

Shirley Caesar



Lesson Plan

OBJECTIVE: *To understand and appreciate the contributions of Shirley Caesar to the history of North Carolina and the United States.*

Social Studies Objectives: 9.02

Social Studies Skills: 1, 2, 3, 5

Language Arts Objectives: 1.03, 1.04, 2.01, 5.01, 6.01, 6.02

Resources / Materials

- Biographical sketch
- Internet access (optional)
- *Activities* page
- Menu of Activities for North Carolina African American Musicians

Procedures

- Students will read and discuss the biographical sketch of Shirley Caesar independently, as a small group or as an entire class.
- Students will complete the *Activities* page.
- Students will complete one or more projects from the Menu of Activities for North Carolina African American Musicians.

Evaluation

- Student participation in reading and discussion of Shirley Caesar
- Student performance on *Activities* page
- Student projects from the Menu of Activities for North Carolina African American Musicians

Bibliography

Centerstage. "Shirley Caesar." 7 March 2003.
<http://centerstage.net/music/whoswho/ShirleyCaesar.html>

Rolling Stone. "Shirley Caesar." 7 March 2003.
<http://www.rollingstone.com/artists/bio.asp?oid=5996&cf+5996>

Shirley Caesar Outreach Ministries
<http://www.shirleycaesar.com/>

2000 Sony Music Entertainment Inc. "Artist Update, Shirley Caesar." 7 March 2003.
<http://www.sonymusic.com/artists/ShirleyCaesar/bio.html>

Shirley Caesar



Biographical Sketch

Shirley Caesar is known for both her powerful, inspirational music and her work as a pastor. She was born in Durham, North Carolina, in 1938. After the death of her father when she was 8 years old, Caesar cared for her semi-invalid mother and her siblings. She began her gospel singing career in a Durham church at the age of 10. Although she was not encouraged to go to college by her teachers, Caesar graduated *magna cum laude* from college with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Marketing. She refused to heed comments of her teachers when they would tell her “not to waste her mother’s money by going to college because you’re not college material.”

Caesar became a professional gospel singer at the age of 20, when she joined the group called Caravan. Caravan was an all-female gospel group that became one of the most popular groups in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1966, Caesar left the Caravan gospel choir and began her solo career. In 1971, she won her first Grammy for the album *Put Your Hand in the Hand*. Because her music was traditional in style, Caesar remained little-known outside the gospel music field. However, she achieved wide acclaim within the gospel scene. She recorded numerous gold albums and won many Dove awards. The Dove award is a Christian music award equivalent to a Grammy.

Today, Shirley Caesar records and tours with a choir and band. In addition, Caesar leads the Mount Calvary Word of Faith Church in Raleigh, and appears in the Broadway gospel musicals, *Mama, I Want to Sing* and its sequel *Born to Sing*. Shirley Caesar and her group, “The Caesar Singers,” have traveled worldwide, performing in a distinctive style that has its roots in the gospel tradition of Durham, North Carolina. Shirley Caesar, the “First Lady of Gospel,” continues to record and remains faithful to her strong religious values.

Shirley Caesar



Activities

Personal Response

Shirley Caesar responds to opportunities to minister to others not only through her music but also in her work as a pastor. What do you think motivates people like Shirley Caesar to help others?

Analyzing Information

1. Describe an incident early in the life of Shirley Caesar that illustrates her caring response to people.
2. Explain why Caesar could have been persuaded not to go to college.
3. Identify the area in which Shirley Caesar received wide acclaim.
4. List three areas of work that Shirley Caesar is involved in today.

Interpreting Meaning

Directions: Find the terms in the passage. Copy the sentence that contains the word. Using context clues, match the word and its meaning.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| _____ 1. inspirational | A. alike |
| _____ 2. equivalent | B. to move or guide |
| _____ 3. heed | C. to pay attention |
| _____ 4. acclaim | D. partly disabled |
| _____ 5. magna cum laude | E. great praise |
| _____ 6. semi-invalid | F. with great distinction |

Creative Response

1. Select an activity from the list "A Menu of Activities for North Carolina African American Musicians."

2. NCFMP: If you were building a monument to commemorate the African American Experience in North Carolina, how could you use the work of Shirley Caesar and other North Carolina musicians and poets that would be accessible, even to blind visitors to your monument? Propose a way to create a monument that would also be meaningful to hearing impaired persons, persons of limited mobility, non-English speakers, and semi-invalid persons like Shirley Caesar's mother.

Shirley Caesar



Activities ■ Answer Key for Teachers

Personal Response

Shirley Caesar responds to opportunities to minister to others not only through her music but also in her work as a pastor. What do you think motivates people like Shirley Caesar to help others?

Responses will vary.

Analyzing Information

1. Describe an incident early in the life of Shirley Caesar that illustrates her caring response to people.

After the death of her father when she was 8, Caesar began caring for her semi-invalid mother and her siblings.

2. Explain why Caesar could have been persuaded not to go to college.

Shirley Caesar was told by her teachers to not waste her mother's money because she was not college material.

3. Identify the area in which Shirley Caesar received wide acclaim.

Caesar received wide acclaim within the gospel music field.

4. List three areas of work that Shirley Caesar is involved in today.

Today, Caesar is involved in the following: 1) records and tours with a choir and band; 2) is a pastor in Raleigh; and 3) appears in Broadway gospel musicals.

Interpreting Meaning

Directions: Find the terms in the passage. Copy the sentence that contains the word. Using context clues, match the word and its meaning

B 1. inspirational

A 2. equivalent

C 3. heed

E 4. acclaim

F 5. magna cum laude

D 6. semi-invalid

A. alike

B. to move or guide

C. to pay attention

D. partly disabled

E. great praise

F. with great distinction

Creative Response

Responses will vary.