Lift Every Voice and Sing

SLSO Learning Lab

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

For Music Educators

Grades 5–7

Objectives

Students will:

- Understand the characteristics of anthems and their cultural importance
- Understand the significance of *Lift Every Voice and Sing*
- Create their own anthems

Standards

Missouri Music Learning Standards

- MU:Cr2A.5a
- MU:Cr3B.5-6a
- MU:Re7B.5a, 6b
- MU:Cn11A.5-7a

Illinois Music Learning Standards

- MU:Cr2.1.5-7a
- MU:Cr3.1.5-7b
- MU:Re7.1.5-7b, 6c
- MU:Cn11.1.5-7a

Materials

- Recording of *Lift Every Voice and Sing*
- *Sing a Song* by Kelly Starline Lyons (optional)
- Typatone (optional)
- Writing materials

Vocabulary

- Anthem

Discussion

This song can open the door to discussions about racism, slavery, civil rights, and more. As you embark on these conversations, acknowledge both *similarities* and *differences* in the human experience. When we have the opportunity and vocabulary to talk about our *differences* it strengthens our own sense of identity and validates our experiences. This is an important first step toward the larger conversation about racism.

Assessment

Lift Every Voice (4-point rubric)

Student successfully:

- Demonstrates an understanding of the characteristics of anthems and their cultural importance
- Demonstrates an understanding of the importance of *Lift Every Voice and Sing*
- Creates an anthem for a group of their choosing
- Performs their anthem



For more than 100 years, Lift Every Voice and Sing has been embraced as the Black National Anthem.

Lift Every Voice and Sing was written by two brothers, James Weldon Johnson and John Rosamond Johnson, in celebration of the anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birthday in 1900. The IN UNISON Chorus performs this anthem with the orchestra as part of the SLSO's annual Lift Every Voice: Black History Month Celebration concert at Powell Hall.

The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra's IN UNISON Chorus is an all-volunteer, 120-voice chorus whose mission is to preserve, promote, and perform music of African-American and African cultures that broaden music appreciation and enrich musical experiences locally, nationally, and abroad.

Discover more about *Lift Every Voice and Sing*

Lift Every Voice and Sing is an important part of American history and the Black American experience. Read author Kelly Starling Lyons's children's book, *Sing a Song*, to learn more about the history and the significance of *Lift Every Voice and Sing*.

Anthems

Lift Every Voice and Sing is known as the Black National Anthem. An anthem is defined as an uplifting song identified with a specific group of people. What other anthems do you know? Listen to *Lift Every Voice and Sing* and read the lyrics. What themes or ideas can you identify? Some examples may include freedom or suffering. In what ways is this song an example of an anthem?

Lift Every Voice and Sing

Lift every voice and sing
'Til earth and heaven ring
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the list'ning skies
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun
Let us march on 'til victory is won

Stony the road we trod
Bitter the chastening rod
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died
Yet with a steady beat
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?

We have come over a way that with tears has been watered
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered
Out from the gloomy past
'Til now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast

God of our weary years
God of our silent tears
Thou who has brought us thus far on the way
Thou who has by Thy might
Led us into the light
Keep us forever in the path, we pray
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee
Shadowed beneath Thy hand
May we forever stand
True to our God
True to our native land

Compose an Anthem

Anthems can unite people! Write an anthem for your family, your friends, your class, or your team.

Step 1: Select a topic. It could be something your family values or one of the concepts you talked about while you listened to Lift Every Voice and Sing, such as unity or equality.

Step 2: Pick a simple melody. Use a familiar melody from a favorite nursery rhyme or pop song. This will serve as the melody for your anthem.

Step 3: Create a list of words. This list should include words that describe or are associated with your topic.

Step 4: Turn your words into more complete thoughts. Keep these thoughts short. They do not have to be complete sentences. You are going to put these fragments together to create your lyrics. Think about word pairs that rhyme and try to use those words at the ends of phrases. Work until you have about four lines (or however many you need for one time through your chosen melody). Repetition is good. Think about your favorite nursery rhymes or pop songs: they all use repetition.

Step 5: Put it all together. You may need to alter your lyrics to fit the melody or alter the rhythm of the melody to fit your lyrics. Fine tune your words and the melody until you have something you are happy with.

Step 6: Share it! Music was meant to be performed. Sing your anthem with family and friends.

After writing your anthem, type the lyrics into Typatone to hear it played musically!

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