

Using Popular Music in Lessons on Jews and Judaism

Purpose:

- To complement lessons on ancient Jewish history or Judaism's influence on Western civilization
- To explore the universal theme of *movement of people*
- To integrate social studies themes and popular music
- To reinforce essential understandings about the significance of the Exodus in Judaism and/or the significance of Jewish legacies in Western civilization.

Materials

- Lyric sheet, Bob Marley's "Exodus"
- Audio recording of Bob Marley's "Exodus." Note: It is advisable to choose a shorter version of this song such as the single version, which is on *One Love: The Very Best Of* (2001) and *Africa Unite: The Singles Collection* (2005) which is 4:30.
- Music player and speakers



Instructional Procedure

Part I

- 1) Link the closure to previously covered information:
 - a. If material about Jewish contributions to the world is used, ask students to identify some of the Jewish legacies in Western Civilization. Responses may include: monotheism, sacred texts, a day of rest, valuing every individual, the rule of law, giving charity, and belief in progress.
 - b. If material about ancient Jewish history is used, ask students: “What is the most commonly referenced event in Jewish prayers?” or “What is the term for the Israelite’s deliverance from slavery in Egypt?” Responses should identify the Exodus.
- 2) Expand upon previously covered information:
 - a. If material on Jewish contributions to the world is used:
Inform students that historical narratives are another important Jewish legacy. One of the most important of these narratives is the Exodus. Many people and groups have been inspired by the Jewish account of escaping from oppression to freedom.
 - b. If material on ancient Jewish history is used:
Inform students that the Exodus is not only important to Jews. Many people and groups have been inspired by the Jewish account of escaping from oppression to freedom.
- 3) Introduce the activity:
 - a. Inform students that they will end class today by listening to a song by Bob Marley. Ask students what they know about Bob Marley. If students do not provide the answer, inform them that Bob Marley was a singer/songwriter who is perhaps the most famous reggae musician ever. He was a Rastafarian, a monotheistic religion that originated in Jamaica and built upon Jewish and Christian beliefs. With his group the Wailers, Marley was the first Jamaican musician to gain popularity internationally. He was very influential in the political and spiritual struggles of his time (1960s and 70s) and continues to be associated with the fight for freedom in many countries.

Part II

- 1) Hand out lyrics sheet. *Note:* This song uses Rastafarian terms and grammar. *Jah* is a Rastafarian name for God. *Babylon* refers to corrupt modern society – its use is also drawn from the Jewish historical narrative; Babylon is the empire where Jews were exiled after the destruction of the First Temple. *Downpression* means oppression but is used because *oppression* pushes people down rather than lifting them up. Rastafarians avoid the possessive case (e.g., Jah light and Jah people mean God’s light and God’s people).
- 2) Instruct students to:
 - a. Circle all the Biblical allusions and references to Jewish history they hear in the song.
 - b. Jot down their thoughts and feelings as they listen. *Optional:* Inform students they may record their feelings through drawing as they listen. This may help some students who are unenthusiastic about the song remain engaged.



- 3) Play Bob Marley's "Exodus."
- 4) Ask students to share their thoughts about the song. You may want to focus their responses by asking what the tone of the song is or how it makes them feel. Responses should identify the motivational nature of the song.
- 5) Ask students what Biblical allusions or references to Jewish history the students can identify. Responses might mention Moses, Exodus, the Red Sea, Babylon, or the deliverance from slavery to freedom ("set the captives free").
- 6) Ask students why people speaking out against racism and oppression in modern times would use these references. Responses might include that they identified with the Israelites' struggles, that the Israelites' deliverance gave them hope, that they see their struggle as righteous and so connect it to religious narratives.



“Exodus”

by Bob Marley, © 1977 Island Records LTD

Men and people will fight ya down
When ya see Jah light.
Let me tell you if you're not wrong,
Everything is all right.
So we gonna walk - all right! - through de roads
of creation:
We the generation
trode through great tribulation.

Exodus, all right! Movement of Jah people!
Oh, yeah! O - oo, yeah! All right!
Exodus: Movement of Jah people! Oh, yeah!

Uh! Open your eyes and look within:
Are you satisfied with the life you're living?
We know where we're going!
We know where we're from.
We're leaving Babylon,
We're going to our Father land.

Exodus: movement of Jah people! Oh, yeah!
(Movement of Jah people!) Send us another
brother Moses!
(Movement of Jah people!) From across the Red
Sea!
(Movement of Jah people!) Send us another
brother Moses!
(Movement of Jah people!) From across the Red
Sea!
Movement of Jah people!

Exodus, all right! Oo - oo - ooh! Oo - ooh!
Movement of Jah people! Oh, yeah!
Exodus!

Move! Move! Move! Move! Move! Move!

Open your eyes and look within:
Are you satisfied with the life you're living?
We know where we're going;
We know where we're from.
We're leaving Babylon, y'all!
We're going to our Father's land.

Exodus, all right! Movement of Jah people!
Exodus: movement of Jah people!
Movement of Jah people!
Movement of Jah people!
Movement of Jah people!
Movement of Jah people!

Move! Move! Move! Move! Move! Move! Move!

Jah come to break downpression,
Rule equality,
Wipe away transgression,
Set the captives free.

Exodus, all right, all right!
Movement of Jah people! Oh, yeah!
Exodus: movement of Jah people! Oh, now,
now, now, now!
Movement of Jah people!

Move! Move! Move! Move! Move! Move! Uh -
uh - uh - uh!
Movement of Jah people!

