

## **The Determined Artesian Fisherman**

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*Yates High School*

### **INTRODUCTION**

I am in my fourth year as a faculty member of the semi-famous, historic Jack Yates High School. After four years at this institution, I am now a believer of the Yates' "tradition." The present location of this historic institution, 3703 Sampson, has stood as a beacon of light in the Third Ward community for almost fifty years. Jack Yates High School was the second "Colored" high school in the city of Houston. The original location of Jack Yates High School was at 2610 Elgin. This historic high school is named after the Rev. John Henry "Jack" Yates, a pioneer of the Fourth Ward Community formerly known as Freedmen's Town.

Jack Yates High School has an enrollment of approximately 1400 students. The majority of students at Yates High School are on the free or reduced lunch program. At least 60% of the students are from economically disadvantaged homes in the Third Ward community. Yates High School is 97% African-American, 2% Hispanic and 1% Asian/ other. Due to a growth spurt during the 1980s, the Houston Independent School District added a magnet school of communications to this educational landmark. Jack Yates High School is the only School of Mass Communications in HISD. The students in the program study journalism, photography, and television broadcasting. The Jack Yates School of Communications is nationally known for its annual photography exhibit, "Eye on Third Ward," held at Houston's Museum of Fine Arts.

### **OBJECTIVES**

This unit will satisfy Houston Independent School District objectives in choral music and music history. The students will:

MUS3.1.04 - Improvise a melodic descant to embellish a particular selection of music in four parts.

MUS3.1.12 - Demonstrate an understanding of complex rhythm patterns in two, three or four parts.

MUS1.3.06 – Visually identify all Major and Minor scales.

MUS4.3.07 - Memorize, play and sing all Major and Minor scales in parallel and contrary motion.

MUS2.4.09 - Perform solos and as a part of ensembles four times.

MUS3.4.14 - Perform in school related productions, such as assembly programs, PTA, and Honors programs.

MUS3.1.07 - Translate the lyrics of a foreign language song into three parts.

MUS4.1.08 - Exhibit correct vocal performance techniques: phrasing, control and pitch in two, three, or four parts.

MUS4.1.13 - Discuss exhibiting the mood and intent of the composer of a song that has two, three, or four parts.

MUS4.2.18 - List six references used in information gathering.

MUS4.4.07 - Use appropriate performance posture and interpretive gestures in eight performances.

MUS4.4.19 - Discuss requirements for organizing performances such as concerts, festivals, and or plays and their implementation.

MUS8.1.06 - Discuss and interpret meaning of lyrics in classical and contemporary songs.

MUS4.1.06 - Develop musical rubrics for self and group evaluations.

MUS4.4.44 - Practice maintaining pitches with two, three, or four parts without accompaniment.

## **RATIONALE**

This curriculum unit will teach students about the life of their school's namesake, Jack Yates, and his love of family, religion, knowledge, and higher education. This unit will bring to the foreground his self-determination and that of others like him. It is my utmost desire to write this curriculum to teach and preserve the history of such a dynamic community figure and expand the knowledge of students who attend this historic institution. At the beginning of every school year, I use an exercise as a small ice breaker especially designed for students new to the school. I allow at least five to ten minutes for students to tell me all they know about Jack Yates. Year after year this information continues to vary and produce very little knowledge about Rev. Yates. The response that I receive most often is, "Isn't he a preacher?" or "Wasn't he a preacher?" I strongly believe that this response is better than no response at all.

The curriculum unit "The Determined Artesian Fisherman" will encompass my choral/vocal music classes, music history and literature, and my AP (advanced placement) courses. The past curriculum units that I have written for HTI focused mainly on my music history and literature classes. My overall intent is for my students to write, produce, and perform a play about Rev. Yates' turmoil and trials from slavery to freedom. I would like to see this curriculum unit taught during the second semester for one obvious and one not so obvious reason.

My first and most obvious reason is that this curriculum unit could be taught during the month of February in celebration of African American History Month. In celebrating African American history month, we often focus on great African American figures on a national scale. Many of my students are more than capable of expounding about such great names like Oprah Winfrey, Magic Johnson, Dr. Martin Luther King and his wife, Coretta. I hope that this curriculum unit will inspire educators to teach the legacy and history behind the name on such buildings like James Madison, Dick Dowling, James D. Ryan, John Caldwell, William S. Holland, and J. Will Jones, just to name a few.

The second reason, and the one not so obvious, is that Jack Yates High School opened its doors on February 8, 1926, with seventeen teachers and 600 students. The Rev. Jack Yates pastored and built two churches in the Fourth Ward community, formerly known as Freedmen's Town. Rev. Yates was also a founding member of the now defunct Bishop College of Dallas, Texas.

In the curriculum unit "The Determined Artesian Fisherman," I want students to know that Jack Yates had a great deal in common with two other very outstanding historical figures. In studying the lives of Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Jack Yates, the similarities are not just amazing but unbelievable. Harriet, Sojourner, and Jack were all born into slavery for profound and divinely inspired reasons that would shape their lives and our country's history. Once Harriet, Sojourner, and Jack gained their freedom from their various slave masters, they all had a tremendous desire and determination to change their names. It is not by coincidence that these historical figures have buildings and institutions named in honor of them. The character, integrity, concern and well being of others along with self-determination are the main reason landmarks, statues, and institutions still bear their names.

The students of Jack Yates past and present through “The Determined Artesian Fisherman” will write a play that will dramatize and preserve the legacy of a man and others like him who truly understood that they could only find real freedom through the power of possessing an education.

## **UNIT BACKGROUND**

### **Harriet Tubman**

*“I grew up like a neglected weed -- ignorant of liberty, having no experience of it.”* (Lewis, “Harriet Tubman Quotes”)

Harriet Green and Benjamin Ross in 1819 or 1820 welcomed into their family a girl child they named Araminta. Araminta, like her parents, Harriet and Benjamin, was born a slave. Harriet and Benjamin were a rare slave couple that lived on separate plantations in close proximity to one another (Clinton 5). The life of a slave couple presented challenges and hardships due to their different owners and locations. Harriet and Benjamin often negotiated with their many owners to keep their family together (Clinton 6). The importance and love of family instilled in Araminta by her parents would be tested and proved in her later years.

Harriet Green’s first owner was Atthow Pattison, who upon his death transferred her ownership to his granddaughter, Mary Pattison. In Master Pattison’s will he requested that when Harriet reached age forty-five, she would be set free. Mary Pattison, a few years later, would marry farmer Joseph Brodess. The Brodess plantation, which encompassed approximately 400 acres, would be the birthplace of Araminta Ross. There is very little information known about Araminta’s father, Benjamin Ross. Mere speculation by Benjamin’s owner places his time of birth around the year 1795. Benjamin, like his wife Harriet, was also to receive his freedom at the age of forty-five. In 1801, Joseph Brodess, Harriet’s master, would die. Two years later Mary Pattison Brodess would marry Ben Ross, the owner of Benjamin Ross. The matrimony between these two slave owners would provide for Harriet and Benjamin to live as man and wife on the same plantation.

Araminta’s childhood as a slave was laden with harsh and cruel conditions. These terrible conditions included insurmountable beatings and additional acts of cruelty, which would plague Araminta the rest of her life. At the age of twelve Araminta refused to assist an overseer with a slave who made an attempt to escape while working. The overseer in his anger threw a three pound lead weight which struck Araminta in her head, literally cracking her skull. For the duration of her life she would suffer from headaches that would cause her to suffer deep lethargic blackouts. The blackouts Araminta experienced were at times unannounced, as well as extremely difficult from which to awaken (Clinton 22). Harriet later recalled that prior to her being struck Araminta was wearing a type of bandanna cloth on her head before the painful blow.

It broke my skull and cut a piece of that shawl clean off and drove it into my head. They carried me into the house all bleeding and fainting. I had no bed, no place to lie down on at all, and they lay me on the seat of the loom, and I stayed there all that day and the next (Clinton 22).

The Ross family would strengthen their religious beliefs after becoming acquainted with a free Methodist minister. Araminta would now envelop a strong belief in the Christian faith. Araminta’s new spiritual birth would now be the cornerstone on which her life’s calling was based. The slave preachers and deacons’ preaching and telling of Bible stories would also give meaning to the spirituals and slave songs she would use later in life.

In 1839 around the age of 19, Araminta married John Tubman, a free man of African descent. Araminta, still a slave, stayed close to her parents although she was married. Araminta

had always lived in fear of being sold and separated from family. Araminta, as a new bride of a free man, feared being sold now more than ever. Araminta's fear was supported from the reality of seeing her siblings sold when her former owner, Joseph Brodess, passed away. Araminta's husband did not share her dream of freedom and was apparently comfortable with their present living arrangements. In order for Araminta to ease her fears, she decided to escape. In order for her to escape successfully, she did not tell her husband because she feared he could not be trusted (Sahlman 1).

Araminta, with the help of Christians on the Underground Railroad, made her journey to freedom a reality. As a fugitive slave, Araminta, like other fugitives from slavery, decided to change her name to Harriet, retaining her husband's last name. This was Harriet's first time not being controlled by her slave master and her husband. Harriet had waited for this day since the age of seven when she made an unsuccessful attempt to gain her freedom:

My mistress got into a great quarrel with her husband; she had an awful temper, and she would scold and storm and call him all kinds of names. Now you know, I never had anything good, no sweet, no sugar; and that sugar, right by me, did look so nice and my mistress' back was turned to me while she was fighting with her husband, so I just put my fingers in the sugar bowl to take one lump and maybe she heard me for she turned and saw me. The next minute she had the raw hide down. I gave one jump out of the door (Clinton 18).

Exhausted and frightened, she tumbled inside the fence of a large pigpen, and "there [she] stayed from Friday to the next Tuesday, fighting those little pigs for the potato peelings and other scraps that came down the trough" (Clinton18). Harriet's taste of freedom was like nothing else she had ever experienced. Despite all the dangers and warrants out for her capture, she was determined to help others taste the very same freedom, regardless of the cost. According to Tubman, "I had reasoned this out in my mind, there was one of two things I had a right to, liberty or death; if I could not have one, I would have the other" (Lewis).

Harriet Tubman's success as the conductor on the Underground Railroad was nothing short of amazing. Her heroic deeds and acts of faith caused her to receive the label of "General Tubman" from her friend and well known abolitionist, John Brown. Harriet's next to last trip on the Underground Railroad was to return to rescue her husband, John Tubman. To Harriet's dismay, she returned to find out that John had taken another wife. Harriet's final and last trip as conductor of the Underground Railroad was a mission of mercy, love, determination, and steadfast devotion as she returned home to free her aging parents. Harriet and Benjamin Ross throughout their lives in captivity believed in keeping their family together. This love of family rooted and grounded in Harriet was a testimony to her parents.

After ten tumultuous years, nineteen journeys, and over three-hundred freed slaves, Harriet retired from the Underground Railroad. This did not end Harriet's service to mankind. Harriet Tubman would spend the rest of her years extending a helping hand to her fellow men and women. Harriet would purchase seven acres of land to establish a home for the elderly. Harriet Tubman died at the age of 93 years. Harriet's last act of kindness was the gift of her home for the aged to Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. The Harriet Tubman home for the elderly is still in existence today in Auburn, New York.

The choral music students will dramatize the life of Harriet Tubman through the songs popularized by her work on the Underground Railroad. The students will create a list of spirituals and map songs with coded messages and hidden meanings to use in writing their dramatic scene of her leadership and bravery as the conductor of the Underground Railroad. There are two pieces of music from the Underground Railroad selections that stand out among all other songs associated with this period of slavery. The first selection is a traditional spiritual, "Go Down

Moses,” which was sung to alert slaves on several plantations when the train (UR) would leave the station. “Go Down Moses” is a vocal composition in a minor key which would represent the sadness and deep darkness of the institution of slavery. Minor key signatures are easily identified by their dismal but beautifully sounding sad chord structures. The choral music students, along with the music history students, will analyze the lyrics and learn to phrase the melodic lines to interpret the meaning of the song. One version of “Go Down Moses” contains the following lyrics:

“Go Down Moses”

When Israel was in Egypt’s Land  
Let my people go  
Oppressed so hard de could not stand  
Let my people go

The Lord tol’ Moses what to do  
Let my people go  
To lead duh children of Israel through  
Let my people go  
Oh Moses the clouds shall clear duh way  
Let my people go  
A fire by night a shade by day  
Let my people go

“Thus saith the Lord” bold Moses said  
Let my people go  
“If not I’ll smite yo’ first bo’n dead”

Chorus:

Go down Moses  
Way down in Egypt land  
Tell ole’ Pharaoh  
“Let my people go.”

~ Public Domain

The second song vital to the life of the Underground Railroad is categorized as a map song. “Follow the Drinking Gourd” is full of directions and hidden meanings. The choral music students will have an awesome time dramatizing Harriet’s life in a dramatic scene using this historic map song that proved to be the rhythm and heart beat of the Underground Railroad. “Follow the Drinking Gourd” is also written in a minor key like “Go Down Moses” to express the seriousness and danger in escaping to freedom. The lyrics of the map song, “Following the Drinking Gourd,” are:

“Follow the Drinking Gourd”

When the sun comes back and the first quail calls  
Follow the drinking gourd  
For the old man is a waitin’ for to carry you to freedom  
If you follow the drinking gourd  
Now the riverbank will make a mighty good road  
The dead trees will show you the way  
And the left foot, peg foot, traveling on

Jes' you follow the drinking gourd  
The riverbed ends between two hills  
Follow the drinking gourd  
And there's another river on the other side  
Jes' follow the drinking gourd  
When the great big river meets the little river  
Follow the drinking gourd  
For the old man is a waitin' for to carry you to freedom  
Jes' you follow the drinking gourd.

Refrain:

Follow the drinking gourd  
Follow the drinking gourd  
For the old man is a waitin' for to carry you to freedom  
Follow the drinking gourd.

~ Traditional Negro Folk Song

The students will work in groups to discover the hidden messages in the song. The students must have working knowledge or meaning of the song in order to perform it properly.

### **SOJOURNER TRUTH**

“Changed My Name”  
I tol' Jesus it would be all right  
If He changed mah name  
Jesus tol' me I would have to live humble  
If He changed mah name  
But I tol' Jesus it would be all right  
If He changed mah name

~ Traditional Spiritual

Isabella Baumfree was born in Ulster County, New York in 1797. Isabella was born the property of a Dutchman, Colonel Johannes Hardenbergh. Isabella was one of thirteen children born to Elizabeth and James Baumfree. Isabella and her parents along with her siblings lived in a cellar beneath the home of Colonel Hardenbergh. This damp, dark, and health-hazardous shelter was the home where Isabella would learn the value of keeping her family together. The slaves on the Hardenbergh Plantation spoke Dutch because of their masters' ethnicity. Isabella spoke Dutch until the age of nine when she was sold to another slave owner. Isabella never learned to read or write. Sojourner, like Harriet Tubman, suffered numerous beatings while a slave. The majority of Isabella's punishment was directly related to the language barrier between Isabella and her English speaking slave owners.

After the death of Johannes Hardenbergh, his son Charles Hardenbergh became Isabella's second master. Isabella, her parents, and her brother Peter would remain the property of Charles Hardenbergh until his death. Isabella, almost ten years of age, in 1808 would be sold again after the death of Charles Hardenbergh. The fear and emotional trauma of her mother, Mau-Mau Bett, losing the last of the twelve or thirteen children she had given birth to, would move a young Isabella to ask: “Mau-Mau, what makes you cry?” Isabella's mother would answer: “I am thinking of your brothers and sisters that have been sold from me.” Mau- Mau Bett would continue to deliver a slave's mother soliloquy in her Dutch tongue: “My children, there is a God, who hears and sees you.” “A God, Mau-Mau! Where does he live?” asked the children. Mau-Mau would reply: “He lives in the sky.” “When you are horribly beaten or in trouble, ask him and

he will give you help.” Mau-Mau Bett taught her children the recite the “Lord’s Prayer” always. Isabella would learn from watching her Mother and listening to her faithfully rely on her religion in the time of trouble. Mau-Mau Bett created in Isabella an unshakeable faith that would mold the rest of life (Gilbert 3).

Isabella’s new owners, Mr. and Mrs. John Nealy, also of Ulster County, New York, only spoke English, which resulted in some of Isabella’s worst beatings ever. Mrs. Nealy administered beatings that forcibly increased Isabella’s knowledge and use of the English language. Isabella would remember the words of her mother and beg and talk to God for mercy. The Nealys’ reign of terror and cruelty on Isabella’s life was more than she could endure. Isabella began to pray to God for new slave owners, yes, for new slave owners and not for freedom. Isabella Baumfree would have her prayer answered when she was purchased by a fisherman named Scriver who also lived in Ulster County, New York, just a short distance from the Nealy plantation. As fate would have it, Isabella would exchange one evil for another. Mr. Scriver, his family, and neighbors were people of questionable character and were morally corrupt. Under the ownership of Mr. Scriver, Isabella did not receive beatings, but her soul would be in jeopardy and her faith would be challenged.

Two years later, Isabella would be sold again to other Ulster County residents, Mr. and Mrs. John Dumont. According to Isabella, Mr. and Mrs. Dumont were as different as night and day, with Mr. Dumont being as kind as day and Mrs. Dumont as evil as night. Isabella would find favor in the heart of the Dumont’s ten-year-old daughter that would compensate for Mrs. Dumont’s unpleasant attitude. Mr. Dumont’s kindness and positive attitude toward Isabella would motivate her to work harder to please him more than any of her previous owners. On the Dumont Plantation, Isabella would develop her character, strengthen her morals, learn about parenting skills, and continue to grow spiritually. Sojourner Truth once remarked the following:

Children, I talk to God and God talks to me. This morning I was walking in the fields and the woods. I saw the wheat a-holding up its head, looking very big. I go up and take a holt’ of it. You b’lieve it, there was no wheat there. I say, God, what is the matter with this wheat? And He says to me, Sojourner, there is a little weasel (weevil) in it. Now I hear talkin’ about the Constitution and the rights of man. I come up and take holt’ of this Constitution. It looks mighty big, and I feel for my rights, but there ain’t anything. Then I say, God, what ails this Constitution? He say to me, “Sojourner, there is a little weasel in it.” (Twine 17)

Isabella talked to God about her freedom asking, “How can I get away?” According to Isabella, God answered her and said, “Just walk away before dawn.” Isabella did just that; she walked away early the next morning with her child and all of their earthly possessions. Isabella’s constant conversations with God would provide for her a deeper understanding of what her life’s mission would become. Isabella with her child sought shelter with a dying abolitionist in her quest for freedom. Isabella’s premature freedom was short-lived; Mr. Dumont would find her living with Mr. and Mrs. Van Wagener, who also lived in Ulster County, New York. Mr. Dumont accused Isabella of running away and demanded that she and her child return home with him. Mr. Van Wagener intervened on Isabella’s behalf and agreed to pay Mr. Dumont a total sum of \$25.00 dollars for Isabella and her child. The Van Wageners did not believe in slavery but purchased Isabella to assist her in gaining her freedom. Isabella and her child would stay with Van Wageners for the period of a year before she would leave to embark upon her religious journey.

Isabella journeyed through fasting and praying in pursuit of becoming a more religious person. Isabella continued to have her personal conversations with God, always seeking His guidance and direction for her life. The greatest revelation in her religious quest was that slavery

was an evil wrong that needed to be righted. There was a job to do, and a job which was ordered by God, and which required her to tell the truth everywhere to anyone who would listen. Isabella's new name became Sojourner because she was to journey to various lands and her last name became Truth because that is what she was going to tell. Sojourner Truth began several lectures with the origin of her new name:

My name was Isabella; but when I left the house of bondage, I left everything behind. I wa'nt goin' to keep notin' of Egypt on me, an' so I went to the Lord an' asked him to give me a new name. And the Lord gave me Sojourner, because I was to travel up an' down the land, showin' people their sins, an' bein' a sign unto them. Afterwards I told the Lord I wanted another name, 'cause everybody had two names; and the Lord gave me Truth, because I was to declare the truth to the people." (Twine 2)

Sojourner began her mission to tell the truth and spread the Gospel very early on a June morning in 1843. This was Sojourner's baptism by fire, because she only had the sun for her compass and God for her guide. Sojourner in her travels would speak to any and all groups that would listen. Traveling alone, to wherever God would send her, meant that she relied solely on His mercy and assistance, for all of her needs He would meet. Sojourner must have known that her mission to spread some good news would not be easy, but like her savior's would be filled with dangerous trials and temptations. Sojourner would not only continue her conversations with God, but these conversations were now accompanied with traditional songs and hymns of praise. Sojourner would pass the time singing and creating her own melodies. If music really does soothe the savage beast, Sojourner soothed a group of savage young men with her gift of song. According to Olive Gilbert, a group of rowdy young attended a prayer meeting, causing "much disturbance." Gilbert continues:

The noise and confusion were now terrific. Sojourner now left the tent alone and unaided, and walking some thirty rods to the top of a small rise of ground, commenced to sing, in her most fervid manner, with all the strength of her most powerful voice, the hymn on the resurrection of Christ. As she commenced to sing, the young men made a rush towards her, and she was immediately encircled by a dense body of the rioters, many of armed with sticks or clubs as their weapons of defense, if not attack.

As the circle narrowed around her, she ceased singing, and after a short pause, inquired, in a gentle but firm tone, "Why do you come about me with clubs and sticks? I am not doing harm to any one. "We ar'n't going to hurt you, old woman; cries one." "Talk to us, old woman, says another. "Pray, old woman," says a third. "Tell us your experience" says a fourth. "You stand and smoke so near me, I cannot sing or talk," she answered.

The crowd suddenly gave back, the circle became larger, as many voices again called for her singing, talking, or praying, backed by assurances that no one should be allowed to hurt her-the speakers declaring with an oath, that they would "knock down" any person who should offer her the least indignity.

After Sojourner sang, spoke, and calmed the masses, she ended in a chorus of one of her original songs:

Bless the Lord, I've got my seal  
Today and today  
To sleigh Goliath in the field  
Today and today  
I know the good ole way  
Is the righteous way  
A right, right, righteous way

I mean t take the Kingdom in  
In the good ole righteous way. (Twine 52)

Sojourner's platform for telling the truth included such topics as women's rights, abolition, and prison reform. Sojourner, although illiterate, always entertained her audiences with her witty remarks and humor. Sojourner gave her most popular speech at a convention on Women's Rights. "Ain't I A Woman" is still resounding and being studied and memorized by young ladies everywhere:

"Dat man ober dar say dat woman needs to be helped into carriages and lifted ober ditches, and ti hab de best place everywhar. Nobody eber helps me into carriages, or ober mud-puddles, or gibs me any best place!" "And a'n't I a woman? Look at me! Look at me! Look at my arm! I hab ploughed, and painted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And a'n't I a woman? I could work as well and eat as much as a man when I could get it- and bear the lash as well! And a'n't I a woman? I have borne tirtchen chilern , and 'em mos' all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And a'n't I a woman?" "Den dat man in black dar, he say women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wan't a woman! Whar did your Christ come from?" "Whar did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had notin' to do wid Him."(Gage)

Sojourner Truth died in her home November 26, 1883. As a testimony to her hard work and care for her fellow men and women, there are several buildings, statues, and organizations that bear her name.

The students will dramatize the life of Sojourner Truth through her speeches and spirituals from that period of slavery. The students will have the opportunity to learn just how important music was to Sojourner's life. The students will recall how at one camp meeting, music saved Sojourner's life. Music today is still an intrinsic motivating factor used to soothe the soul and calm its fears. The one spiritual that resonates loudly in my ear is a spiritual that could have been Sojourner Truth's theme song:

"Ain't Gonna Turn Me Around"

Ain't gonna let nobody turn me around  
Turn me around, turn me around  
Ain't gonna let nobody turn me around  
I'se gonna keep on a walkin', keep on a talkin'  
Keep on a preachin' in Jesus name  
Ain't gonna let nobody hold me down  
Hold me down, hold me down  
Ain't gonna let nobody hold me down  
I'se gonna keep on walkin', keep on a talkin'  
Keep on a preachin' in Jesus name

~ Traditional Negro Spiritual

When Isabella changed her name to Sojourner, she said that she was to travel the world spreading God's message. The students will be able to combine two spirituals to dramatize the life of Sojourner Truth using "Changed Mah Name" and "Ain't Gonna Turn Me Around." "Changed Mah Name," like "Go Down Moses," is written in a minor key, signifying change in Sojourner's life while on the other hand, "Ain't Gonna Turn Me Around," is written in a major key. "Ain't Gonna Turn Me Around" is an upbeat song in 4/4 time that bespeaks Sojourner's determination to carry out her mission.

## **JACK YATES**

John Henry Fields was born in slavery on July 11, 1828. John Henry lived on a plantation located in Ware Neck on Mobjack Bay located in Gloucester County, Virginia. John Henry was the second of six children born to Robert and Rachel Yates. John Henry had a rare skill of being an artesian fisherman. His trade allowed him the flexibility to move freely from one plantation to another. John Henry's young master, George Fields, taught him to read and write while he learned himself.

John Henry as a young boy often attended the religious gatherings held by the slaves, which would develop his love of religion. John Henry at times would take his reader, Bible and song book to the field with him to sing songs and read Bible stories until nightfall. While attending a religious gathering for the slaves, John Henry met the love of his life, Harriet Willis. Harriet, also a slave, lived on the Willis plantation down the road. Eventually, John Henry and Harriet married and started a family, when slavery would challenge the institution of their union. John Henry decided to change his name to Jack Yates, symbolizing his new status in life as a free man.

John Henry had worked and saved enough money to purchase his freedom from Master Fields. John Henry's newfound freedom still allowed him to move around freely and see Harriet and his children on a regular basis. Now that John Henry was a free man, he needed a name symbolizing his newly found freedom. Their love for each other and the children they shared would come at a very high price. Harriet's owners, Master Willis and his family, decided to leave Virginia and move to Texas, taking all of their slaves with them. Jack and Harriet could not bear the thought of breaking up their family, so Jack voluntarily returned to slavery to gain Harriet's freedom and his freedom for the second time.

Jack and Harriet, along with their owner, Master Willis, moved to Corpus Christi, Texas, in 1863. Seven months after the Emancipation Proclamation arrived in Texas, Jack and Harriet moved to Houston, Texas, and settled in Freedman's Town. It is in Freedmen's Town where Jack and Harriet would put down their roots. Jack and Harriet, along with other freed slaves, built a thriving neighborhood and community that became an asset to the city of Houston. After Jack arrived in Houston, he worked as drayman by day and a lay minister by night. Rev. Isaac Sydney Campbell and Elder J.J. Rinehart, as members of the National Baptist Convention, ordained the Rev. Jack Yates in 1863 and installed him as the first pastor of Antioch Baptist Church, which became the first Baptist congregation of color in the city of Houston. The Rev. Yates and his congregation of fellow former slaves built their first red brick church edifice in 1875. Antioch's original location was Rusk and Bagby, built on two lots known in the neighborhood as Seneshal Survey that was purchased from Mr. Edward Cranery on January 13, 1864. Antioch's present location is at 500 Clay Street in downtown Houston.

The Rev. Yates's congregation consisted of hardworking, honest men and women who with their past behind them strove for a better way of life. The Rev. Yates was instrumental in helping his neighbors and members of his congregation further their educations and become land owners. The Rev. Yates purchased several lots on Andrews Street where he built his home and at least two additional homes for other family members. To purchase land so few years after slavery was abolished was a phenomenal accomplishment for a man who until recently had been a slave.

The Rev. Yates was also instrumental in creating the first Baptist association for people of color in Houston, Texas. The Rev. Yates with the assistance of two white clergymen opened the Houston Academy, a primary learning facility for young children of color. He was also a founding member of the now defunct Bishop College in Dallas, Texas. The Rev. Yates saw the need for an institution of higher learning to instruct ministers in leading their congregations successfully. The Rev. Yates was determined to make a difference in his community when he was

instrumental in the purchase of Emancipation Park where the official first Juneteenth Celebration was held in the city.

The Rev. Yates pastored Antioch Baptist Church for approximately twenty years. After leaving Antioch, the Rev. Yates built and pastored his second church in Freedmen's Town, Bethel Baptist Church, located at the intersection of Andrew and Crosby Streets, was walking distance from his home. The Rev. Yates, again with the aid and labor of his fellow former slaves, built a much larger and more picturesque church. Bethel Church, like Antioch, in their latter years became what the African-American community considered "silk stockings congregations." Although these two historic churches were built by former slaves and had humble beginnings, these two churches could boast of their memberships, which consisted of the wealthiest of African-Americans in the city. These two congregations established by the Rev. Yates were composed of Houston's first dentist, medical doctors, African-American business owners, pharmacists, school principals and teachers. Antioch Baptist Church today is still the location of worship of the Rev. Yates' direct descendants and internationally renowned architect, John Chase.

The Rev. Yates and Harriet were married for approximately twenty-five years and had a total of eleven children. After the death of Harriet Willis Yates, he married a member of his congregation, Ms. Annie Freeman in the fall of 1888. The Rev. Yates and Annie had one child born to this union. On December 22, 1897, the slave, artesian fisherman, husband, father, minister, educator, community advocate, and humanitarian died at the age of sixty-nine. The Rev. Yates is survived by his granddaughter, Mrs. Martha Whiting and her daughter, Mrs. Jacqueline Bostic, who occasionally honor the faculty and students at Yates High School with their presence and contributions.

In 1994 the Yates home was donated to the city of Houston and moved from Andrews Street to Sam Houston Park in downtown Houston. The Yates home was restored to its original 1800s configuration. The Yates home is open for tours year round through the Harris County Heritage Society. On February 8, 1926, with seventeen teachers and six-hundred students, a school, located at 2610 Elgin, was named in honor of the Rev. Jack Yates.

The students will write a play dramatizing the life struggles and accomplishments of Jack Yates through a spiritual that was sung by members of his congregation. The students will use "Nobody Knows de Trouble I've Seen" as a launching pad to writing a dramatic scene about the Rev. Jack Yates. The students through the use of this spiritual will be able to show the Rev. Yates' innate, natural and essential care and well being for the people in his community regardless of their stations in life. The words of this traditional spiritual reflect the sentiments of Yates and his congregates:

"Nobody Knows de Trouble I've Seen"  
Nobody knows de trouble I've seen  
Nobody knows but Jesus  
Nobody knows the trouble I've seen  
Glory Hallelujah!  
Sometimes I'm up, sometimes I'm down  
Oh, yes, Lord  
Sometimes I'm level to de groun'  
Oh, yes, Lord  
Although you see me goin' 'long so  
Oh, yes, Lord  
I have my trials here below  
Oh, yes, Lord

If you get there befo' I do  
Oh, yes, Lord  
Tell all my friends I'm coming too  
Oh, yes, Lord

~ Traditional Spiritual

## **PLAYWRITING**

The students have three amazing historical figures to write some very wonderful plays about. The research and information provided about these great women and one man makes this task much easier. I am going to require that the students use the broken dialect that reflects the time periods of our icons. A trait needed for a successful playwright is a required course entitled, Observation 101. Stephen Sossaman advocates:

As a playwright, you must be keenly observant of people, perceptive about human psychology, and alert to the human condition, including yours. You should be honestly and courageously introspective. In addition, you should be attentive to the ways in which people express and conceal thoughts, their patterns of speech, their ways of interacting with each other in a variety of situations. (Sossaman 12)

In playwriting it is extremely important to have the right ingredients for producing a successful play. A dramatic play must have a plot, a specific situation, characters, and dialogue. The characters should be interesting and never boring. The two main characters in a dramatic scene or play are the protagonist and the antagonist. The protagonist is the central character who struggles to meet his or her objective, which is of the greatest interest and importance to the audience (Sossaman 26). The antagonist, on the other hand, may be seen as the villain due to the fact that his or her job is to block the way of the protagonist from his or her accomplishment.

### **Prepare Your Script and Ancillary Materials**

#### ***Format Script***

Format script properly – (Sossaman 100)

#### ***Write a synopsis***

The synopsis gives the theater's literary managers a quick idea of whether or not your play fits their interests and capabilities. The theater wants to know both the overall story of the play and such nuts-and-bolts as cast size. (Sossaman 101)

#### ***Host a cold reading***

Friends (especially actor friends) can gather in your living room to read the script without a rehearsal, much as a theatre group would do a read-through when it first begins rehearsal. You'll learn about your play from hearing it read and from questions and suggestions (Sossaman 102).

#### ***Produce your own play***

If you have spare money, extra time, and some background in theatre, you can become your own producer (Sossaman 102).

## **LESSON PLANS**

### **Lesson Plan One**

**Title:** We're Bringing the Music Back

**Objectives:** MUS3.104, MUS3.1.12, MUS4.1.08 and MUS4.4.44

**Purpose:** The choral music students will learn, sing, analyze, interpret, and perform Negro Spirituals to accompany and support the dramatic scenes written and produced by their fellow classmates.

**Development:** The singers will begin class sight reading choral arrangements of “Go Down Moses,” “Follow the Drinking Gourd,” “Changed Mah Name,” “Ain’t Gonna Turn Me Around,” and “Nobody Knows de Trouble I’ve Seen.” The students will observe which selections are in major and minor keys. The students will also observe that the sheet music for all of the spirituals notate that the piano (accompaniment) is for rehearsal use only. To allow the students to experience the unaccompanied spirituals, the tempo of a couple of the selections will be relaxed for personal reflection and interpretation. “Go Down Moses” and “Follow the Drinking Gourd” are written in the traditional African call and response style requiring soloist. The soprano, alto, tenor and bass sections will sing the solos in sections and later audition individually for the part as soloist. The students must also become comfortable singing in the broken dialect of the slaves.

**Student Practice:** All choral music students are required to spend at least forty minutes a week in the practice rooms preparing for an up-coming performance. The choir members practice time is monitored by their section leaders.

**Evaluation:** Oral, performance, and peer evaluations

**Materials:** Sheet music, music textbooks and recordings, use of a keyboard instrument.

**Modifications:** Repeat, re-teach and review as needed for students with special needs. All special need students will be allowed additional time for mastery.

**Closure:** The students will keep a portfolio to document what they learned during the last ten minutes of each ninety minute class period.

## **Lesson Plan Two**

**Title:** Searching for Truth

**Objectives:** MUS8.106, MUS4.218 and MUS4.4.19

**Purpose:** All music history and AP art history students will write a dramatic scene on the life of Sojourner Truth.

**Development:** The music history and AP art history students will compete to have their dramatic scene about the heroic Sojourner Truth performed for an audience of their peers. The students will use the research in “The Determined Artesian Fisherman” and any other information related to Sojourner Truth for their scripts. The students must list at least six additional sources of added research information. The students must use Sossaman’s book, *Writing Your First Play*. To make this competition extremely competitive, they can use singers from the choral music classes in their productions. The students may choose to work as a team of writers or individually.

**Student Practice:** The students will use forty-five minutes of class time to work on their dramatic scenes. The students may use this time to work on selecting costumes, auditioning characters, and hold cold readings.

**Evaluation:** Peer and teacher oral and written evaluations

**Materials:** Paper, pen and /or pencil, access to the internet, access to the school library and computer lab. Students will also need access to the auditorium stage area.

**Modifications:** Repeat, re-teach and review as need. Additional time for special needs students will be provided for mastery. These students will also receive help from their peers.

**Closure:** Students will use their portfolio to document what they learned in class that day.

### **Lesson Plan Three**

**Title:** Let My People Go

**Objectives:** MUS3.4.14, MUS3.1.04, MUS3.4.14, MUS4.1.13

**Purpose:** The choral music, music history and AP art history will work collaboratively to write a dramatic play about the life of the Rev. Jack Yates.

**Development:** The aforementioned classes will work together to write a play about the life and struggles of Jack Yates. The students will brainstorm about what the plot will be. The students will also select the writers, characters, soloists, stage managers, etc. The students will have total control; it is their play. The Instructors in the Fine Arts department will coach and facilitate the needs of the students in creating this masterpiece. The students will create a master schedule for meeting times and places for production purposes.

**Student Practice:** The students will use forty-five minutes of the class time to work on the production. The students will also meet after school as needed to complete their project.

**Evaluation:** Oral and written evaluations on the work in progress.

**Materials:** Paper, pen, pencils, sheet music, percussion instruments, access to the computer, access to the library, access to the auditorium, an acoustic piano, and audio visual equipment

**Modifications:** Repeat, re-teach and review as need for students with special needs. Additional time will be allowed for students with special needs for mastery.

**Closure:** The students will document in their classroom portfolios what they learned in class.

## APPENDIX

### *THE DETERMINED ARTESIAN FISHERMAN*

by

April Sloan-Hubert

#### CAST OF CHARACTERS:

JOHN HENRY/ JACK YATES: a slave who has just gained his freedom from MASTER FIELDS. He changes his name to JACK YATES.

HARRIET: a slave to MASTER WILLIS, wife to JOHN HENRY, and mother of his children.

MASTER WILLIS: slave owner of HARRIET.

AT RISE: *JOHN HENRY enters with his freedom papers in hand from MASTER FIELDS and finds HARRIET in the kitchen of the “big house” of MASTER WILLIS preparing a meal for her owners.*

#### JOHN HENRY

Harriet! Harriet! I’s free, I is finally free! And now dat I’s a free man I gon’ change my name to Jack Yates jes’ like my mama and papa.

*(JACK notices that HARRIET’S jubilation is much less than what he expected.)*

#### HARRIET

(running toward JOHN HENRY) Oh! John Henry! *(shouting)* Lawd a mighty! John you is free! You’s free, John Henry! Thank you, Jesus!

#### JOHN HENRY

Harriet, I is free now. (looking *directly into her eyes*) John Henry is a slave name. Dat’s no name for a free man. Hear me, woman! (proudly) Now my name be Jack Yates.

*(Immediately the happy occasion is now bittersweet. HARRIET turns away to conceal her tears. She walks over to the kitchen table and sits down wiping away the tears with her apron.)*

#### JACK YATES

Harriet, what be wrong now? Why you turn and walk away from me? Are dose happy tears? Ain’t you happy fo’ me?

#### HARRIET

*(sobbing and slowly saying his new name)* Jack, I is happy fo’ you. I’s happy dat you are free, but what bout’ me and duh chillun’? I wants to be free like you.

#### JACK YATES

*(JACK approaches HARRIET with outstretched arms.)* Oh! my HARRIET, I cain’t forget bout’ you and duh chillun’. Yall’s my family, my flesh and blood, and I loves you. Lawd knows I do. *(JACK embraces HARRIET and consoles her.)* Now stop yo’ weepin’. I promise you everything gon’ be alright; jes’ you wait and see. We’s family. I’m gon’ talk to ole MASSA WILLIS bout’ yo freedom papers.

*(JACK continues to embrace the speechless and distraught HARRIET. While JACK and HARRIET embrace, MASSA WILLIS walks into the kitchen. HARRIET and JACK'S embrace is broken when MASTER WILLIS speaks.)*

JACK YATES

How you be, Massa Willis, suh! Real good to see you, suh.

MASTER WILLIS

Well hello, John Henry! Boy are you in here sneakin' some of Harriet's pork chops? Is there anything wrong with my wells that I don't know about? What you doin' in my kitchen this time of the mornin'?

JACK YATES

(taking a deep breath) Massa Willis suh, I's a , I'se a free man now, suh, and I wants to uh talk to you about buyin' Harriet's freedom papers.

MASTER WILLIS

(rising from his chair) Freedom papers? What freedom papers? You know Harriet doesn't have any freedom papers, boy! Why Harriet's on her way to Texas with my family and the rest of my slaves.

*(JACK, in amazement, forgets his place and looks MASTER WILLIS in the eyes. JACK then suddenly lowers his head starring at the ground. HARRIET stands in silence.)*

JACK YATES

(*distraught*) Texas! (*stronger*) Texas! Massa Willis what you mean, suh?

MASTER WILLIS

Boy, I've sold my plantation to my brother-in-law and just purchased a new one down in Texas. I know for sure that Mrs. Willis is expecting Harriet to organize and run her new kitchen.

*(The two men stand in silence contemplating what each other's next statement will be. JACK breaks the silence.)*

JACK YATES

Massa Willis, suh, I wants to buy my Harriet's freedom, suh, so we can be a family.

MASTER WILLIS

Boy, what do you know about family? Families are for white folks, not your kind.

JACK YATES

(JACK's back stiffens) No disrespect, Massa Willis, suh! Harriet is my family an' the mother of my chillum, suh. And accordin' to the good book, suh, that makes us family!

MASTER WILLIS

Well, you believe what you want to, boy. Now if you really want to be a family then maybe you'll come and work for me.

JACK YATES

What you mean Massa Willis, suh? (Lowering his head, he hears HARRIET gasp for breath.)

MASTER WILLIS

*(rubbing his chin)* Boy, now that you are free, you can go any where you want to, but Harriet's going to Texas. If you really want Harriet's freedom papers, then you'll come to Texas and work for me, and then you can buy Harriet's freedom and yours again.

JACK YATES

*(speechless/slight pause)* My freedom? Excuse me Massa Willis, suh, I is free, suh. I have my freedom papers from Massa Fields.

MASTER WILLIS

Yes, but I can't take any chances with you running off with my property. John Henry, putting you back in slavery is my personal promissory note. I'll need you to find some wells at the new plantation.

JACK YATES

*(humbly)* Yes, suh, Massa Willis.

*(JACK turns and walks away as MASTER WILLIS exits lighting his pipe. JACK'S footsteps are as heavy as his pounding in his chest. JACK returns to the cabin where HARRIET is waiting to hear what happened.)*

JACK YATES

It gone, Harriet, it gone. My freedom gon', jes like dat to Massa Willis. I'se belong to him now jes' like you. Don't worry Harriet, we is family. I loves you, Lawd knows I do.

*(JACK and HARRIET look at each other. JACK takes HARRIET's hand as they kneel in prayer and begin to pray.)*

THE END

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