

STUDY GUIDE: Harvey Mason Jr.

This study guide is to support virtual and in-person classes for students and teachers inspired by the movie *Respect* about the life of Aretha Franklin.

Overview and Learning Objectives

In this master class, Harvey Mason, Jr, songwriter, music producer, film producer, and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of The Recording Academy, shares his thoughts about the ways in which music can impact individuals and the greater society in positive ways.

Although this master class is rich with multiple themes, the lessons below focus on the following three areas:

- **Songwriting:** Characteristics of good storytelling, song structure/form/patterns, songwriting techniques.
- **Life lessons:** Work ethic, empathy, persistence, ability to receive and learn from critical feedback, confidence, self-love, believe in yourself, be true to yourself; setting a goal, standing up (advocating) for yourself, perseverance, overcoming adversity, commitment, sacrifice, dedication, developing positive self-images.
- **Music's ability to impact positive change:** Emotional impact, social activism, motivation, meditation, healing, relaxation, mental clarity, energy, empathy for others, unifying communities, centering a common goal.

Music Lessons

Lesson 1. Songwriting is storytelling.

- What are characteristics of a good story?
 - What are some things you remember about a good story?
- How is a story structured?
 - What comes first, second, third, and so on?
- Are all stories structured the same?
 - What are other ways to create a great story?
- Can you think of a song(s) that follows the first structure pattern?
- Do all stories have to follow the same pattern?

Lesson 2. Song forms:

- Verse-chorus (A/B)
- Verse-hook-verse-hook

Lesson 3. Songwriting techniques:

- Examine how songs can emotionally connect to an audience.

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- Explain the techniques the songwriter used to connect to the audience.
- Discuss some of the emotional benefits of a song.

Access Points:

Reading English Language Arts Standard

- Literature: story, poetry, drama
- Writing Structure
- Adventures and experiences of characters in stories
- Emotions and expressions of characters in stories

Lesson Takeaways

- Becoming good at it does not come overnight. It is not instant.
- Practice is required.
- Must do it every day with the intention of getting better at it.
- You must be able to receive and learn from critical feedback.
- You must be able to listen and learn from others.
- Learning is a life-long journey.
- There are no short cuts to the top.

Ask students to share one incident where they learned one or more of these life lessons.

(This does not have to be a personal story. It can be something they learned through other sources.)

Suggested Student Activities

In 2021, Harvey Mason, Jr. became the first African-American president and Chief Executive Officer of The Recording Academy, which is best known for the Grammy Awards. To be the first to break a record or achieve a goal is an incredible feat. No matter who comes next, no one can replace the person who did it first. For example, Sally Ride was the first American woman in space. Barack Obama was the first African American president. Sonia Maria Sotomayor, is the first woman of color, first Hispanic, first Latina Supreme Court Justice.

Activity 1.

- Identify others who were “the first”?
 - Create a Hall of Fame of persons who were “the first”. (This activity may include family members.) Create a profile of the person and identify their greatest life lesson.
- Imagine what it might be like to be “the first”. Share your ideas in small groups.
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of being “the first”?
- Summarize life lessons of those who are “the first”.

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Activity 2.

As the Chief Executive Officer of The Recording Academy, Harvey Mason, Jr. discusses ways music impacts individuals, communities, and society.

Collaborative or Independent Study. Learn more about one of the following themes and share in the form of a written, oral, or visual presentation. Students should use one primary and one secondary resource.

- Songwriting
- Music for Social Change
- Music Education and Advocacy
- Music Philanthropist

Resources

- [Sonia Maria Sotomayor](#)
- [Barack Obama](#)
- [Sally Ride](#)
- [12 Songs that Became Anthems of Change](#)
- [How Can Music Inspire Social Change?](#)
- [Say it Loud: How Music Changes Society](#)
- [How can we use music to achieve social change?](#)

Key Terms

Verse, chorus, hook, The Recording Academy, advocacy, philanthropist, song structure, Grammy Museum

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