

Bob Marley

Introduction:

We have learned about the immigration of black people from different parts of the world to Canada. Black ideas and culture have also been moving across borders for centuries.

One of the most inspiring musicians in the world was Bob Marley. In this module, we are going to learn about how his music spread important messages around the world and helped black people in North America, the Caribbean and Africa to speak out against racism and oppression. Bob Marley himself was an immigrant at some points in his life, but it is the migration of his music and ideas that we are learning about.

Here is a list of activities you will work on:

- KWL Chart
- Reading
- Listening / Video
-

KWL chart

K	W	L
What I know about Bob Marley's music and ideas	What I want to know about Bob Marley's music and ideas	What I learned about Bob Marley's music and ideas

Reading

Who was Bob Marley?



Figure 1: Still, Peter. Bob Marley performing. Redferns/Getty Images. Retrieved 16 Dec 2017 from <https://www.thoughtco.com/why-did-bob-marley-die-3552830>

Robert Nesta "Bob" Marley was born on 6 February 1945 in Nine Mile, St Anne Parish, Jamaica. He was a singer, songwriter and musician and his sound blended mostly [reggae](#), [ska](#) and [rocksteady](#) styles of music.

At some point in his life, Bob Marley was an immigrant. He moved from Jamaica to the Bahamas in 1976 for a month, and then he relocated to London, England.

Whilst in England, he recorded the famous albums [Exodus](#) and [Kaya](#). [Exodus](#) stayed on the British album charts for 56 weeks in a row. It included four UK hit singles: "Exodus", "Waiting in Vain", "Jamming", and "[One Love](#)".

Political influence:

While he was alive, Bob Marley recorded songs that had clear political messages, and that showed his support for black people across the world who were fighting for freedom and independence in different countries. His album, [Survival](#), was released in 1979.

It has tracks such as "Zimbabwe", "[Africa Unite](#)", "Wake Up and Live", and "Survival" which became popular around the African continent and let the world know about Africans' struggles. He sang at the [Amandla Festival](#) in [Boston](#) in July 1979 showing his strong opposition to South African [apartheid](#), which he already had shown in his song "[War](#)" in 1976. In early 1980, he was invited to perform at the celebration of Zimbabwe's Independence Day on 17 April.

It often happened that when Bob Marley supported a cause and put it into song, that song would travel across the world faster than people move, reaching as high up as the United Nations. His songs spread messages around the world about black civil rights activism in the USA as well as in African and Caribbean countries. We are going to listen to and learn about two such songs below.

Redemption Song

Bob Marley was inspired by black activists in the USA. One such activist was Marcus Garvey. Marcus Garvey was a Jamaican civil rights leader who called for black Africans who had moved to other parts of the world such as the USA and Canada to unite in Africa.

Redemption Song, one of Bob Marley's most legendary and iconic songs, was born here in Canada in Nova Scotia. Marcus Garvey was invited by the [Universal Negro Improvement Association \(UNIA\)](#) of Nova Scotia to give a talk. A line of Bob Marley's Redemption Song includes part of Garvey's speech. His speech was called "*The Work That Has Been Done*", and it was one of the last talks he gave before he died. He ended the speech with the words:

"We are going to emancipate ourselves from mental slavery, because whilst others might free the body, none but ourselves can free the mind".

Bono, a celebrity and international champion for human rights, had this to say about Redemption Song:

"I carried Bob Marley's Redemption Song to every meeting I had with a politician, prime minister, or president".

Many popular artists have sung covers of Redemption Song. In fact, Beyonce sang it at the 2015 [Global Citizen Festival](#) in New York.

In 2004, [Rolling Stone](#) placed the song at #66 among "[The 500 Greatest Songs of All Time](#)". In 2010, the [New Statesman](#) listed it as one of the Top 20 Political Songs.^[4]

Listening/Video and Activity

Listen to Bob Marley's "Redemption Song" by clicking on this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFGgbT_VasI

Do you hear Marcus Garvey's words in the song? Circle the correct underlined answers below.

Bob Marley sings Marcus Garvey's words in the third/first/second line of the third/first/second verse of "Redemption Song".

Buffalo Soldier

"Buffalo Soldier" is a [reggae](#) song written by [Bob Marley](#) and [Noel "King Sporty" Williams](#). It was only released after his death in 1983, and it became one of Marley's best-known songs. The title and lyrics refer to the black U.S.A. cavalry regiments, known as "[Buffalo Soldiers](#)", that fought in the [Indian Wars](#) after 1866. In the song, Marley likened their fight to a fight for survival, and he makes the Buffalo Soldiers a symbol of black resistance to racism in the USA.

Buffalo Soldiers were originally members of the [10th Cavalry Regiment](#) of the [United States Army](#), formed on September 21, 1866 at [Fort Leavenworth, Kansas](#).

Some say the nickname "Buffalo Soldiers" was given to black soldiers by Native Americans, who thought African Americans' hair felt and looked like a [buffalo's](#) pelt or skin. The African American troops welcomed the name as they knew all about buffalo's fierce bravery and fighting spirit. The Buffalo Soldier's duties were settling railroad disputes, building telegraph lines, repairing and building forts, helping settlers find a place to live, and protecting the settlers from attacks by Native Americans.

Many [Jamaicans](#), especially [Rastafarians](#) like Marley, talked about "Buffalo Soldiers" as an example of black men who did their work with courage and honor, courage especially since there were so few black people in the army. They were excellent soldiers even though they experienced a lot of racism from white soldiers.

Eventually, all African American troops were called "Buffalo Soldiers".

On September 6, 2005, [Mark Matthews](#), the last living Buffalo Soldier, died at the age of 111. He was buried at [Arlington National Cemetery](#).^[2]

Listening/Video and Activity

Listen to Bob Marley's Buffalo Soldier by clicking on the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMUQMSXLIHM>. This video also shows the lyrics of the song.

The first Buffalo Soldiers also experienced what it was like to move from Africa to North America. Can you find the lines in the song that talk about this migration?

Here's one:

**"And he was taken from Africa, brought to America
Fighting on arrival, fighting for survival"**

Write the other lines in the song that talk about what it was like to move from Africa to North America.

KWL Activity

Complete the KWL chart on p. 2.

References:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Marley

[*Black Heretics, Black Prophets: Radical Political Intellectuals*](#) - Bogues, Anthony, Page 198, via [Google Books](#).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFGgbT_VasI