

**American Slave Music:
Communication of Sorrow and Hope**

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Senior Division
Group Documentary
Process Paper: 489 words**

Process Paper

We chose our topic because we are both very interested in music. American Slave Music has fascinated us both and the influence it has had on history is amazing. The intriguing culture found in the slave spirituals opened the world's eyes to see how oppression has been met with strong resilient people with hope through sorrow. It fits this year's theme because the songs communicated the history of sorrow and hope in slavery, inspired new movements such as Gospel and laid a foundation of Civil Rights protest music.

We first conducted our research by searching the Internet and our local library to find websites and books about the American Slave Music and Slave Spirituals. On the internet we found many great resources within the Library of Congress, but unfortunately not many books were available to us. Library loan wasn't available to us with the books we wanted to due Covid restrictions. It didn't stop us from continuing researching other options. Other important websites were the National Museum of African American Music and the National Museum of African American History and Culture. We also tried to contact college professors in African American Studies, but never was able to get a zoom meeting set up.

The information we found -pictures, quotes and general information- was put into our research journal. We also used the research journal to cite our sources and do our layout for our documentary. Once we felt we had enough information, we went through our journal to see how/what information would fit into our layout.

For our presentation we decided to create a documentary. This would be a way to use videos/songs to not only be seen, but also be heard. We used the iMovie app and quickly learned what we could do and couldn't do with this. The other app we used was picollage for our title and credits. Next, we wrote our "script", uploaded our pictures and videos and started to record. After that we would go back and edit our timing of pictures as well as the volume of the videos. Finally once our documentary was completed to the best of our ability we typed up our annotated bibliography and process paper.

Our historical argument is the importance of slave spirituals had on events in history such as the Underground Railroad, Gospel Music and Civil Rights Movement. In all these events the communication of music was fighting for equality, justice and faith. Some might believe songs are just music for the soul, but it is bigger than that. It is something that can communicate togetherness so we can do better than what has been done before.

Our topic is significant because it is an American legacy of a history of sorrow and hope. It communicates to people a willingness to fight for what is right and for what is needed. It can communicate to all people during times of social injustices.

Annotated Bibliography

Secondary sources

A quote from Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass. (n.d.). Retrieved January 14, 2021, from <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/318900-slaves-sing-most-when-they-are-most-unhappy-the-songs>

On this webpage we learned quotes on slaves and slave songs. "Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy. The songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by its tears."— Frederick Douglass).

African American Spirituals. (n.d.). Retrieved January 14, 2021, from <https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200197495/>

On this website we found a picture of Harriet Tubman. We learned how she communicated with slaves escaping on the Underground Railroad.

Brown, Leroy: Vocalist, Tenor Vocal, et al. Swing Low, Sweet Chariot. 1916. Audio. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/jukebox-14854/>.

On this website we found a slave song called Swing Low, Sweet Chariot. This is a famous slave song meaning one day God would send his chariot to pick them up from their hard life and take them to heaven.

Celebrating black music month. (2020, June 01). Retrieved March 30, 2021, from <https://nmaahc.si.edu/blog-post/celebrating-black-music-month>

On this website we learned about information on slave spirituals history. It is important to learn songs and dances were learned through oral history as they were not allowed to read or write.

It050043. *Rock My Soul - Golden Gate Quartet*. 25 Feb. 2009, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hle4u8nBfh0.

On this youtube website we found an example of a joyful spiritual. It is important as an example of a type of spiritual.

KDietz. "African American Music Timeline." *Timetoast*, 2007, www.timetoast.com/timelines/african-american-music-timeline.

On this website we found an informative timeline of African American music. It is important because it helped us to understand how the music genres fit together. Majcpw. (2008, May 25). Certainly lord - asbc male chorus. Retrieved March 30, 2021, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pgmXinmL5M>

On this youtube website we found an example of a call and response song entitled Certainly Lord by the ASBC Male Chorus. It is important because it demonstrates the call and response type of song.

Nmaam, & *, N. (2021, February 17). African American music and the struggle for freedom. Retrieved March 30, 2021, from <https://nmaam.org/2021/02/05/african-american-music-and-the-struggle-for-freedom/>

On this website we learned about Civil Rights protest songs otherwise known as freedom songs. It is important because it shows that equality and social justice is still needed in our country.

NormanLarry. "Larry Norman - If I Got My Ticket - [Lyrics]." *YouTube*, YouTube, 20 Sept. 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_Gbqev6q7k.

On this youtube website we found an example of a coded message in a spiritual for the Underground Railroad. It is important to hear the railroad terms and know it was part of the escape of slaves to the north.

Robinson, James. *The Evolution of African-American Music*, www.unf.edu/uploadedFiles/committee/AAFS/AAFS/The%20Evolution%20of%20African-American%20Music.pdf.

On this website/pdf we found information about West African music history. This is important because this is the foundation of what would become American Slave Spirituals.

Smith, J. (2019, August 02). Tracing country music's roots back to 17th-century slave ships. Retrieved January 13, 2021, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/08/02/tracing-country-musics-roots-back-to-17th-century-slave-ships/>

On this website we learned about how the spirituals came into America. The slaves brought over their culture in song and dance. This led to the slaves 'ring shout' or call and response songs.

Wenturiano. (2007, August 24). Louis Armstrong - nobody knows the Trouble I've seen (1962). Retrieved March 30, 2021, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVKKRzemX_w

On this youtube website we found an example of a spiritual. It is important to show there were different types of spirituals such as sorrow and hope.