

The Sound of Freedom: Survey of Freedom Songs

Objective: Students will be able to identify freedom songs associated with the civil rights movement and consider why these songs particularly resonated with Freedom Summer organizers and volunteers.

Time: Suggested time: 25-30 minutes

Materials: computers, headsets, Internet access, Freedom Song lyrics, and list of websites with Freedom Song lyrics

Warm Up: Have students listen to and complete the worksheet for the [History Explorer Podcast: Freedom Songs](http://americanhistory.si.edu/connect/podcasts/history-explorer-freedom-songs) [<http://americanhistory.si.edu/connect/podcasts/history-explorer-freedom-songs>].

Afterward, ask students to think about how music makes them feel and its role in their daily lives. Encourage them to identify a favorite song and explain why it is their favorite. Next, ask them to consider the role of music in the civil rights movement. Ask: *Can anyone name a song that they believe is associated with the Civil Rights movement or Freedom Summer?*

Procedure: Have students explore the “[History of Freedom Songs](http://www.folkways.si.edu/explore_folkways/civil_rights.aspx)” on the Smithsonian Folkways website: [http://www.folkways.si.edu/explore_folkways/civil_rights.aspx]. Encourage them to listen to the select audio clips located on the lower right hand side of the webpage.

Next, have them view and listen to audio clips of [freedom songs from the civil rights movement](http://www.folkways.si.edu/voices-of-the-civil-rights-movement-black-american-freedom-songs-1960-1966/african-american-music-documentary-struggle-protest/album/smithsonian): [<http://www.folkways.si.edu/voices-of-the-civil-rights-movement-black-american-freedom-songs-1960-1966/african-american-music-documentary-struggle-protest/album/smithsonian>]. Since the focus of this year’s Summit is on Freedom Summer, ask that students pay close attention to songs sung by those affiliated with the Freedom Summer Project such as Willie Peacock, Fannie Lou Hammer, and the CORE Freedom Singers.

Ask them to select one song from the list of featured songs that resonates with them featured on the *Folkways* site listed above and to locate the lyrics to their chosen song on the web. An alternate approach to this activity is to have them select a song from the list of freedom songs listed on the *American Experience* “[Lyrics of the Freedom Song](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/soundtrack-lyrics/#turn)” [<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/soundtrack-lyrics/#turn>]. In addition to reading the lyrics, encourage students to locate and listen to an audio version of their chosen song from the *American Experience* site. After students have selected a song from the *Folkways* or *American Experience* website to focus on, have them answer the questions below.

Supplemental Resources:

- [Freedom is a Constant Struggle](http://www.crmvet.org/crmpics/albums/ms_movt.pdf) [http://www.crmvet.org/crmpics/albums/ms_movt.pdf]
- [The Freedom Riders and Popular Music of the Civil Rights Movement](http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/freedom-rides-and-role-popular-music-civil-rights-movement#sect-objectives) [<http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/freedom-rides-and-role-popular-music-civil-rights-movement#sect-objectives>]
- [The Power of Freedom Songs: Bruce Hartford](http://www.crmvet.org/info/fsongs.htm) [<http://www.crmvet.org/info/fsongs.htm>]
- [Songs of America: Smithsonian Folkways](http://www.folkways.si.edu/popups/radio_america/player.html) [http://www.folkways.si.edu/popups/radio_america/player.html]