
***My Country 'Tis of Thee:
How One Song Reveals the History of Civil Rights***

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My Country 'Tis of Thee: How One Song Reveals the History of Civil Rights offers insights into the historic significance of the song's familiar melody as an instrument for change. Protesting for freedom is universal, and songs have long provided a sense of solidarity and a means to communicate messages for protesters with strong beliefs about various causes. By hearing an instrumental recording, students first engage in an activity to identify the song, which, since 1831, has been known as "America" to many in the USA. Students become familiar with concepts and historic people named throughout the book by manipulating and sorting concept cards. Using historic events depicted in the book, students create timelines using a technological timeline tool. Then, after listening to a read-aloud of the book, they use clues to match different sets of lyrics with corresponding historical events. Civil rights history is revealed through different lyrics of this song.

Title and Author of NCSS Notable Trade Book:	<p><i>My Country 'Tis of Thee: How One Song Reveals the History of Civil Rights</i> Author: Claire Rudolf Murphy 2015 Notable Trade Book for Young People New York, New York: Henry Holt Company ISBN 978-0-8050-8226-5 Recommended for Grade Levels 5-7 Lesson Time – 2 hours</p>
Book Summary:	<p>"My Country 'Tis of Thee" is a well-known song claimed by United States citizens as "America," since 1831, to honor freedoms. The book records the many lyric adaptations of this melody. With different lyrics, the song has been used to accompany protests, civil rights movements, revolution, and war. Starting with King George II, the song traces important historical events including the American Revolution, slavery, Civil War, Emancipation Proclamation, labor protests, immigrant assimilation, women's suffrage, Native American citizenship rights, and the African American Civil Rights Movement. The book includes extensive source notes, bibliography, further resources, and musical links.</p>

NCSS Standards:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Culture 2. Time, Continuity, & Change 3. Civic Ideals & Practices
Materials:	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Exploration Phase:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. White board and white board markers for teacher. 2. Link to “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” instrumental music (<i>see link in Resources</i>). <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Development Phase:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. One whiteboard and marker for teacher 4. One set of cards (Appendix A) for each small group of two or three students (hereafter called group) 5. One pair of scissors for teacher 6. Envelopes or plastic baggies to use as containers for each set of cards 7. One read-aloud book, <i>My Country ‘Tis of Thee: How One Song Reveals the History of Civil Rights</i> 8. One computer with Internet per group 9. Online timeline tool link (<i>see link in Resources</i>) 10. Option for #7 and #8: large white paper, pencils, and water markers for each group 11. One copy of Appendix B per group 12. One copy of Appendix E for teacher <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Expansion Phase:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. One copy of Appendix C 14. One pair of scissors to cut Appendix C into lyric cards 15. One lyrics card cut from Appendix C for each group 16. One copy of Appendix B for each group 17. Students will need the timelines that they created during the lesson’s Development Phase 18. One rubric (Appendix D) per student
Objectives:	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Exploration Phase:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will demonstrate their prior knowledge of the song, “My Country ‘Tis of Thee,” after hearing the melody, through participating in a whole-class discussion. <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Development Phase:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Students will prepare for the upcoming lesson by engaging in a card sorting activity using concepts and ideas contained within the book. 3. Students will listen to a read-aloud of the book and discuss each historical event as it is presented. Examples include American Revolution, slavery, Civil War, Emancipation Proclamation, labor protests, immigrant assimilation, women’s suffrage, Native American citizenship rights, and the African

about the words is likely to ensue, and students will hear the words multiple times in different ways.

5. Have groups share the concepts placed in the “NOT SURE” space. On the whiteboard, make a list of the concepts or ideas.
6. After the “NOT SURE” list is complete, discuss those concepts and their meanings with students. Encourage clarification questions (*see online dictionary link in Resources for use as needed*).
7. At this point, students should be able to recognize the people and concepts in the book. The card sort activity will prepare students to place the book’s events and lyrics in context.
8. Play the instrumental version of the song again, so students may hear the melody. Explain that you will read the book aloud, and whenever students see various lyrics to the song, they might visualize the lyrics being sung with the same melody.
9. Read the book, *My Country, 'Tis of Thee: How One Story Reveals the History of Civil Rights*, aloud to students. Stop often to discuss historical events unfolding throughout the book. Have students pay close attention to each historical event and the lyrics matching the event. Assist students’ ability to relate the significance of the lyrics with each historical event. Show students clues in the lyrics, explaining what each set of lyrics meant to the protesters. For example, page 16 explains that, during the Revolutionary War, loyalists continued to sing “God Save the King”; however, Revolutionary soldiers shouted opposing verses as they marched into battle. The soldiers’ lyrics are:

God save the Thirteen States!

Long rule the United States!

God save our States!

Make us victorious;

Happy and glorious;

No tyrants over us!

God save our States!

These are clues that singers were Revolutionary patriots and soldiers: “Thirteen States”; “United States”; “victorious”; “No tyrants over us.”

Sample Questions to ask:

- What tells us this is a protest song?
- How do we know who is protesting?
- What clues tell us that, even though these people were still at war, they believed they had already won?
- Why do you believe these people needed this particular song?

10. After the book read-aloud discussion, place small groups at

Expansion:	<p>each computer with an Internet connection. Write the website for a timeline maker on the whiteboard and have students access this site (<i>see timeline tool link in Resources</i>).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. If students have not been taught the skill of creating a timeline in earlier grades, show a visual of a timeline, explaining its purpose, and modeling how to create one (see Appendix E). 12. The <i>Read Write Think</i> timeline maker tool is child-friendly, free, and does not require a username and password. Using this tool, students may also save unfinished timelines and return later to edit or complete them. 13. Distribute Appendix B. Ask student groups to create timelines using the historical events and dates located on Appendix B. 14. Explain that information placed on timelines does not need to be written verbatim; however, dates and brief summaries for historical events should be included. <p>Note. A timeline example for the teacher is included with this lesson plan as Appendix E. Creating a timeline will allow students an opportunity to read, discuss, and manipulate historic information included in this book. If you do not have access to computers, students may create timelines with butcher paper, pencils, and water markers.</p> <p><u>Closure:</u> Before moving to the Expansion Phase of the lesson, review what students have learned so far. Encourage all students to ask questions and clarify misconceptions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Assessment Students will be monitored on their ability to 1) participate in a card sort activity, 2) listen to a read-aloud and participate in a discussion about the contents, 3) create a timeline of historic events mentioned in the book. <p>Note: Before starting the Expansion Phase of the lesson, make one copy of Appendix C and separate lyrics cards by cutting them apart with scissors. Appendix C contains sets of lyrics printed in the book.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain the procedures and scoring rubric (Appendix D) to make students aware of grading criteria. Encourage clarifying questions about grading criteria before students begin. 2. Separate the class into small groups of two or three. 3. Give each group one of the lyrics cards taken from Appendix C. 4. Ask groups to use Appendix A and the timelines they created during the Development Phase to discuss and match a set of lyrics with one of the historical events. 5. After matching lyrics with historical events, ask groups to present the lyrics to the class, interpret the lyrics, and explain why the students believe they have selected the correct
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historical event to match the lyrics.

6. Students will answer the following questions:

Questions:

- What clues in the lyrics helped you make this match? (analysis)
- What other evidence, from the historical events, helped you make this match? (analysis)
- What do the lyrics mean? (interpretation)
- What message do the lyrics convey? (interpretation)
- Why do you believe the protesters chose these specific words? (evaluation)
- Why do you think the protesters needed this particular song? (evaluation)

7. Lesson summary

In this lesson, different lyrics of a song, known as “America” to many in the USA, revealed civil rights history in this country. Starting with King George II, the song traces important historical events including the American Revolution, slavery, Civil War, Emancipation Proclamation, labor protests, immigrant assimilation, women’s suffrage, Native American citizenship rights, and the African American Civil Rights Movement.

8. Assessment

- A rubric (Appendix D) will be used to score each student’s ability to a) work with a small group to reach a conclusion, b) match lyrics with a historical event, c) interpret a set of lyrics, d) provide clues from the lyrics that support students’ choices used in making matches, and e) supply information from the historic event match to support each student’s decisions.
- Teacher will be able to check students’ matches by looking at the page number which is typed on each lyrics card. By reviewing the book’s page, the teacher may readily see the historical event matching the set of lyrics (see Appendix C).

Students will be asked a series of thinking questions:

- What clues in the lyrics helped you make this match (analysis)
- What other evidence from the historical events helped you make this match? (analysis)
- What do the lyrics mean? (interpretation)
- What is the lyrics’ message? (interpretation)
- Why do you believe the protesters chose these specific words? (evaluation)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you think protesters needed this particular song? (evaluation)
Assessment:	<p>This lesson briefly introduces students to several historic civil rights topics. The lesson contains ongoing assessments in each phase; however, historic topics require elaboration. Free-choice exploration and assessment is used.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Each student will create a personalized learning contract to research and present detailed information about a topic of choice from the lesson (see Appendix B). 2. Each contract will include the following components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start with “I would like to learn more about this...” • Resources chosen by the learner and approved by the teacher • Work behaviors • Authentic audience for the student’s work • Communication or presentation style (e.g., website, digital story, poster, radio show, role-play, song, report, readers’ theater) • Assessment criteria • Signed and dated by the student and teacher 3. Assessment criteria is agreed upon by student and teacher, and may include elements of Project-Based Learning (PBL) such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the product to create • What kinds of subject matter content should be included • What are expectations of publishing, performance, or presentation 4. Evaluators emphasize growth and improvement through personalized feedback. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I Like That” Critique:</i> I like that..., I wonder if..., Best next steps might be... • <i>“Rose, Thorn, Bud” Critique:</i> Address the good (rose), the bad (thorn), and the bud (may be a good idea but needs work). 5. If grades are needed for the lesson, Appendix D – Expansion Phase Student Scoring Rubric may be used.
Suggested Extension	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have students write their own lyrics to this melody and share with the class. Then, post them to the book author’s website

Activities:	<p>(see link in Resources).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Give students a complete version of “America” lyrics written by Samuel Francis Smith. Have students use what they have learned to interpret all four verses of the song (see complete song printed inside the front and back covers of the book). 3. Allow students to select one of the historical events from the book, engage in further research, and report details to the class. 4. Create a class timeline with pictures and text to place on a bulletin board or mural. Use the extended detailed information that students researched to complete the timeline. 5. Create a class civil rights website. Place historical information, lyrics, and timelines. Include musical links from the author’s website (see link in Resources). 6. Using the lyrics cards (Appendix A) practice singing all songs.
Additional References	<p>Hernandez, M. (2016, June 6). <i>Evaluation within project-based learning</i>. Edutopia. Retrieved from http://www.edutopia.org/blog/evaluating-pbl-michael-hernandez</p> <p>Murphy, C. R. (2014). <i>My country ‘tis of thee: How one song reveals the history of civil rights</i>. New York, New York: Henry Holt Company.</p> <p>Smith, S.F. (2004). <i>My country ‘tis of thee</i>. New York, New York: Cartwheel.</p>
Digital Resources	<p>Merriam-Webster (2015). <i>Dictionary</i> [online]. Merriam-Webster, Inc. Retrieved from http://www.merriam-webster.com/</p> <p>Murphy, C.R. (n.d.). Claire Rudolph Murphy: Author, storyteller, writing instructor. Retrieved from http://www.clairerudolphmurphy.com/page/2/</p> <p>Read Write Think (n.d.). <i>Timeline</i>. Retrieved from http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/timeline_2/</p> <p>Smith, S.F. (2016). <i>My country ‘tis of thee: A primary source</i>. New York, New York: The Gilder Lehman Institute of American History. Retrieved from http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/art-music-and-film/resources/my-country-%E2%80%99tis-thee</p> <p>Unknown (n.d.). My Country ‘Tis of Thee (Instrumental). [Recorded By The Heritage Choir and Orchestra]. <i>YouTube</i>. Available from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVdYTZ2FX4E</p> <p>Notes: ‘Tis of Thee = "it is of you, My country...sweet land of liberty...it is to you that I sing".</p> <p>Book Extras: pp. 42-43 – Extensive Source Notes p. 44 – Bibliography, Further Resources, and Musical Links.</p>

Appendix A

Cards for Development Phase Student Card Sort Activity

daughters	Sons
king	Prince
sires	black or white
fathers	pilgrims
'Tis of Thee	money ring
soldiers	loyalists
tyrant	millionaire
Yankee	Rebel
offspring	Farmers
Southern	Northern
immigrants	labor activist
Revolutionary soldiers	Bonnie Prince Charlie
franchise	trumpet
called to arms	in vain
gracious	Noble
victorious	Freedom
glorious	Vile
Presbyt'ry	Scotland
war	Rival
Feckie	Reign
Abigale Adams	George Washington
All-glorious	Woman
female	Americans
Boston	Philadelphia
British	the Atlantic
slaves	abolitionist
Wales	Britain
Abraham Lincoln	Lincoln Memorial
Martin Luther King, Jr.	Washington, D.C.
Marian Anderson	Constitution Hall
Constitution	Barack Obama
civil rights	Protest
liberty	citizenship
Aretha Franklin	Native American
Civil War	patriotic

Additional Words and Concepts:

fame	ravished	mortal
Effalgence	O'er	patriot
'gainst	Ancient of days	auspicious
thou	rouse	ravished
resound	native	Pleas
partake	prolong	independence
pleas	Freedom's band	supreme
toil'd	templd	Snare
Declaration of Independence	declare	colonists

Appendix B

Development Phase Information for Student Timeline Activity

- 1745 – Supporters of King George II of Britain protested an uprising against the king.
- 1745 – From Scotland, Charles Edward Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie) led an unsuccessful uprising against King George II in efforts to become King of Britain.
- 1754-1763 – French and Indian War was fought between Great Britain and France. The site of the fighting was North America. The British won the war.
- 1765 – The British motherland was taxing the colonists for paper, tea, and stamps.
- Loyalists supported King George III; however, the colonists in the 13 American colonies protested the taxes.
- July 1776 – Declaration of Independence
- 1775-1783 – American Revolutionary War between Great Britain and 13 American colonies.
- 1789 – Free Americans serenaded President George Washington at his inauguration.
- 1795 – Women’s rights to land and property. Anonymous woman publishes protest song in a Philadelphia newspaper.
- 1831 – Samuel Frances Smith wrote a patriotic version of the song known as “America.”
- 1831-1861 – Abolitionists wrote protest lyrics to end slavery.
- 1861 – Northern and Southern soldiers sang competing versions of the song.
- 1863 – Abraham Lincoln – Emancipation Proclamation celebration of freedom.
- 1868 – Women’s Suffrage – Protesting for voting rights.
- 1870 – Freedom’s sons of color – Protesting for voting rights.
- 1870-1900 – Labor activists protested for better working conditions, higher pay, and an eight-hour work day.
- 1900 – Immigrants began arriving in the U.S. in great numbers. Immigrant school children were required to show their loyalty to the U.S. by singing “America” and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance each morning.
- 1919 – Native Americans protested for U.S. citizenship rights.
- 1939 – Opera star, Marian Anderson, was not allowed to sing in Constitution Hall because she was an African American. So, she sang on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial for 75,000 people.
- 1939 - As a child, Martin Luther King, Jr. listened to Marian Anderson’s performance on the radio and became inspired to be an activist.
- 1944 – 15-year-old Martin Luther King won a speech contest. The name of his speech was “The Negro and the Constitution.” The speech was inspired by Marian Anderson’s 1939 singing performance.
- 1963 – Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke about the song at the March on Washington.
- 2008 – Aretha Franklin sang the song at Barack Obama’s presidential inauguration.
- 2015 – What historic moment, in your life, do your lyrics represent?

Appendix C

Expansion Phase Lyrics Cards for Student Matching Activity

p.8	<p><i>God save our gracious King Long live our noble King; Send him victorious, Happy and glorious, Long to reign over us, God save the King.</i></p>
p. 9	<p><i>God bless the prince, I pray, God bless the prince, I pray, Charlie I mean; That Scotland we may see Freed from vile Presbyt'ry Both George and his Feckie, Ever so, Amen</i></p> <p><i>Note: Feckie is the nickname for Frederick, Prince of Wales</i></p>
p. 10	<p><i>Come, Thou Almighty King Help us Thy name to sing, Help us to praise. Father! All-glorious O'er all victorious Come, and reign over us Ancient of days</i></p>
p.13	<p><i>Fame, let they Trumpet sound Rouse all the World Around, With loud alarms! Fly hence to Britain's land, Tell George in vain his Hand Is raised 'gainst FREEDOM'S Band. When call'd to arms.</i></p>
	<p><i>God save the Thirteen States! Long rule the United States! God save our States! Make us victorious; Happy and glorious; No Tyrants over us; God save our States!</i></p>

p. 14	<p><i>Hail, thou auspicious day! Far let America Thy praise resound: Joy to our native land! Let ev'ry heart expand, For Washington's at hand, With glory crown'd!</i></p>
p. 16	<p><i>God save each Female's right, Show to her ravished sight Woman is Free; Let Freedom's voice prevail, And draw aside the veil, Supreme Effulgence hail, Sweet Liberty.</i></p>
p. 19	<p><i>My native country, thee, Land of the noble free, They name I love. I love thy rocks and rills. They woods and templed hills; My heart with rapture thrills Like that above.</i></p>
p. 20	<p><i>My country, 'tis for thee, Dark land of slavery, For thee I weep. Land where the slave has sighed, And where he toil'd and died, To serve a tyrant's pride, For thee I weep.</i></p>
p.23	<p><i>Let music swell the breeze, And ring from all the trees Sweet freedom's song. Let mortal tongues awake; Let rocks their silence break, The sound prolong.</i></p>
p. 24	<p><i>Then, 'mid the cannon's roar Let us Sing evermore. God Save the South! Ours is the soul to dare; See, our good swords are bare—</i></p>

p.25	<i>We will be free, we swear! God save the South!</i>
p. 26	<i>Come sing a cheerful lay, And celebrate this day Throughout the land. Oh! Let us joyful be, For freedom's sons are we, In this land now the free At thy command.</i>
p. 29	<i>My country, 'tis of thee, Once land of liberty, Of thee I sing. Land of the Millionaire; Farmers with pockets bare; Caused by the cursed snare- The Money Ring.</i>
p. 30	<i>I love thine inland seas, They groves of giant trees, Thy rolling plains; Thy rivers' mighty sweep, Thy mystic canyons deep, Thy mountains wild and steep, All thy domains.</i>
p.32	<i>Our country, now from thee Claim we our liberty, In freedom's name. Guarding home's altar fires, Daughters of patriot sires, Their zeal our own inspires, Justice to claim.</i>
p. 34	<i>My country! 'Tis of thee, Sweet land of Liberty, My pleas I bring. Land where OUR fathers died, Whose offspring are denied The Franchise given wide, Hark, while I sing.</i>
	<i>My country, 'tis of thee, Sweet land of liberty,</i>

p.37	<p><i>For thee we sing, Land where my fathers died! Land of the pilgrims' pride! From every mountainside, Let freedom ring!</i></p>
p. 39	<p><i>This will be the day When all of God's children Will be able to sing with new meaning "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing... Note: This is not a song. It is part of a speech</i></p>
p. 40	<p><i>Our fathers' God, to Thee, Author of liberty, To Thee we sing. Long may our land be bright, With freedom's holy light; Protect us by Thy might, Let freedom ring!</i></p>

Appendix D
Expansion Phase Student Scoring Rubric

My Country ‘Tis of Thee: How One Song Reveals the History of Civil Rights
By Claire Rudolf Murphy

Student’s Name: _____ Final Score: _____/50

Objective 1:

Students will work with partners to identify which song lyrics match certain historical events.

Objective 2:

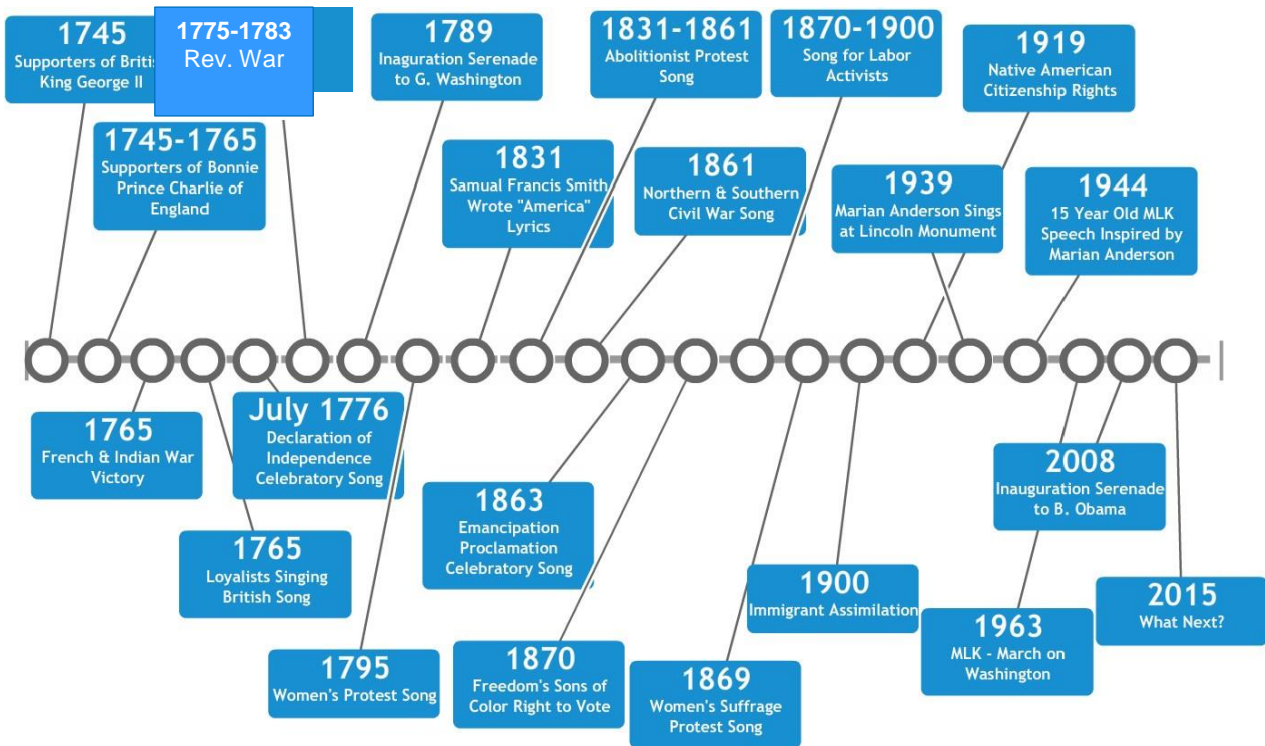
After matching lyrics with historical events, partners will present the lyrics to the class, interpret the lyrics, and explain why they match.

CATEGORY	10 - Mastery	8-9 - Good	6-7 – Improvement Needed	0-5 - Not Yet
Student Accurately Matched Lyrics with Historic Event				
Student Accurately Interpreted the Lyrics				
Student Accurately Provided Clues in Lyrics that Support the Match				
Student Accurately Provided Evidence Found in Historical Event to Support the Match				
Student fully Participated with Group or Partner to Reach Final Conclusions				
Student was able to answer these questions:				
• What are the clues in the lyrics that helped you make this match? (analysis)				Y N
• What other evidence, from the historical events, helped you make this match? (analysis)				Y N
• What do the lyrics mean? (interpretation)				Y N

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What message do the lyrics convey? (interpretation) • Why do you believe the protesters chose these specific words? (evaluation) • Why do you think the protesters ‘needed’ this song? (evaluation) 	<p>Y N Y N</p>
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Appendix E

Invention Phase Timeline Example: Model for Teacher



About the Authors

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