Negro Spirituals Assignments

Activity 1

In your group, read the spiritual you are assigned. As a group, analyze the lyrics of the song. Answer the following questions about your song on a separate sheet of paper and turn it in with all of the group members’ names.

1. What does the song appear to be about on the surface?
2. What messages are actually being conveyed?
3. What imagery is used to convey these messages?
4. What figures, metaphors, similes, etc. are used?
5. What feelings or emotions does the song evoke?

Activity 2

In your group, write an original Negro Spiritual that slaves along the Underground Railroad Trail in Sandy Springs, MD may have sang. Draw your inspiration from what you learned about slave life in Washington, DC at the time and the obstacles that the slaves along that trail faced. The song must include at least 2 verses and chorus. You may use the melody of another song (not a spiritual) to write your words to. Keep in mind that Negro Spirituals were sung for a purpose. The song should convey emotion and have a hidden meaning.

Rubric: Your group will receive points based on the rubric below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Approaching</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Exceeding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lyrics</td>
<td>Either verse or chorus missing</td>
<td>Short verse and chorus</td>
<td>Substantial verse and chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparent Message</td>
<td>Message is unclear</td>
<td>Message is present but unclear</td>
<td>Message is clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden Message</td>
<td>No hidden message</td>
<td>Hidden message present but not clear</td>
<td>Hidden message is clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotion</td>
<td>Little emotion evoked</td>
<td>Evidence of some emotion</td>
<td>Emotion clearly evoked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>One or two people completed assignment</td>
<td>Most group members participated</td>
<td>All group members participated equally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each group may earn an additional 10 points for performing their song.
Thinking About Songs
AS HISTORICAL ARTIFACTS

ILLUSTRATION
Look at the physical format and graphical elements.

What do you see?

LYRICS
What people, places, and events are mentioned?

MUSIC
What do you notice about the music (fast, slow, catchy, dull)?

What are your personal reactions to the images?

What are your personal reactions to the lyrics?

What emotions might this song produce when sung or played?

Why do you think the artist(s) wrote this song?
What clues do you find to suggest this?

For what audience was the song written?

Why is the music important to this song?

What does the song tell you about what life was like during this period in history?

WHAT MORE DO YOU WANT TO KNOW, AND HOW CAN YOU FIND OUT?

www.loc.gov/teachers/lyrical
Swing Low Sweet Chariot

Chorus
Swing low, sweet chariot,  
Comin' for to carry me home;  
Swing low, sweet chariot,  
Comin' for to carry me home.

Verse 1
I looked over Jordan,  
And what did I see,  
A band of angels comin' after me,  
Comin' for to carry me home.

Chorus

Verse 2
If you get there before I do,  
If you get there before I do,  
Comin' for to carry me home,  
Tell all my friends I'm comin' too,  
Comin' for to carry me home.

Follow the Drinking Gourd

When the sun goes back  
and the first quail calls  
Follow the drinking gourd  
The old man is a-waitin' for  
to carry you to freedom  
Follow the drinking gourd

The river ends between two hills  
Follow the drinking gourd  
There's another river on the other side  
Follow the drinking gourd

Follow the drinking gourd  
I thought I heard the angels say  
The river bed makes a mighty fine road,  
The river bed makes a mighty fine road,  
Dead trees to show you the way  
And it's left foot, peg foot, traveling on  
Follow the drinking gourd

Follow the drinking gourd  
The stars in the heavens  
gonna show you the way  
Follow the drinking gourd

Chorus

Follow the drinking gourd,  
follow the drinking gourd  
For the old man is a-waitin'  
to carry you to freedom  
Follow the drinking gourd

Wade in the Water

Wade in the water  
Wade in the water  
Wade in the water  
God's gonna trouble the water

Now if you should get there before I do  
God's gonna trouble the water  
Tell all my friends that I'm comin' too  
God's gonna trouble the water  
Sometimes I'm up lord and sometimes I'm down  
God's gonna trouble the water  
God's gonna trouble the water  
God's gonna trouble the water

Sometimes I'm level to the ground  
God's gonna trouble the water  
God's gonna trouble the water  
Wade in the water  
Wade in the water  
Wade in the water  
God's gonna trouble the water

If you don't believe I've been redeemed  
God's gonna trouble the water  
I want you to follow him on down to Jordan stream  
My God's gonna trouble the water  
You know chilly water is dark and cold  
God's gonna trouble the water

You know it chills my body but not my soul  
God's gonna trouble the water

Wade in the water  
Wade in the water  
Wade in the water  
God's gonna trouble the water
Go Down Moses

When Israel was in Egypt's land
Let my people go
Oppressed so hard they could not stand
Let my people go

Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land
Tell ol' Pharaoh, Let my people go.

Thus saith the Lord, bold Moses said,
Let my people go,
If not, I'll smite your first-born dead,
Let my people go.

Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land
Tell ol' Pharaoh, Let my people go.

No more shall they in bondage toil,
Let my people go,
Let them come out with Egypt's spoil,
Let my people go.

Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land
Tell ol' Pharaoh, Let my people go.

The Lord told Moses what to do,
Let my people go,
To lead the Hebrew children through,
Let my people go.

Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land
Tell ol' Pharaoh, Let my people go.

O come along Moses, you'll not get lost,
Let my people go,
Stretch out your rod and come across,
Let my people go.

Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land
Tell ol' Pharaoh, Let my people go.

As Israel stood by the waterside,
Let my people go,
At God's command it did divide,
Let my people go.

Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land
Tell ol' Pharaoh, Let my people go.

When they reached the other shore,
Let my people go,

They sang a song of triumph o'er,
Let my people go.

Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land
Tell ol' Pharaoh, Let my people go.

Pharaoh said he'd go across,
Let my people go,
But Pharaoh and his host were lost,
Let my people go.

Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land
Tell ol' Pharaoh, Let my people go.

Jordan shall stand up like a wall,
Let my people go,
And the walls of Jericho shall fall,
Let my people go.

Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land
Tell ol' Pharaoh, Let my people go.

Your foes shall not before you stand,
Let my people go,
And you'll possess fair Canaan's land,
Let my people go.

Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land
Tell ol' Pharaoh, Let my people go.

O let us all from bondage flee,
Let my people go,
And let us all in Christ be free,
Let my people go.

Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land
Tell ol' Pharaoh, Let my people go.

We need not always weep and mourn,
Let my people go,
And wear these slavery chains forlorn,
Let my people go.

Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land
Tell ol' Pharaoh, Let my people go.