

In this unit the children learn about protest songs. A protest song is a song associated with a movement for protest and social change. Some social movements that have a body of songs associated with them are the civil rights movement in America, women's suffrage, and anti-war movements. Some protest songs have their origins in African-American spirituals and gospel songs which the children learnt about in the unit on *African-American Spirituals* in year 5.

The children listen to songs associated with the American civil rights movement, including *We Shall Overcome* sung by Pete Seeger and *I wish I knew (how it would feel to be free)* sung by Nina Simone. They also listen to other songs by famous American artists such as Woody Guthrie and Bob Dylan associated with social change. They finish the unit by listening to a song by an English artist called Labbi Siffre called *Something Inside So Strong* which was written in response to the violence of apartheid in South Africa. During the course of the unit they learn to sing *I wish I knew (how it would feel to be free)* and *Something inside so strong* considering how the songs are structured (e.g. using a verse/chorus structure) and the use of pulse, metre (the grouping of beats) and rhythm to create different moods.

Lesson Sequencing

In lesson 1 the children listen to the song *We Shall Overcome* sung by the American folk singer Pete Seeger. *We Shall Overcome* is a gospel song that is associated heavily with the American civil rights movement. If studying PKC history, the children learn about human rights in the year 6 unit *The History of Human Rights*, which mentions the civil rights movement in the U.S.A. Pete Seeger and Joan Baez (both American folk-singers) among other musicians, learnt the song *We Shall Overcome*. It became known as a protest song. It was famously sung by Baez at the 'March on Washington' in 1963. The children learn that some protest songs have their origin in African American spirituals and at the end of this lesson practice singing two songs they learnt in the unit on *African-American Spirituals* in year 5, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* and *When the Saints Go Marching In*. They then sing these songs simultaneously.

In lesson 2 the children listen to Nina Simone singing *I wish I knew (how it would feel to be free)*. Nina Simone was an American singer, songwriter and civil rights activist. She is known as one of the most influential jazz singers. In the 1960s Nina Simone performed and spoke at civil rights meetings in America. She recorded *I wish I knew (how it would feel to be free)* in 1967. The song is a was written by Billy Taylor and was associated with the American civil rights movement. The words of the song are about freedom from oppression. In this lesson the children start to learn the song, learning how it has a strong emphasis on the off-beat which they have already explored in the context of jazz and the blues in year 4 (in the unit *Take the 'A' Train*) and year 6 (in the units *Blues and the Groove* and *Rock, Pop and the Influence of the Blues*).

In lesson 3 the children listen to *This Land is Your Land* written in 1940 by the influential American folk singer, Woody Guthrie. Guthrie viewed singing as a means of protest and many of his songs are focussed on themes of socialism. *This Land is Your Land*, written in 1940 is one of the U.S.A.'s most famous folk songs. This song, and lots of Guthrie's music were influenced by his childhood during the Great Depression, a time of great poverty in the 1930s, caused by an extreme economic downturn in the U.S.A. If studying PKC art the children will have encountered photographs of the Great Depression taken by Dorothea Lange in the year 5 unit on photography. As a child Guthrie observed an unequal distribution of land and wealth. In this song the line 'This land was made for you and me' emphasises how Guthrie thought everyone should be able to share in the land and the wealth that it produces. At the end of the lesson the children continue to practice *I wish I knew (how it would feel to be free)* which they started to learn in lesson 2. As they sing they practise clapping or clicking on the off-beat (beat 2 and 4).

In lesson 4 the children listen to *The times they are a-changin'* by Bob Dylan building on their knowledge of the American folk song tradition for which Woody Guthrie was famous, which they encountered in lesson 3. Bob Dylan is an American singer/songwriter who was born in 1941. He is considered to be one of the most important songwriters of all time. He was influenced by Woody Guthrie who wrote *This Land is Your Land*. His song *The times they are a-changin'* was written in 1964. Dylan wrote the song as an attempt to create an 'anthem for change'. The words of the song talk about change generally rather than being specific. Dylan's lyrics generally are considered to have poetic power and in 2016 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for "having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition". At the end of the lesson the children continue to practice singing *I wish I knew (how it would feel to be free)*.

In lesson 5 the children listen to the song *Something Inside So Strong* by the English songwriter Labi Siffre who grew up in Hammersmith, London. He wrote the song after watching a documentary about the violence of apartheid in South Africa which existed from 1948 to the early 1990s. The song's lyrics are powerful for anyone facing discrimination. The children use the song to explore how music can express how we feel, and how in this case the combination of the lyrics, a steady pace and a heavy emphasis on the downbeat creates a strong, defiant quality. If studying PKC history, the children will have a growing historical awareness of *The History of Human Rights* which is also studied in summer B of Y6 and will be able to begin to make links between their knowledge and this piece of music. Siffre has also said that the song was influenced by his experience of growing up as a gay man. Whilst this is not included in the detail of the lesson plan teachers may choose, at their discretion and in accordance with their own school policy on teaching about sexuality, to discuss this. The children learn to sing a simplified version of *Something Inside So Strong* over a backing track at the end of the lesson.

In lesson 6, the children perform and record the songs which they have created over the course of the unit. They then evaluate their performance. In doing so, they learn that we can evaluate a performance to make it better next time. By practising the piece so it is ready for performance they develop their skills in singing together as an ensemble.

Musical Focus

Style, Structure and Form

- Song with verses and verses/chorus
- Songs as an expression of a need for social change
- Development of song style and genre—African-American Spiritual, gospel songs, protest songs, jazz, folk

Rhythm and Metre

- Time signature - 4/4
- Off-beat
- Downbeat

Links to Prior/Following Units

Year 5

Spring B—*Beethoven's Eroica* (Notation showing time signatures and bar lines)

Summer A—*African-American Spirituals* (Texture—singing in parts, harmony; Structure and Form—Verse and chorus, call and response; Instrumentation—singing a cappella, jazz band)

Summer B—*English Folk Songs* (Structure and form—songs forms, verse/chorus, call and response; Texture—singing a cappella, singing in unison and in parts)

Year 6

Spring A—*Blues and the Groove* (Rhythm and Metre—4/4 time; Genre of blues and jazz)

Summer A—*Rock, Pop and the Influence of the Blues* (Rhythm and Metre— 4/4 time; Genre of blues)

Links to other PKC subjects

This unit links to the History curriculum in year 6, where in Summer B the children learn about *The History of Human Rights*. It also links to the Art curriculum in year 5, where in Summer B the children learn about the photography of Dorothea Lange taken during the Great Depression in the U.S.A.

Outcomes

Learn, practise and perform *I wish I knew (how it would feel to be free)* and *Something inside so strong* over a backing track, adding clapped/clicked rhythms to accompany the song.

Key Learning Points

- A protest song is a song associated with a movement for protest and social change.
- Some protest songs have their origins in African-American spirituals and gospel songs.
- We Shall Overcome* is a gospel song which became associated with the American civil rights movement
- Nina Simone was an influential jazz singer, songwriter and civil rights activist in America .
- She is known for singing the song *I wish I knew (how it would feel to be free)* which is a song associated with the American civil rights movement.
- Woody Guthrie was an influential American folk singer/songwriter who wrote hundreds of folk songs which focussed on themes of socialism.
- Bob Dylan is an American singer/songwriter who is considered to be one of the most important songwriter's of all time. He wrote *The times they are a-changin'* as an 'anthem for change'.
- The English songwriter Labbi Siffre wrote a song called *Something Inside So Strong* in response to the violence of apartheid in South Africa.

Progression: Technical, Constructive, Expressive

Singing

Children sing songs which they have previously learnt in Y5 in the unit on African-American Spirituals, to warm up at the beginning of each lesson. They also learn to sing two protest songs which they listen to over the course of the unit. This develops their technical singing skills which include posture, breath control, singing with a pulse, imitating rhythms, varying speed, holding a particular pitch and singing together in an ensemble. Practising songs over the course of six lessons ensures familiarity and increasing sophistication of musical expression.

Listening

Children practise 'active' listening, in particular identifying the words of the songs and discussing what they are about. By listening to the songs they begin to have conscious understanding of how music is constructed, focussing on the dimensions of pulse, metre, rhythm, structure/form and style. By studying these songs, they begin to develop an increasing understanding of the expressive qualities of music from a particular culture/genre.

Practising

Practising singing songs over the course of the unit creates an internal sense of pulse, rhythm, pitch, melody and form. Singing these songs develops knowledge of handling pulse, rhythm, metre, structure/form and style as component dimensions of making music. Practising the skills required for singing the songs gradually over the course of the unit, ensures increasing confidence and sophistication in the expressive quality of musical outcomes.

Performing

Working towards performance of songs with accompaniment over the course of six lessons ensures increased technical accuracy, confidence, fluency, expression and the ability to sing securely in an ensemble.