

The Banner Project– An Integrated Curriculum Unit

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The Goal– The creation of an original national anthem.

The Objective– To create a national anthem, based on an examination of anthems around the world (including *The Star Spangled Banner*), as well as an examination of the importance of anthems within different regions and cultures. This new anthem should reflect themes important to the composer, and it should also be an anthem that could be performed by all American citizens at the appropriate times and places where national anthems are performed.

Curricular Areas That Could Be Included In This Integration Unit–

- * Music
- * Geography
- * Language Arts
- * World Languages
- * World History
- * American History

Materials Needed– piano/guitar, or some other musical instrument capable of creating harmonic accompaniment, music manuscript paper (optional).

Classroom Preparation needed for Success in this Unit– Basic lessons in melody and harmony construction; basic lesson in song structure; basic piano/guitar skills lesson; an overview of anthems worldwide; a history of *The Star Spangled Banner*.

Questions to Ponder Regarding The Banner Project–

- What is the purpose of a national anthem?
- What musical qualities make for an effective anthem?
- Is *The Star Spangled Banner* an effective anthem? Why or why not?
- What should the lyrics of an anthem reflect or convey–
 - Nationalism?
 - Universalism?
 - Military might?
 - Faith/religious themes?
 - Personal themes?

Amount of Time Needed for Success with this Project– Ideally, this should be a semester-long project. The collaborative prep time could be considerable, considering the number of different curricular areas that could be involved. However, this project is not necessarily dependant on all of the above areas having a major role in the success of the unit, especially if a music educator, or an educator from one of the other curricular areas who has a strong music background heads it up. It is important to keep in mind that the process of composing is what is most important, not the quality of the finished product. Many students will only be able to compose one verse (or just a portion of one verse), and many students will work best in a collaborative environment (should be kept to groups of no more than three). It will be important to stress to the students that they have

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a certain amount of time in which to complete this project, and that their anthems will be performed for the rest of the class.

Ideal Collaborative Team– A music educator with a composition background is ideal; a world history teacher with a background in geography, or separate history and geography educators; a world languages educator to aid in translation of anthems; a language arts educator to aid in lyric composition/ideas.

Educational Outcomes– Students will utilize musical skills learned to create an original piece of music within a prescribed style and context (in this case, an anthem). In addition, students will begin to appreciate regional and cultural differences through the study of anthems from around the world, as well as acquiring a better understanding of American during the country’s first fifty years. Language arts skills will be enhanced by the construction of a lyric (presumably in a rhyming meter) that will be used in the anthem. Through the study of other world anthems, students will have to translate and analyze other languages, as well as examining how other languages deal with rhyme and meter within music phrasing. If time permits, an overview of the geo/political activities that led to the creation of different world anthems could supplement this unit.

Resources–

- * Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra– *National Anthems of the World* (Madacy CD)
- * http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_anthems_of_UN_member_states – List of world anthems
- * <http://glyfix.com/soa/anacreon.html> – Website outlining the *Star Spangled Banner*’s beginnings as *The Anacreontic Song*
- * <http://listen.grooveshark.com/#/s/Rewriting+The+National+Anthem/G3w5T> – A classic Albert Brooks comedy skit from 1974 called “Rewriting the National Anthem”. This is where I got the idea for this project!

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