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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1997 Volume V: The Blues Impulse

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## **Sing Two Stanzas and Rebel in the Morning: The Role of Black Religious Music in the Struggle for Freedom**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 97.05.07  
by Marcella Monk Flake

This unit examines the role of black religious music in the black man's struggle for freedom and civil rights. The unit presents slave songs as a means of communication among slaves that kept their white enslavers ignorant of their discussions. The use of double entendre and its relationship to African trickster tales is discussed, and religious songs from the Civil Rights Movement are also presented. The unit shows how the black church has accepted its role as the driving force behind social issues that affect its people.

This unit was written with my seventh grade talented and gifted students in mind. However, Sing Two Stanzas has a strong historical and musical base and can be adapted to any grade level. A summary of the works of Ivan Van Sertima has been presented to lay a foundation for both students and teachers. Van Sertima's research has been critical in correcting faulty assumptions about pre-slavery Africa and Africans. He presents evidence of the African presence in the New World approximately five hundred years before Columbus.

(Recommended for History and Music, grades 4-12)

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