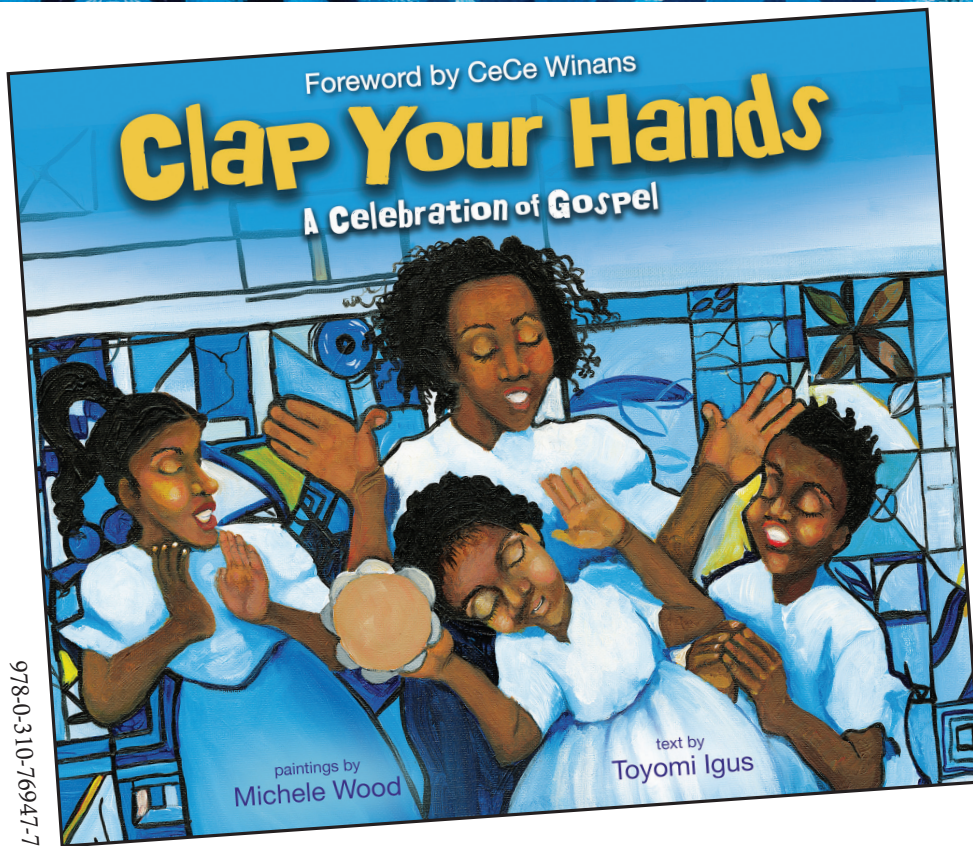


# Curriculum Guide



## Clap Your Hands A Celebration of Gospel

Paintings by  
**Michele Wood**  
Text by  
**Toyomi Igus**

An inspirational, joyous celebration of poetry, art, and rhythm tracing the history of African American gospel music and the poets, singers, and thought leaders who have contributed to the spiritual and social evolution of America.

**C**lap Your Hands, created by Toyomi Igus and Michele Wood, winners of the Coretta Scott King award for *I See the Rhythm*, shares the African American history of gospel music that has courageously broken all color barriers, influencing both worship and popular culture in America for hundreds of years.

This compelling book, a spellbinding blend of poetry, art, history, and music, also includes a running timeline of historical milestones—from the beginning of the slave trade in 1485 to 2018 protests about the Trump administration’s immigration policies.

Students will be captivated by this informative and inspirational book that honors gospel music with its proper, influential due as reflected through the journey of African Americans in the United States.



The Common Core State Standards addressed by the discussion questions, activities, and worksheets in this guide are noted throughout. For more information on the Common Core, visit [corestandards.org](http://corestandards.org).

# Discussion Questions

Unless otherwise noted, all discussion questions meet the following Common Core State Standards: [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1](#)

-  Illustrator Michele Wood includes an image of a character named Missy within each painting in the book. Who is Missy and what is her purpose in helping the reader enjoy *Clap Your Hands*?
  -  Look closely at the way author Toyomi Igus organizes this book. What do you notice about the information included in the margins of the pages? Why do you think this information is included in a story about gospel music?
  -  Rhythm is an important part of music. The first poem in the book describes the rhythm of Africa. What parts of nature are compared to the rhythm of Africa? Brainstorm more examples from nature that can be described as rhythmic.
  -  The second poem in the story, “Clap your hands to the rhythm of a New World,” uses words such as *despair*, *grief*, and *strife*. Read the information included in the margins that surround this poem. What information helps the reader to understand the sad content and tone of this poem?
  -  The author notes that, “To Africans, all music is devotional.” How is the theme of devotional music represented in the poem, “Clap your hands to the rhythm of Plantation Sundays”?
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.2](#);  
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2](#)
-  In 1867, Fisk University formed the Fisk Jubilee Singers, a choir of ex-slaves that performed old African American spirituals. What is the Day of Jubilee for which the choir was named?
  -  Who is known as the Father of Gospel and what was his influence on gospel music? Reread the poem “Clap your hands to the rhythm of Bronzeville” to find out more about how gospel music changed in the 1920s.
  -  Discuss how gospel music was an important part of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s in America. How did gospel music help spread the message of overcoming inequality and support the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and others?
  -  What newer music styles have infused contemporary gospel music? Which poem describes how gospel has been blended with modern music?
  -  Look carefully at the vivid illustrations that accompany each poem. Do you have a favorite? Discuss favorite illustrations from *Clap Your Hands* as a class. Make sure to give reasons for your opinion. How do the illustrations capture the words, emotions, and mood of the poems? How do the colors in the illustrations affect your feelings about the poems?

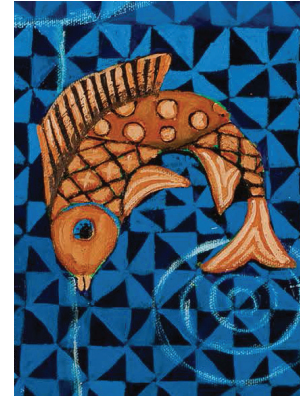
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.7](#);  
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7](#)



# Activities for Students

## Perform a Poem

Pick a favorite page from the story. Practice reading the poem on your selected page with a partner. Decide how you will divide up the poem for recitation. Will some parts be read together and other parts read with two voices? Rehearse the poem several times to practice reading it fluently and with expression. Get together with other partnerships to share your poetry performances. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.4](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.4](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.4](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.4](#)



## A Gospel Artist in Depth

Select an important figure or group in gospel music to research, such as Mahalia Jackson, Thomas Dorsey, the Staples Singers, BeBe and CeCe Winans, or others mentioned in the book, and find out more about his/her life and contribution to the world of gospel music. Write an informative report about the life of a famous gospel artist or group.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2](#)

## Listen and Compare

Choose three gospel songs from the discography at the end of the book to listen to and compare. What similarities do you hear in the rhythms and lyrics of the songs? What stands out as different in each song?

## A Musical Mural

Artist Michele Wood creates richly detailed and colorful illustrations based on the words of author Toyomu Igus and the historical events of the time period she describes in her poems. As a class, choose the lyrics to a song from the discography in *Clap Your Hands*. Work as a class to design a mural to accompany the gospel song you selected. How will you represent the lyrics in the illustration? What colors will you choose to capture the emotions and mood of the song? Will you need to do research to include what was happening in America when the song was written to include historical elements in your mural? Display your mural in the school hallway for other classes to see.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7](#)

The discussion questions, activities, and worksheets in this guide were created by Leigh Courtney, Ph.D. She teaches in the Global Education program at a public elementary school in San Diego, California. She holds both master's and doctoral degrees in education, with an emphasis on curriculum and instruction.

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# Linking Poetry to History



Each poem in *Clap Your Hands* ends with a line or two in bold, colored type. These highlighted lines leave the reader with an important thought to consider. Look at the highlighted lines listed below and find these four poems in the book. For each poem listed, scan the historical timeline at the bottom of the pages. List an item from the timeline that connects to the thought highlighted at the end of the poem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.3

## Lines from the poem

## Event from historical timeline

I see the rhythm of the  
Freedom Songs and  
I have a dream.

(page 24-25)

I see the rhythm of our  
emancipation in the songs  
sung by freed men who are  
still not free.

(page 12-13)

I see the rhythm of the  
Americas, as Africa's spirit  
shines on so bright.

(pages 6-7)

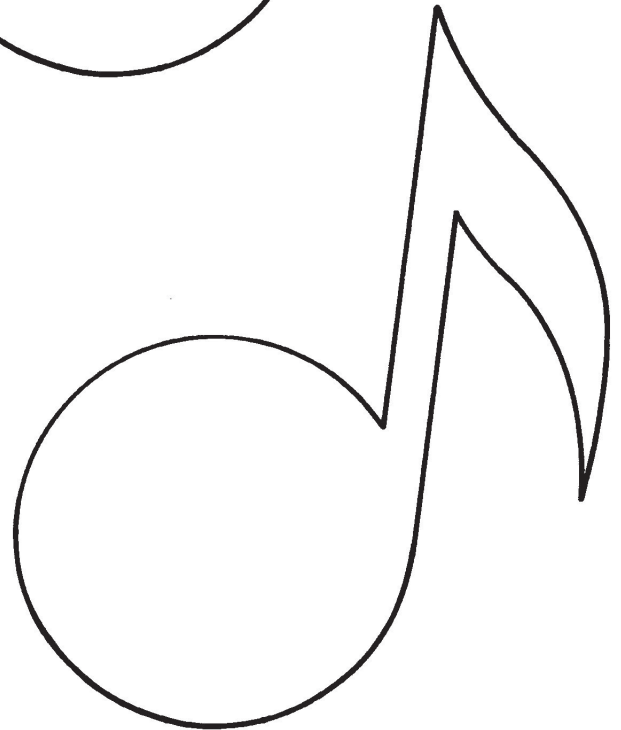
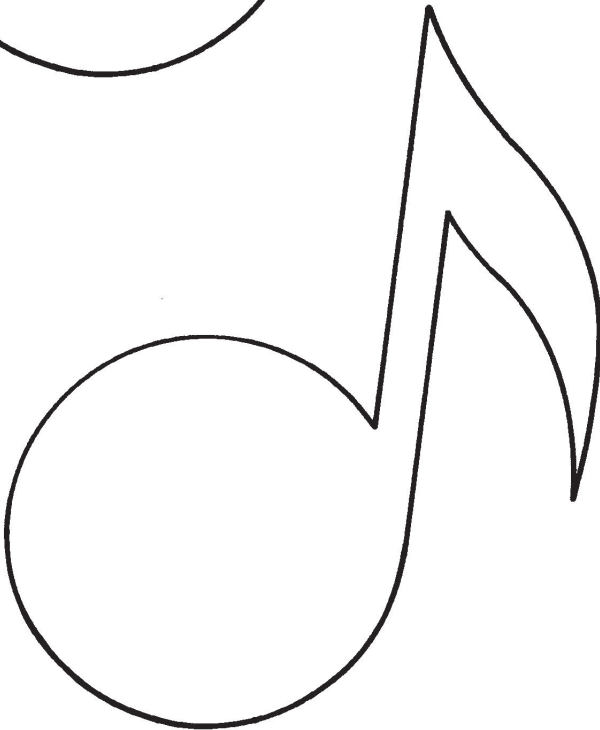
I see the rhythm of gospel  
soul reach out and speak to  
a new generation.

(page 28-29)

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

# Musical Rhymes

Author Toyomi Igus uses poetry to tell the rich history of gospel music. An important element of these poems is the author's use of rhyme. The rhymes help the poems sound like music. Look through the poems to identify groups of words that rhyme. Write sets of rhyming words in the musical notes below. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.4](#)



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

# Gospel Continues To Grow

Gospel music has long offered hope to those who are facing challenges or feeling sad. It is a celebration of faith and strength. The historical timeline that is woven through *Clap Your Hands* details what was happening in America as gospel music was written and performed. Think about what is happening in your world right now. Make a list of topics that are important to you and that might inspire a gospel song.



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