equitable as possible.

- Mark Twain A Life

Powers, Ron, Free Press, 2005

While this book is about Mark Twain, the reader will soon pick out how Twain protested the mistreatment of people, including slaves in the US. This book is not for the elementary classroom, but can be used as background for the teacher on how to present a complete portrait of a person through a biography. While I wouldn't use this book in this fashion, history or English teachers could use excerpts of this volume in conjunction with excerpts of Huck Finn with a view of how personal mastery of an art form (e.g. writing or singing) can have an effect on important social issues of the time.

- Marian Anderson

Sutcliffe Jane, Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2008

This book is a biography for upper elementary students. The language is clear and concise, and the pictures will draw in student interest. A great book to use with this grade level that helps students understand the life of one of our great American singers.

- Marian Anderson: A Singer's Journey

Keiler, Allan, University of Illinois Press, 2002

This book is a great teacher's resource on Marian Anderson, and excerpts could be used with students. The focus of the book is Marian's musical career, and it gives very vivid descriptions of how she sang, which will help students understand why she was such a popular singer. While the chronology is a little vague, the writing is very clear and concise, and the writer uses primary sources to back up what he writes.



- The Sound of Freedom: Marian Anderson, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Concert That Awakened America  
Arsenault, Raymond, Bloomsbury Press, 2010

This book's focus is the civil rights aspect of Marian Anderson's life. If your focus is on the civil rights movement, this book might give you good information of how Marian Anderson is a significant figure in that struggle. I would not use this book with elementary students, but high school students might find value in this as a supplementary text.

- The Voice that Changed a Nation: Marion Anderson and the Struggle for Equal Rights  
Freedman, Russell, Clarion Books, 2004

This book is meant to be read by students in grades 5 -9. It is well written, and is very compelling reading. Archive photos are included, and students who are ready to read a more comprehensive biography on Marian Anderson will thoroughly enjoy this book.

- When Marion Sang: The True Recital of Marian Anderson , The Voice of a Century  
Ryan, Pam Munoz, Scholastic Press, 2002

I got the audio book version of this book, because the recording includes authentic sounds and recordings of Marian Anderson singing. This book is written for younger elementary students, and is very compelling. Students get a view of her life from her early years to her first performance at the Met when she was fifties. The illustrations are beautiful, and the climax at her Lincoln Memorial

concert really draws the students into her life. I used this book as the centerpiece to my project, and most students were very engaged.

#### Accommodations

- Sing Aloud
- Video Photographs
- Audio Recordings

## **Marian Anderson Checklist**

**Student Name:**

**Grading Key: Always= 3. Sometimes= 2, Never= 1**

**Checklist:**

**Student answers comprehension questions accurately.**

**Student is actively involved in class discussion.**

**Student can answer higher level thinking questions.**

Questions to ask students:

Why couldn't Marian get into music school?

What happened when Marian sang for Mr.

Boggetti?

What was different for Marian when she went to Europe?

Where did the government invite Marian to sing?

How do you think people reacted when Marian sang at the Metropolitan Opera?