We Look Like Men of War: Precursor to Jim Crow Laws and the Civil Rights Movement

Standards:
ELACC7RI3: Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).

ELACC7RI5: Analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how the major sections contribute to the whole and to the development of the ideas.

ELACC7SL1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
   b. Follow rules for collegial discussions, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.
   c. Pose questions that elicit elaboration and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant observations and ideas that bring the discussion back on topic as needed.
   d. Acknowledge new information expressed by others and, when warranted, modify their own views and understanding.

Procedures:
1. Play “We Look Like Men of War”. Ask students to pay attention to the ‘mood’. This is how they felt when they heard it. Talk about why. Talk about how the music does the job words have to do when that’s all you have (like in a book).
2. Hand out the ‘close read’ handout and discuss it.
3. Listen to the song again. Have students read the words while they listen.
4. Using think-pair-share, have students review the questions, discuss, and share.
5. As a formative assessment, have students write their response to the final question on the back of the paper.

Accommodations:
The arts help make content accessible to students who traditionally have a difficult time with the higher level thinking required of the standards. For students who have expressive issues (especially writing), allow them to tell you the answer to the final question instead of writing. Encourage them to write as much as they can, though, using phonetic spelling skills we’ve been practicing. Their success in high school and beyond depends on their ability to communicate!

What’s Next:
1. Remembering Jim Crow radio transcript and audio (selected portions).
   http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/remembering/resources.html
2. Jim Crow ceremonial tearing up of the Jim Crow laws.
We Look Like Men of War

Chorus:
We look like men, we look like men
We look like men of war
An army dressed in uniform
We look like men of war.

Oh listen to the trumpet sound
They called for volunteers:
Being Jesus stands on freedom’s ground
And we shall have no fear.

Chorus

We want no cowards in our band
Who from their colors fly:
We call for valiant hearted men,
Who’re not afraid to die.

Chorus

It sets my eager heart aflame;
A soldier known to be;
I did enlist in Jesus’ name
To fight for liberty.

Chorus

Oh see our armies on parade
How mighty they appear;
Let none but rebels be afraid
Our battle song to hear.

Chorus

Our cause is right
Our honor bright
With courage we must stand;
Enlisting soldiers for the Lord
To march to Canaan’s Land.
The trumpets sound
The armies shout
Drive on the host avail
Our general is the mighty God
The great Emmanuel.

Chorus

Background: Most white Americans at the time of the Civil War thought of black adults as children, lacking in mental ability and discipline. Slavery had stripped black men of their manhood, so the thinking went, making them dependent and irresponsible. These stereotypes led most whites to assume that a black man could never be trained to fight like a white soldier. Even when they were finally allowed to fight, black soldiers could not become officers and were often given only support roles in the war.

As you listen to the song, think about the words in the chorus and what they could mean.

What does this mean?

What liberty were they fighting for?

Where is Canaan’s Land and why would they want to go there?

What cause?

What is honor?

The chorus of a song often contains the theme. Repetition is a strategy authors use to help the reader understand the significance of what he/she is trying to say.

What words are repeated in the chorus?

What do these repeated words tell you about the theme of the song?

What was the tone of this song? How did the tempo, volume, and intensity of the music help set this tone?