

SESSION 1: RIGHTS, FREEDOM SONGS AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Age range: 7–11 years

<p>Outline</p> <p>Learners will begin by thinking about the term “equality”, before exploring the concept of rights through the distinction between “needs” and “wants”. Learners will reflect on how songs and singing have an impact on how they feel. They will then learn a song as a class (“This Little Light of Mine”) and explore the role of gospel and Freedom Songs during the Civil Rights Movement in America.</p>		
<p>Learning objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To build knowledge about rights and equality. To develop confidence with singing and aural recall. To reflect on how songs can help people to manage and express their feelings. To begin to understand the role of music in the Civil Rights Movement. 	<p>Learning outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners will sing a traditional song from American gospel music to gain an understanding of the roots of some protest music. 	
<p>Key questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the difference between “needs” and “wants”? What are rights? What was the Civil Rights Movement? What role did songs play in the Civil Rights Movement? How can songs help people to express their feelings? 	<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slideshow: <i>Raising Our Voices</i>, slides 1–12 Activity sheet: <i>This Little Light of Mine (lyrics)</i> Backing track for “This Little Light of Mine” (2min 15sec) Background notes for teachers 	
<p>Curriculum links</p>		
<p>England English: reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners should identify how language and presentation can contribute to meaning. <p>Music</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners should perform in an ensemble, using their voice or instruments with increasing control and expression. 	<p>Wales Music : performing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sing with increasing control of breathing, posture, diction, dynamics, phrasing, pitch and duration Maintain a part as a member of a group in a part of a song <p>Literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a range of strategies to make meaning from words and sentences 	<p>Scotland Social Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can contribute to a discussion of the difference between my needs and wants and those of others. SOC 1-16a By exploring the ways in which we use and need rules, I can consider the meaning of rights and responsibilities and discuss those relevant to me. SOC 1-17a <p>Music</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspired by a range of stimuli, and working on my own and/or with others, I can express and communicate my ideas, thoughts and feelings through musical activities. EXA 1-18a / EXA 2-18 <p>Literacy and English</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can show my understanding of what I listen to or watch by responding to and asking different kinds of questions. LIT 1-07a



Session outline

Starter (10 minutes)

Equality

- Show slide 3. Ask learners what this is. (It's an equals sign.)
- Discuss what being equal means. For example, if two apples weigh the same as two pears, the weight of the apples is equal to the weight of the pears; or if a girl and her twin sister each get £2 a week pocket money, they receive equal amounts of money.
- Ask the class if they think people can be equal. Write the word “equality” on the board and tell the class it means “being equal”. Ask them what they think this means when talking about people. Brainstorm ideas and write them on the board. You may need to guide learners towards the idea that equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal chance to make the most of their lives, regardless of where they are born, what they believe or whether they have a disability.
- List and discuss what particular characteristics have caused people to not have equality in the past:
 - Race
 - Disability
 - Gender
 - ReligionDo learners think this is fair?
- Ask learners if they think any of these inequalities still exist today (either in the UK or elsewhere in the world).

Activity 1.1 (15 minutes)

Exploring Rights

N.B. If you covered this activity in [Raising Her Voice](#), you can just do a quick recap [here](#).

Needs and wants

- Ask learners about the things that they need every day, giving prompts such as food, drink, clothing, space to work or play, communication, health, transport, etc. Write up their suggestions on the board.
- Ask the class to think about which of these are “needs” and which “wants”. Talk through the list and circle all the needs in red and wants in green.
- Are there more red or green circles? Why is that?
- Ask learners to look at the needs (perhaps write them out as a list if it is clearer). Encourage them to focus on the things which they really need to live. Should everyone have these basic needs met? Why / why not? What do they think everyone has a right



to? You may have to prompt learners to consider ideas such as family, shelter, safety, education, play, medicine and friendships.

- Mark the ones which the whole class considers to be essential for survival. You might want to refer back to this list in the plenary, so keep it on the board if possible.

Rights

- Show slide 4 which presents a simplified version of Oxfam's Global Charter for Basic Rights and was based on a long consultation with people suffering from poverty and injustice (see Background notes for teachers). Talk the class through the list. You may also like to show a video which introduces the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights: vimeo.com/2308360 (3min 35sec, or 4min 18 sec including credits).
- Point out that the first human right in the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights states that "all human beings are born free and **equal** in dignity and rights".

Activity 1.2 (30 minutes)

Freedom Songs and the Civil Rights Movement

- Ask the class to think about a song which changes how they feel when they are sad. What songs might they sing to cheer themselves up? How do these songs make them feel? Discuss whether they like singing with other people and ask if it makes a difference where they are and who they're with; for example whether they're in school, at home, or at a football match. Why do learners think this is?
- Explain to the class that they are going to sing a song together called "This Little Light of Mine". This is quite a well-known song so some may already know it. Use the video link to listen to it first and then either display the lyrics on slide 5 or give the learners the activity sheet with the lyrics. You can use the backing track provided if you wish. (Please note that the backing track only has six verses on it, so the final chorus will be unaccompanied. Learners will know the tune by then though.)
vimeo.com/15007038 (2min 48sec)

Differentiation

Make it easier: Sing just the chorus and first verse.

Make it harder: Without using a backing track, split the class into two groups and sing the song as a round, bringing in the second group after the first group completes the first line, 'This little light of mine'.

- After singing, show slides 6–9 to introduce the Civil Rights Movement and talk about the role of Freedom Songs (see background notes for teachers, at the end of this document).
- Ask learners if they can explain the connection between the lyrics of "This Little Light of Mine" and equality. Draw out that each person is equally important, with something



positive to contribute to the world no matter what their race or gender. People do not need to hide away who they are.

- If you have time, play learners a snippet of Martin Luther King's speech from this video (the "I Have a Dream" section begins at 12min 30sec): vimeo.com/35051588 (17min 28sec).

Plenary (5 min)

Ask learners to think about which of the rights on the list of needs agreed by the class in Activity 1.1 were denied to black Americans until the law was changed in the early 1960s. Ask them to spend a few minutes discussing this in pairs and then bring them back together as a class to share their thoughts.

Watch this video about Rosa Parks to learn more about the Civil Rights Movement:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxTWb38NERg (2min 59sec)

Further ideas

- Using gospel music as a form of resistance began during the slave trade, with songs like "This Little Light of Mine" which are known as "worker songs". The slave trade is not covered by this resource, but the International Slavery Museum has resources suitable for 7–11 year olds which explore the slave trade in more detail.
www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ism/learning/downloads/International-Slavery-Museum-teachers-pack.pdf

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This Little Light of Mine

Chorus

This little light of mine
I'm going to let it shine
This little light of mine
I'm going to let it shine
This little light of mine
I'm going to let it shine,
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

Verse 1

Everywhere I go
I'm going to let it shine
Everywhere I go
I'm going to let it shine
Everywhere I go
I'm going to let it shine,
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

Chorus

This little light of mine
I'm going to let it shine ...

Verse 2

All in my house
I'm going to let it shine
All in my house
I'm going to let it shine
All in my house
I'm going to let it shine,
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

Chorus

This little light of mine
I'm going to let it shine ...

Verse 3

Out in the dark
I'm going to let it shine
Out in the dark
I'm going to let it shine
Out in the dark
I'm going to let it shine,
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

Chorus

This little light of mine
I'm going to let it shine ...

Background notes for teachers

The slave trade

Although this resource does not focus on the slave trade, there is an obvious link between it and the Civil Rights Movement. Therefore you may find these notes useful to inform discussion with your learners.

The transatlantic slave trade lasted from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, and saw the transportation and enslavement of millions of people by the Portuguese, British, French, Spanish, Dutch and North Americans. It is estimated that 9.4 to 12 million Africans were shipped from west and central Africa to the new colonies in North and South America. These slaves worked as free labour on coffee, cocoa and cotton plantations; in construction, in mines or as servants. The use of slaves became the foundation of many of these economies, particularly the cotton industry in the southern states of America.

The conditions for slaves were generally brutal and degrading, with whipping, beating, sexual abuse and execution being commonplace. Slaves were prevented from becoming literate for fear that this would cause rebellion or escape. Any medical care was provided by other slaves. Marriage between slaves was not officially recognised and therefore an owner was free to split up a family at any time. Children were sent to work from about the age of 12.

The movement against slavery began in the late eighteenth century. Key figures such as Thomas Clarkson (1760–1846), William Wilberforce (1759–1833) and Olaudah Equiano (c.1745–1797) campaigned against the trade for many years in Britain. In America, the issue of slavery was the foundation of the Civil War between the northern and southern states. After the war, it was illegal to buy slaves and Congress passed legislation on civil rights issues aimed at protecting those who had been slaves.

The Civil Rights Movement

Despite the end of the slave trade, there was still ingrained racism in legislation, with many southern states passing “Black Codes” that limited the civil rights of African-Americans. This created racial segregation in public places and underpayment in employment. Many black people migrated to cities in the north during this time.

The Civil Rights Movement was centred in the American south, and was a mass popular movement to secure equal entitlement to the basic rights enjoyed by US citizens, such as access to education and the right to vote. Activists such as Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr instigated the movement in the late 1950s and 1960s with non-violent protests and boycotts. By 1963 demonstrations were met with violence that shocked the nation, leading to President Kennedy requesting a civil rights bill to end racial discrimination. This was passed in 1964 despite his assassination, meaning that discrimination and segregation were outlawed.

Music and singing played an important part in inspiring, mobilising and giving a voice to the Civil Rights Movement. In his book, *Why We Can't Wait*, written in 1964, Martin Luther King wrote that people “sing the freedom songs today for the same reason the slaves sang them,



because we too are in bondage and the songs add hope to our determination". Freedom Songs were not the only anthems for the Civil Rights Movement. Prominent musicians, both black and white, such as Nina Simone, Aretha Franklin, Pete Seeger, Joan Baez and Bob Dylan are all recognised as using their music to support the movement.

Human Rights

The concept of natural rights – rights which belong to all people by virtue of their humanity – is a very old one. Despite wide differences in culture and in ideas about the individual, it has developed in some form in many human societies.

However, the recognition of natural or moral rights does not mean that these rights are automatic or secure for everyone. Throughout history, people have had to struggle to claim their rights. Action for justice has united people in some of the world's most memorable movements against tyranny and oppression. These include the fight for freedom from slavery, the right to vote, the right to take political action, and the right to follow one's own religion without persecution.

Wherever there are rights, responsibilities also exist for all of us to ensure that those rights are met. Responsibilities can be legal (for example, to pay taxes and obey laws) or moral. People have struggled to ensure that moral rights are safeguarded legally, through national or international law. There have been many codes and laws which attempt to define and protect rights. These have developed to suit the moral and political climate of the time, and have often excluded the weakest groups in society; for example, slaves or landless labourers, women and children.

In the twentieth century, international and regional codes of human rights which aim to secure certain basic rights for everyone were developed and have been endorsed by almost every government in the world. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981); and the European Convention on Human Rights (1950). These laws act as guidelines for national governments, many of which include them or similar codes, in their constitutions. Conventions can also be enforced through international agencies such as the European Court of Human Rights.

Despite the power of these codes in law, in practice there are still major violations of people's rights in many parts of the world. Today many people still live in a state of absolute want, unable to afford the most basic shelter or the minimum food requirements for leading an active, productive life. Although we are all born with rights, these are denied to tens of millions of people around the world.

Oxfam's Global Charter for Basic Rights

Oxfam has produced its own list of basic rights, based on a long consultation with people suffering from poverty and injustice. These are shown on slide 4. They are more than just the necessary requirements for staying alive, and they form a foundation on which other rights must rest. In Oxfam's view, alleviating poverty is inextricably linked with rights, and requires giving people the chance to take control of their lives in the longer term. This involves providing them with education, a means of making a living or providing for



themselves, and the confidence and knowledge necessary to make their views known to those in power.

A summary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

1. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.
2. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms listed in the Declaration, regardless of race, colour, sex or religion.
3. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security.
4. No one shall be held in slavery.
5. No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
6. Everyone has the right to recognition before the law.
7. Everyone is equal before the law.
8. Everyone has the right to an effective remedy for the violation of their legal rights.
9. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.
10. Everyone is entitled to a fair hearing.
11. Everyone is innocent until proved guilty.
12. No one shall suffer arbitrary interference.
13. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement.
14. Everyone has the right to seek asylum.
15. Everyone has the right to nationality.
16. Everyone has the right to marry.
17. Everyone has the right to own property.
18. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought.
19. Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.
20. Everyone has the right to freedom of assembly and association.
21. Everyone has the right to take part in government.
22. Everyone has the right to full security in society.
23. Everyone has the right to work.
24. Everyone has the right to rest and leisure.
25. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being.
26. Everyone has the right to education.
27. Everyone has the right to participate freely in the cultural life of their community.
28. Everyone has the right to a social and international order in which these rights and freedoms can be fully realised.
29. Everyone has duties to the community and a duty to respect the rights and freedoms of others.
30. Nothing in the Declaration may be interpreted as giving a right to destroy any of the rights and freedoms set out in it.

www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/

For more ideas on educating about rights, please see these Oxfam resources:

[Children's Rights \(8–11-year-olds\)](#)

[Developing Rights \(11–14-year-olds\)](#)



Useful links and references

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic_slave_trade

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American_Civil_Rights_Movement_%281954%E2%80%931968%29

mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_songs_and_the_civil_rights_movement/

www.oxfam.org.uk/~media/Files/Education/Resources/Developing%20rights/background_information_for_teachers_rights.ashx

policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/our-work