

“The Spirit of America”
Words and Music by John Jacobson and Cristi Cary Miller

National Standards:

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

Objectives:

- Students will perform the song using accurate pitch, rhythms, and dynamic phrasing.
- Student will discuss the text of the song and understand the spirit of America and what that means to them as individuals.
- Students will discuss the musical genre of American Patriot songs and its influence on American Spirit in history.
- Students will sing the harmony part with the melody.
- Students will read music and identify parts, dynamics, and meter.

Materials:

- 2088 World’s Largest Concert student copies of “The Spirit of America” or transparency (www.sibeliusmusic.com/menc)
- Piano or CD player
- Whiteboard/Chalkboard
- History timeline

Prior Knowledge:

- Students can identify and match a steady beat.
- Students are familiar with three part scores.
- Students have experience with singing and discussing patriotic songs.

Procedures:

1. Tell the students that today they are going to learn a song about American Spirit. Have students create a list of words on the board that describe American Spirit (answers may vary).
2. Play/sing “The Spirit of America” for the students. As the students are listening to the song, have them listen carefully for words in the song that describe America or the Spirit of America. Compare the words to the ones that were placed on the board.

Words from the song that could be used:

(1 syllable)	(2 syllables)	(3 syllables)
Proud	Spirit	Together
Tall	Alive	One and all
Great	Country	Every one
Small	Dreamer	
Free		
Hope		
Strong		
Me		

3. Have the students listen to the song again while patting the steady beat. Ask them to identify the meter of the song.
4. Distribute copies of “The Spirit of America” to students or use transparencies. Teach the song using part I only in phrases using solfege or melodic diction with your hands.
5. Have students sing Part II and Part III with the piano accompaniment. When all parts are mastered, assign your group into three part sections. Practice one phrase at a time using the piano. When all groups feel confident, have them sing the entire song in three parts.
6. Have the students sing other patriotic music from your general music textbook or gather some additional examples and sing at least three other pieces.
7. Have students compare other songs written about American and American Spirit. Examples that could be used are: America, The Star-Spangled Banner, This Land is Your Land, You’re a Grand Ole Flag, America the Beautiful. Use graphic organizers to compare spirit words from other songs listed above.
8. Discover the dates American Spirit songs were written to the dates of wars in American History. Compare this to the number of American Spirit songs that were released immediately following the tragedy of 9-11. There was a huge release of American Spirit songs immediately following 9-11 and the trend still continues today.
9. Have a class discussion of the reality of American Spirit being stronger or weaker today and discuss why.

Extensions:

1. Use your words to describe American spirit and create a simple canon or speech chant. Add instrumentation to your composition. You may also embellish the song by adding a four-measure speech chant starting in measure number 38.
2. Collaborate with the general classroom teacher and create poems using your spirit word list. Take your spirit word list and create a school spirit song.

3. Teach several American songs for an American spirit celebration.

Indicators of Success:

- Students perform “The Spirit of America” using correct rhythms, pitch, and dynamic phrasing.
- Students demonstrate understanding of American Spirit and can identify several song titles in this genre.
- Students will sing in three parts to create harmony.
- Students will identify vocabulary words that can describe American Spirit.

Supplemental Resources:

http://edhelper.com/teachers/graphic_organizers.htm

http://www.tnap.org/teachermaterial/naptm_lesson02.html

This lesson plan for “The Spirit of America” was created by Linda M. Steffen. MENC, FMEA, and FEMEA member, and National Board Certified. Music Specialist at Lawton Chiles Elementary School in the Alachua County School District in Gainesville, Florida.