

Lesson Plan

Many Meanings

Book: *Aretha Franklin*

Series: Black Voices on Race

Level: Navigator

Objective

To help students explore how a song's lyrics and themes can apply to various situations.

Supplies

- *Aretha Franklin* book
- YouTube video (from the Universal Pictures channel) of Aretha Franklin singing "Think" from the movie *The Blues Brothers*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RTXszRHcOqs>

Before the Activity

Read through the *Aretha Franklin* book, or assign it to students to read on their own. Pull up *The Blues Brothers* video in your web browser and skip ahead to 2:33.

Activity

One of Aretha Franklin's popular songs is called "Think." Open the book to page 22 and choose a student to read the sidebar about when and why Franklin wrote this song. Then, turn to the special feature ("A Closer Look: *The Blues Brothers*") on pages 24–25. Choose another student to read this feature, which describes how the song "Think" was used in a film called *The Blues Brothers*.

After that, pull up the YouTube video and play it for the class. Start at 2:33 for a short section of introductory dialogue or jump to 2:44 where the song begins. (Note: The actors use mild profanity between 0:27 and 2:05, so you may wish to skip that section.) Stop the video at 5:41 when the song ends. Discuss the following questions as a class:

- What event inspired Aretha Franklin to write the song "Think"? (Answer: the death and funeral of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.)
- What message did she want to send to people? (Answer: She wanted to empower people to let themselves be free.)
- How did Franklin apply this message to her own life? (Answer: She stopped having her abusive ex-husband be her manager, and she chose someone else instead.)
- How did this message relate to the themes of *The Blues Brothers*? (Answer: In the movie, the song warns Franklin's character's husband and the movie's viewers to think about the consequences of their actions.)

Evaluation

Could students answer the questions about the book's text? Could students identify how the song's theme and message related to the concepts and characters in the movie?

Standards

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' reading standards for informational text, grade 5 (RI 5.1, 5.2, 5.7), and speaking and listening standards, grade 5 (SL 5.2).