

Title: *Exploring Women’s Rights through the Music of Abigail Washburn and Wu Fei*

Integrating global music into classroom instruction provides a gateway to exploring and connecting across cultures. Music has always been a vital part of human expression. It has the power to engage, motivate and inspire students and builds bridges between both what is familiar and what is unfamiliar. The integration of music across the curriculum enables students to engage in rich textual analysis of diverse, interdisciplinary primary source materials, as well further develop global competency skills such as recognizing perspectives and communicating across cultures. This lesson integrates music from the album [Wu Fei and Abigail Washburn](#), available through Smithsonian Folkways.

Lesson Theme: Exploring women’s rights through an analysis of folk music

Featured Song: “Who Says Women Aren’t as Good as Men”

Overview: Students will read and listen to the music of Abigail Washburn and Wu Fei. They will discuss women’s rights issues through an analysis of the song, “Who Says Women Aren’t as Good as Men,” by Wu Fei and Abigail Washburn. Students will use this experience as a springboard for a research assignment in which they identify and detail a woman in modern history that they would consider a hero.

Suggested Grade level: 8

Subject: ELA

Corresponding National Standards: [W 8.8](#), [W 8.7.C 8.4](#)

Corresponding Global Competency Skills: [Asia Society’s Global Competency Skills](#):
Recognize perspectives; Investigate the world.

Essential Question: How have the roles of women in cultures changed over time?

Lesson Objectives:

1. Students will analyze a folk song to analyze issues related to women’s rights
2. Students will gather information on a topic and organize it into a focused piece of writing.

Materials:

- Pencils
- [Who Says Women Aren’t as Good as Men lyrics](#)
- [Mulan Lesson Materials](#)
- Library of Congress article on [Rosie the Riveter](#)
- [Mulan Vocabulary Extension Activity](#)

Student Activities:

- Read the following information about Abigail Washburn and Wu Fei with the class prior to teaching the lesson: <http://www.wufeimusic.com/abigail-washburn/> as well as this introduction video to the [Guzheng](#).
- Have students read the lyrics to the song, [“Who Says Women Aren’t as Good as Men”](#), first then listen to the song as instructed in the [“Who Says Women Aren’t as Good as Men” Initial Writing assignment](#).
 - **After listening to the song and reading the lyrics, facilitate a brief class discussion:**
 1. How do songs reflect cultural norms?
 2. What makes songs a form of poetry?
- Facilitate a classroom discussion on the story of the Chinese heroine Mulan. This should be student led to allow the instructor to assess any prior information students may have on the story. Next direct students to read the background information on the story of [Mulan](#). Then go back to the discussion and determine if all students are aware of the story or if any of their views have changed.
- Next present the Library of Congress link on [Rosie the Riveter](#) and have students complete the comparison sheet.
- Give students the handout entitled [Mulan as a Hero](#) (page 4) and instruct students to complete the chart first. Then go over the requirements for the essay and have students write an essay explaining how Mulan could be considered a hero.
- Connections: After students write the essay comparing a modern day woman to Mulan, have students listen to a pop culture song about women’s rights issues. A good song example could be 1990s pop group’s song [Just A Girl](#). After discussing with students that the idea of bringing women’s rights issues to light through music is still evident today, have students research their own song that reflects strong powerful women and compare. Students can compare by sharing in small groups, with the class as a whole, or writing a short response.
- Assessments: Students will be assessed on their writing based on the lesson rubric, found in the [lesson materials](#).
- Learning Extension: Have students dive deeper into the vocabulary of the song Mulan. Hand out the [Mulan Vocabulary Extension](#) to each student. Go over the directions with the students and have them fill out the sheet using a dictionary and thesaurus. They will need to include the definition, synonyms, antonyms, create a visual and use the words correctly in a sentence.
- Explore Further: After writing the essay and exploring other songs that have empowered women throughout the years, have students read the following article from the history archives of the United States House of Representative: [United States House of Representatives History on Women’s Rights in America](#). Students should compare some of the things done in the women’s rights movements of in the United States to the things in their songs they have chosen. Students can complete this using a two-column chart or a top down web.

Bibliography:

- Davis, C. (2019). Abigail Washburn-Wu Fei. Retrieved from <http://www.wufeimusic.com/abigail-washburn/>
- Harvey, S. (July. 20th). Rosie the Riveter Transcript (journeys and crossings, library of congress digital reference section). Retrieved from <https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/journey/rosie-transcript.html>
- LessonsGoWhere (2015, November 23). *An Introduction to the Guzheng* [Video] YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDMg01S603Q>
- Lily. (2020, March 5.) The Real Story of Mulan from the Ballad of Mulan. Retrieved from <https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/article-movie-real-story-of-mulan.htm>
- Pattix123 (2009, July 14) *No Doubt Lyrics for Just a Girl* [Video] YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wETo3tufqmA>
- Washburn, A. and Wu, F.(2020). Who Says Women Aren't As Good As Men [Lyrics]. Retrieved from <http://www.abigailwashburn.com/lyrics/>.
- Washburn, A. and Wu, F. (2020). *Wu Fei and Abigail Washburn* [Album]. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings.
- The Women's Rights Movement, 1848-1920: US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/WIC/Historical-Essays/No-Lady/Womens-Rights/>