



Adapting History

Study Guide

Recommended for grades 7-12



Mondavi Center
UCDAVIS

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California Arts Standards (2019)

Responding—Anchor Standard 7:

Perceive and Analyze Artistic Work

7-8.MU:Re7.1; 7-8.MU:Re7.2; Nov-Adv.MU:C.Re7.1; Nov-Adv.MU:C.Re7.2; 7-8.TH:Re7; Pro-Adv.TH:Re7

Responding—Anchor Standard 8:

Interpret Intent and Meaning in Artistic Work

7-8.MU:Re8; Nov-Adv.MU:C.Re8; 7-8.TH:Re8; Pro-Adv.TH:Re8

Responding—Anchor Standard 9:

Apply Criteria to Evaluate Artistic Work

7-8.MU:Re9; Nov-Adv.MU:C.Re9; 7-8.TH:Re9; Pro-Adv.TH:Re9

Connecting—Anchor Standard 10:

Synthesize and Relate Knowledge and Personal Experiences to Make Art

7-8.MU:Cn10; Nov-Adv.MU:C.Re10; 7-8.TH:Re10; Pro-Adv.TH:Re10

Connecting—Anchor Standard 11: *Relate Artistic Ideas and Works with Societal, Cultural, and Historical Context to Deepen Understanding*

7-8.MU:Cn11; Nov-Adv.MU:C.Re11; 7-8.TH:Re11; Pro-Adv.TH:Re11

Common Core Standards

Common Core broadens the definition of a “text,” viewing performance as a form of text, so students are experiencing and interacting with a text when they attend a performance. Seeing a performance provides rich opportunities to write reflections, narratives, arguments etc.

7-12.RL.2; 7-12.RL.3; 7-12.RL.5; 7-12.RI.3; 7-12.RI.6; 8-12.RH.8; 7-12.SL.2;

About Author and Performer Dahlak Brathwaite

Dahlak is an award-winning playwright, composer, and performer. His work has been presented at The Smithsonian, Brooklyn Academy of Music, The Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, REDCAT, The Public Theater, SXSW, and on HBO’s last two seasons of *Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry*. He attended UC Davis and is currently an MFA student at NYU’s Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program, where he was awarded the Dean Full-Tuition Fellowship. All roles in *Adapting History* are played by him.

<https://www.thisisdahlak.com>

ARTIST STATEMENT:

I’m a writer.

I deal in words.

I create art that is

meant to be heard,

felt through vibrations,

and contemplated.



adapt.





adapt.



About Adapting History

Adapting History is an oral telling of American music through history and American history through music. From gospel to blues, jazz to R&B, America has produced some of the most innovative music of the 20th century. Although the songs are easy on the ears, their inception occurred in cultural climates that were often discordant. Musical artist Dahlak uses spoken word poetry & hip hop to narrate the sometimes tense, sometimes strained history of our nation. This musical chronicle shows that despite struggle, conflict, and misunderstanding, we can still learn, adapt, and be brilliantly creative.

The story is told in four parts:

Part 1: Adapt/Call and Response (work songs)



Part 2: The Breaks (spirituals/hymns)



Part 3: Personal Narrative (the blues)



Part 4: Freestyle/Improvise (the family tree)



Vocabulary

13th Amendment - The 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution abolished slavery in the United States and provides that “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction”.

Actor - Any theatrical performer whose job it is to portray a character.

Bass - (“that boom boom” vs. treble): The lower half of the whole vocal or instrumental tonal range. Treble is the upper half of the whole vocal or instrumental tonal range.

Beat - Underlying steady pulse present in most music.

Blues scale/ the blue note - A six-note scale based on the major or minor pentatonic with added chromatic “blue” notes. The notes “between the cracks” of conventional pitches are called blue notes.

Composer - One who creates music compositions

Composition - Original piece of music that can be repeated, typically developed over time, and preserved either in notation or in a sound recording.

Context -Environment that surrounds music, influences understanding, provides meaning and connects to an event or occurrence.

- **context, cultural:** Values, beliefs and traditions of a group of people that influence musical meaning and inform culturally authentic musical practice.
- **context, historical:** Conditions of the time and place in which music was created or performed that provide meaning and influence the musical experience.
- **context, personal:** Unique experiences and relationships that surround a single person and are influenced by personal life, family, habits, interest and preferences.
- **context, societal:** Surrounding something or someone’s creation or intended audience that reflects and influences how people use and interpret the musical experience.

“The Dozens” - (ref. “You so old ... ” moment): Playing the dozens is an African-American custom in which two competitors—usually males—go head to head in a competition of comedic trash talk.

Expression - Feeling conveyed through music.

Form - Element of music describing the overall organization of a piece of music, such as AB, ABA, rondo, theme and variations, and strophic form.

Genre - Category of music characterized by a distinctive style, form, and/or content, such as jazz, march, and country.

Harmony - Chordal structure of a music composition in which the simultaneous sounding of pitches produces chords and their successive use produces chord progressions.

Improvisation - Music created and performed spontaneously or “in-the-moment,” often within a framework determined by the musical style.

Improvise vs. improve - To improve is a verb that means to get better, to improvise is a verb that means to invent or make something without having planned it. How might they relate to one another?

Melody - Linear succession of sounds (pitches) and silences moving through time; the horizontal structure of music.

Movement - Act of moving in non-locomotor (such as clapping and finger snapping) and locomotor (such as walking and running) patterns to represent and interpret musical sounds.

Philosophy of the Blues - “The blues is an impulse to keep the painful details and episodes of a brutal experience alive in one’s aching consciousness, to finger its jagged grain, and to transcend it, not by consolation of philosophy but by squeezing from it a near-tragic, near-comic lyricism” —*Ralph Ellison*

Pun - A joke based on the interplay of homophones—words with the same pronunciation but different meanings or words that sound *similar*, but not exactly the same:

- Adapt vs. adapt
- Composed vs. compose
- Record (verb) vs. record (of history)
- Subject vs. subject



Post Viewing Discussion Questions

In *Adapting History*, Dahlak makes use of puns based on **homonyms** and **homograph**.

- 1.** Words that are spelled the same and sound the same, but have different meanings, are called homonyms. What are some different meanings that the word **adapt** can have?
- 2.** Homographs are words that are spelled the same but sound different and have different meanings. Discuss the differences with two such words used in *Adapting History*: **record** and **subject**.
- 3.** What are the differences between **composed** and **compose**?



Mondavi Center Arts Education

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This activity is supported in part by the California Arts Council, a state agency. Learn more at www.arts.ca.gov.



Additional support provided by



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