

We Shall Overcome: The Story of a Song- 3rd grade lesson plan

The song We Shall Overcome has changed over the years. It has been used as a message of hope and determination throughout its history dating back through slavery. The lyrics have changed many times for example enslaved people sang "I'll be all right", later in the 1940's labor protesters sang "We will overcome" even later it became "We shall overcome". The book "We Shall Overcome: The Story of a Song" shares much of the history and changes that were made. It shares different lines of the song which can also be seen in a timeline at the back of the book.

Below is a video of the book being read/performed for you to preview and or show to your class.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=naq3G39BngA&t=31s>

Discussion questions:

- Music can uplift people and unite them. What is your favorite song or type of music? Dose the music you listen to match or reflect your mood?
- Why do you think this song has changed over the years? What line would you add? Why?
- This song has been used in many places across the world to help people find hope and to uplift those who are struggling. Discus a few ways the song and music can strengthen people and give them hope.
- The song We Shall Overcome, is often seen as a symbol of the Civil Rights Movement. Groups of people during that time would often start singing it to help them feel better. What helps you feel better when you are upset?

Possible activities:

- Listen to a recording of the song We Shall Overcome from 1964 (scroll down to find *We Shall Overcome* then *click the red play button*).

<https://www.npr.org/2010/02/11/123599617/a-freedom-singer-shares-the-music-of-the-movement#playlist>

- Pick a line from the song and illustrate it.
- Write a new line to the song and draw a picture of it. Then share with the class why you would add it to the song.