

**Mifflin, Mass Media, and Me:
A School and Teachers in Time
Who Were Patriotically Inclined**

*Dolores K. Sebastian
Mifflin Elementary School*

**Overview
Rationale
Objectives
Strategies/Adaptations
Classroom Activities
Annotated Bibliography/Resources
Appendices**

Overview

After giving my project much thought, I began to reminisce about my teaching career; the accomplishments that I have made and the reasons why I developed the teaching philosophy that allowed me to be successful in the teaching profession for 50+ years. I often wondered what impact, if any, I've had on my students. Interestingly, on January 24, 2005, a front page article in The Daily News of McKeesport caught my attention. The headline read **WM grad scales Mt. Kilimanjaro**. Reading the picture caption, I noticed that the person's name was the name of a student that I recalled from Mifflin Elementary School. As I read the article, my suspicions were confirmed. Sure enough, Patti Watkins was a sixth grade student of mine in 1970. As I read further, I was pleasantly surprised with what I was reading. The article read "The trip to Kilimanjaro fulfilled an ambition born in a Mifflin School classroom. It was great to see the places in Africa we learned about in sixth grade social studies with Mrs. Dolores Sebastian," she recalled. This newspaper jogged my memory about the effects that mass media had on my career. In addition, I wanted to tie my project to the culmination of Mifflin's \$7.5 million renovation. Thus, I have decided to title my project—

**MIFFLIN, MASS MEDIA, and ME
A School and Teachers in Time
Who Were Patriotically Inclined**

I don't feel that any teacher of United States history could effectively teach history without feeling patriotism deeply and inspiring it in others.

Rationale

When former students return to Mifflin to visit, I have a stock question for them: What do you remember most about your experience at Mifflin? The majority of students respond with “I remember the patriotic programs that we did in the auditorium.” They loved to perform on stage, whether it was Christmas, promotion, or patriotic programs. I concluded from their comments over the years that Mifflin, my colleagues and I were on the right track.

Students in the elementary school often view history as an old subject, a subject of events that already happened and therefore are no longer applicable or relevant to the present. The music curriculum fits hand in glove with the social studies curriculum. Engaging our students in humor, storytelling, our rich musical heritage, and theatre brings these two curriculums to life in a meaningful way. Students get to meet colorful historical characters who step right out of history and onto the stage. Highly interactive programs which embrace stories, songs, dance, history and heritage put students directly in touch with their diverse cultural traditions in an exciting, meaningful way, thus making the traditions relevant to their daily lives. Simply stated, the program philosophy is: ***“Without an understandable past, we have no future.”*** I stated it this way in my essay for the Institute: ***“Unless History Lives In the Present It Has No Future. . .”***

Research shows that people remember 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see, 20% of what they say and 90% of what they do! With this in mind and with the need for differentiating instruction for diverse learners in the mainstream classrooms, the activities in this unit will include successful inclusion strategies as outlined by Susan Fitzell in her Social Studies Adaptations and the 100+ Product Possibilities adapted from *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed Ability Classrooms* by C.A. Tomlinson. The strategies were distributed to social studies teachers at our latest in-service.

The Office of Multicultural Education of the Pittsburgh Public Schools under the direction of Dr. Stanley E. Denton distributed pamphlets to the district entitled, ***I TOO SING AMERICA***. Following are excerpts from this document:

“Our history IS our strength—Our diversity IS our future

&

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IS OUR GOAL!!!

We embrace our differences and say “I TOO SING AMERICA”. As African-Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans, Hispanic-Americans and Native Americans ... WE understand that our duty is to

RESPECT AND VALUE ONE ANOTHER!!!

The beauty of being an American is that there are MANY, MANY cultural, ethnic, nationality, religious and special needs groups. The power of MULTICULTURAL education is that we are able to learn about, appreciate and teach the experiences of ALL PEOPLE!!!

Our VISION is for all students to develop a positive self identity through pride and awareness.

We embrace our individual and collective heritage.

As a teacher of social studies I firmly believe in this philosophy and have tried to incorporate and utilize it in my teaching and with my many students so that each and every individual realizes his/her importance and that each of them can be a productive member of our society.

WE MUST LEARN TO RESPECT AND VALUE ONE ANOTHER.

Then. . .

WE CAN AND WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE. . .

WE WILL CREATE STRONG FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE!!!

Then. . .

With an understandable past, we have a future. . .

Objectives

The student objectives for the project will be:

1. To bring to life our history and heritage in an interesting theatrical way using traditional music as the medium.
2. To promote an understanding in our students about their engaging past and its impact on their future.
3. To perform on stage before a live audience.

Strategies

The historical development of *patriotism* at Mifflin School will be related through my personal experiences and partnerships with my colleagues and the impact that patriotism had on our careers and personal lives. Pittsburgh's mass media and select personalities who worked in the media were the stimulants and driving force that planted the seeds, led us and sparked us to produce, achieve, and blossom on such a high professional level that would last for 50+ years.

The students will take a journey through 200+ years of American history and American musical traditions and will explore key periods and key characters of history. All of the songs in the program will be representative of the time and event being described. Students will also experience how songs themselves have survived, though they change through time as they are passed on from generation to generation. We refer to this change as the folk process. This historical musical revue will be entitled, ***Our American Song.***

(This project will be in keeping with the Communications, Citizenship, and Arts and Humanities standards of the Pittsburgh Public Schools. It is also hoped that the writing pieces which the students generate will contribute to their cross curriculum portfolios and satisfy the requirements of the social studies department.)

Narrative

As I began to reflect on my teaching career of 50+ years, I suddenly realized what an effect that Pittsburgh's Mass Media has had on my teaching career, my students, my colleagues, and my private life. I began my teaching career in Virginia in 1954 while my husband completed his enlistment with the United States Army. I still have one very vivid memory of my first year. I was privileged one day (at least I thought so at the time) to visit one of the segregated schools in Warrenton. As a northerner I certainly was not prepared for the experience. I was appalled at what I saw in this one room schoolhouse that was so ill equipped and horrendous, and I still have this vision in my mind. As I remember this experience, I have long concluded that the only things of value in that segregated school were the beautiful children and their dedicated teacher.

Since 1955 I have been teaching in the Pittsburgh Public School System at Mifflin School in Lincoln Place. I initially taught intermediate language arts and social studies. Presently I teach 7th & 8th grade social studies and serve as the intermediate ITL – Instructional Teacher Leader. It was here at Mifflin that I met Mrs. Marie Stewart, who taught junior high school social studies. Since I taught intermediate language arts and social studies we often served on the same committees. Through our work with students, various displays, auditorium programs, and committee assignments, each of us would constantly strive for excellence. Consequently, our individual initiatives produced a common bond of dedication. Together we came to respect each other's opinions and contributions. Subsequently we began to seek and utilize the suggestions, advice, and critical evaluation from each other as we recognized our individual strengths and weaknesses.

In 1969, Marie and I began producing auditorium programs which were 100% patriotic in nature. Our common dedication to patriotism in and outside the classroom helped to further strengthen our common bond of friendship.

Mifflin is the place where first we met—
Where two hearts became one.

“One hears too often these days that it’s no longer fashionable to be patriotic. It’s almost as if our American Way is to be indifferent to America’s history and ideals, and to behave as if such symbols as the flag and the national anthem were things Americans never fought for.”

Little did we know that this one line ~ *“One hears too often these days that it’s no longer fashionable to be patriotic.”* ~ from Ed and Wendy King’s *American Family Album*, which aired on Party Line on KDKA Radio 1020, would be the inspiration to write a patriotic program ~ *The American Way* ~ for Mifflin School’s Junior High Promotion in June 1969. Marie was so deeply touched by Ed’s line that –

Her pen took off on its own and wrote with great ease.
The program it created was certain to please
And please it did (both one and all).
When the class read it and liked it;
They gave it their all.
“It’s too good ‘to chuck’ or just store away,”
Said Lloyd K. Lloyd (our counselor) on that fateful day.
“It should go on to Freedoms Foundation,” he said.
And that simple statement stacked more work on D’s head.

Through the National Awards Program, Freedoms Foundation has honored more than 56,000 individuals from all walks of life – the famous and the unknown, the young and old – from Maine to Hawaii. This program was intended to say thank you to those whose projects, words or deeds reflect the best of the American spirit of volunteerism. The Valley Forge Teacher’s Medal is the highest educator award presented by Freedoms Foundation. This medal is awarded to teachers for outstanding achievement in bringing about a better understanding of the American way of life and by honoring patriotism, good citizenship and U. S. history, and for teaching, supporting, and fostering the principles and obligations of freedom. The bronze medal is shaped like a dogwood flower and is engraved on the reverse side with the recipient’s name and the year in which it is presented.

The Daily News of McKeesport was the first to announce Marie’s winning Freedoms Foundation Valley Forge Teacher’s Medal for 1969. The Pittsburgh Press, the Post Gazette, and the Homestead Messenger soon joined the ranks of

mass media coverage. Both Marie and I represented Mifflin School at the Freedoms Foundation Awards Ceremony at Bell Telephone Company Auditorium, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on November 19, 1970. It was at this moving ceremony that we came to realize the increased value of shared patriotism over individual contributions. We became aware of the fact that for many years we had been doing similar work without having shared it with our fellow Americans. As our work was published, we also learned that our patriotic pride helped spur us on to do more and more such work.

Shared patriotism to Marie and me came to mean working together all the way—each utilizing our individual strengths fully and completely to produce a superior job of selling patriotism to everybody we could reach—everywhere.

The following year provided us with a new challenge. Could I possibly win Freedoms Foundation Valley Forge Teachers Medal for 1970? My 6th grade class of 80 students was an outstanding group of cooperative and creative students. With this in mind and knowing that I would be supervising four student teachers, I decided to plan a year of projects to challenge and involve them in all of the classroom activities and help to shape them into teachers who appreciate the value of every child in the classroom as I did. We made a decision. . .

Being contented with one winner would *never ever do.*

We had to go for two and go we did.

With time to plan and time to work

We gave it our all—

Bigger and better than ever became our motto.

The entire school year was spent preparing—

Doing this and doing that—

Constructing, writing, dramatizing, drawing

Room 12 boomed with projects.

Photographers had a ball.

After collecting all of the projects

Our final product was sent on its way to Valley Forge

Again, just under the June 30th deadline.

We heard that they were investigating and waited anxiously for word.

At long last on February 8th our good news came via mailman on creamy vellum.

As I took the mail out of the box, my heart skipped a beat. I guess we really knew

it all along, but it felt oh so good to have it in hand.

On February 15th – official George Washington's day—

The Daily News tapped the wire and searched for me at Mifflin School
to conduct an interview.

That evening brought an inspiring news article.

The Pittsburgh Press announced all 19 winners that same night.
We were happy too that again I was the only Pittsburgh teacher to win the medal.

PTA Founders Day took all extra time
and we really couldn't enjoy our achievement.
Our American symbols we honored that night
The anniversary of Marie's highlight.
To all who came our symbols were a delight.
Our Liberty Bell tolled loud and clear
And as a symbol remains very dear.
Little did we at this time know
How far our fame would really go.
And that our "bell" would toll for all to hear.
As news of the award spread far and near.
And brought congratulations from all directions.

The Post Gazette came out for an interview
I conned Marie into being a spokeswoman, too.
Douglas Smock took notes fast and furious
While Jim Klingensmith his camera focused.
Now with that one done and well accomplished
We waited anxiously for the next surprise.
KDKA's Yvonne Forston was also due
And finally on Friday (February 26th) came into view.
(By that time I was almost a nervous wreck.)
After two hours of videotaping and interviewing
She left with all the paraphernalia and crew.
That they were delighted was quite evident
For she called Miss Pfferman (public relations) at the Board
To relate her morning's affair.

The seven o'clock news was to tell the tale
Of how D and her kids did fare.
With everyone alerted we sat patiently to see
Just what would really be on TV.
At 7:24 our hopes grew dim
Then suddenly Paul Moyer my name so beautifully said.
For the next five minutes we all sat motionless.
Fort Pitt was the very last scene
That ended the program
My TV career, too.
And again victorious we did appear.
Then off to 1776
Which was to be the highlight of the week
It turned out to be

A perfect evening for a perfect (hectic) week.
High praise came from all who had viewed the TV,
And with “celebrity” they dubbed me.

The next bit of publicity came when Miss McKenney, our principal, had a request from Mr. Kearney to have the news written up so he could give it to Legislator William Coyne who took it to Harrisburg to record.

After all the excitement finally settled
The Post Gazette did their article feature.
At long last we two (Marie and I) did together appear
And each shared the limelight equally.
We were finally pictured as a “team,”
This had always been our dream.

Ed King made the initial contribution that has lasted a lifetime. He was the outstanding inspirational patriot who deserved top recognition. He was the true leader. Where he led, we followed. What he sparked, we produced. Without his patriotic inspiration, Pittsburgh, Mifflin School, and we would have been poor indeed. We dubbed Ed “Pittsburgh’s Patriot.” Edward L. Blank, Press TV-Radio Writer on February 10, 1971, wrote an article *Public Podium* which quoted our feelings about Ed King and publicly made our dubbing official. He gave credit where credit was due. The program, which won Ira Apple Freedoms Foundation’s top award and a cash prize of \$5,000, had been suggested by Ed King. On February 12, 1971 on Party Line stationery we received the following:

“Ed Blank was kind enough to forward your letter to me. Wasn’t that nice of him? And how can I say thank you? I assure you I feel no disappointment in not being “singled out”. As you know the work is its own excuse for being, and when involved in a labor of love, as I have been fortunate enough to be, the reward is already built in. Again, my congratulations to you, for your award and my gratitude for your thoughtfulness. It was most kind and generous, and I know you need no “inspiration” to conjure up the muse. Good luck in your future ventures and I am grateful to be included in your list of friends.

Regards, Ed”

(Ed King died on November 18, 1971, just a few days after he was diagnosed with lung cancer. He was 50. Some of his scripts are archived at Duquesne University’s library.)

All of the mass media coverage and publicity called attention to the fact that **patriotism** is still alive and was still being taught daily by dedicated teachers.

We picked up our patriotic banner once more in 1973 and decided to make a third try for a national award from Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge in the

General Americana Classification. This time we were stirred by Harry E. Fosdick's quotation:

*"Life has always been a struggle, but the secret of living is the same today as it ever was. **FIND** a high purpose and build your life around it. Give yourself to it with all your heart."*

We had found our high purpose in patriotism and had given ourselves to it completely—heart and soul together. We decided that—

It wasn't enough for us to feel patriotic and think patriotic and be patriotic in everything we did. Patriotism for us we decided must also include causing others to examine and declare their own patriotism too—which is what we then attempted to do.

We directed our combined efforts toward alerting adults in our larger community to the fact that every responsible adult citizen has the obligation of helping to make America's young people more fully aware that for every right enjoyed there is a corresponding responsibility. We tried to remind adults that the example set in meeting their citizenship responsibilities is of utmost importance in impressing this fact on young people who observe their elders with a critical frame of mind. We made use of newspapers, community relations, a TV program, and organizational meetings to achieve our goals.

We Share Our Feelings

We show our love for our American Way
By enjoying our Freedoms
(And meeting our obligations)
Day after Day.
The Right to Free Speech and of the Press
Are two we enjoy most and use the best.
We wrote poems, plays, and letters constantly—
Expressing our love for this Land of the Free.
We shared patriotic thoughts
With our children or publicly—
By sending them to "the press" for all readers to see.

We continued our patriotic writing. These writings formed the basis for numerous Letters to the Editor. Following is one example:

THE DAILY NEWS
McKeesport, PA
Monday Evening, February 13, 1973
PRAISE FOR MEDIA

The American news media has been under so much attack recently (sometimes, at least, with justification) that we thought it only fair to present a point of argument in their favor.

When the first POWs arrived, the press, television, and radio presented Navy Captain Jeremiah A. Denton, Jr. to the public as the spokesman of the first planeload of men returning to American soil.

We, two social studies teachers, discussed his greeting the American people. It touched us so deeply that together we composed a poem with which we introduced the current events history lesson of the day. It asked the question, "If he can say with such conviction after all he's been through, 'God Bless America', shouldn't I? Shouldn't you?"

Pupil reaction was beautiful. They answered the question by writing what they sincerely felt about our American heroes and America itself. They drew cartoons and pictures. One group of boys came up with their own version of America's Spirit of '73 which presented the POWs carrying our flag back to American soil.

As these products of deep thinking and deep feeling were shared by other classes, pupils who were a little slower getting original ideas devoured newspaper articles, TV and radio programs in an attempt to make a notable contribution themselves.

This research done in preparation for the next day's class was not a required homework assignment. It didn't need to be. One good loyal self-sacrificing American had sent America a message by newspapers, radio, and TV. Other dedicated Americans (and we assure you that with proper guidance today's youngsters are) took it from there.

We salute American news media's coverage of our POWs homecoming.

Mrs. Marie S. Stewart
Mrs. Dolores K. Sebastian

Loyalty Day—May 1, 1973—brought recognition and citations to us as "*outstanding Crusaders against Communism and outstanding Teachers of the Principles of our American Heritage*" from the Allegheny County Council Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. It was a fitting day to rededicate ourselves to our country and our heritage of freedom.

All of the aforementioned community involvement was rewarded with the George Washington Medal for the 1973 Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge National Award in the General Americana Classification. The face of this four inch bronze medal pictures Washington kneeling at Valley Forge. The reverse is inscribed:

Impress on the mind of every man from
first to lowest the importance of the cause
and what it is they are contending for.
GEORGE WASHINGTON
FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN BRINGING ABOUT
A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE

On the 24th of October, 1973, KDKA TV came to Mifflin to film my sixth grade class while I was teaching the impeachment process. Bob Sprague and his cameraman, Don Null, thanked me for letting them interrupt our “*Eyewitness on History*” lesson. The results of their filming were shown on the 7 o’clock news. Wonderful congratulatory letters came from far and near. My students and I were proud of their efforts and rightfully so.

(The next day the class and I received a special note about the telecast from (Mrs.) Helen S. Faison, Assistant Superintendent of Area Three.)

In June of 1976, my mentor, my colleague, my mother-like friend Marie, retired after 37 years of teaching. Our bicentennial year of 1976 couldn’t have been a more fitting time for her retirement. Our friendship, however, continued. Two years later in 1978 we again shared the spotlight. We were the ’78 Loyalty Day Awardees of the Allegheny Council Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I continued the climb toward higher and higher levels of patriotism by sharing and producing programs and activities. In 1976 Mrs. Judith S. Morgan came to Mifflin as our music teacher, and I found a new partner and a new friend. Together we ran Arts in Basic Education classroom. Patriotic programs continued at Mifflin for the next five years. Our patriotic efforts continued to attract Pittsburgh’s mass media. Red, White, and Blue continued to be noticed and recognized and continued to “fly high.”

During this five year period our students were involved in all sorts of creative activities. We celebrated the birthday of Lovely Lady Liberty in high style. Lady Liberty surprised the students and the Mifflin community by arriving in “person” in the form of an 8 foot fiberglass replica. Needless to say, she was the highlight of the show for everyone – young and old alike. The statue was graciously lent to us by the town of Glassport that had purchased her for its Bicentennial Celebration. She still stands proudly in the window of Glassport’s Public Library; and she continues to remind me weekly as I pass by how proudly she really does stand and how happy she made our students. She also reminds me of the rolled up piece of paper that was thrust in my hand by one of my students, Elaine Baker, with the comment, “I wrote this just for you.”

She stands. . .
 Holding her torch high above her head,
 forever lighting the way to freedom.
She stands. . .
 Weather beaten, pale, but still her godly
 figure a joy for anyone to see.
She stands. . .
 With a patriotic feeling that labels America—
 Freedom land.
Proudly – she stands!

Judy and I created a multicultural program which was an original historical revue with a musical parody involving all of the Christmas stamps issued by the United States Postal Service. This seemed to be a fitting theme since the very first Christmas stamps were issued in Pittsburgh in 1962. The program was an interesting Show and Tell that involved all of America's Christmas stamps through 1977. The stamps fell into categories and were projected on a large screen. Each category was matched with appropriate songs which the students sang. It was aptly titled, "*Mifflin Puts Its Stamp on Christmas.*"

In 1980 Judy wrote Mifflin's Alma Mater. It has been sung at each of our promotions and other appropriate events since then. In 1983 Judy transferred, and I lost my second partner and devoted friend. Sadly in 1993 I lost her forever when she succumbed to cancer. Her legacy continues to live on at Mifflin in our Alma Mater and her presence is felt each time it's sung. There is an old rumor in the Lincoln Place community that Mifflin School has a ghost in the old music room. Often times I wonder if it is Judy. I at least like to think that it may be.

As fate would have it, in 1984 I met Mr. Frank Ligons, our new music teacher who unexpectedly became my third partner and devoted friend. Our first teaching responsibility at Mifflin was to sponsor the yearly promotion exercises. Almost immediately, we two creative professionals formed a smooth functioning partnership. Mr. Ligons quickly began to share my long dedication to Red, White, and Blue.

Besides being an outstanding music teacher, Frank is a professional musician. Consequently, his special audio equipment and his expertise in using it gave our patriotic musical programs a unique dimension. Along with this, various media were used for stage settings. The use of patriotic colored fluorescent paints and black lights fascinated the audiences. Helium filled red, white, and blue balloons made into sculptures provided interesting backdrops. With all of this, Mifflin's auditorium programs became patriotic extravaganzas.

The musical auditorium programs which were presented to the public involved students of all grade levels (K-5); others occasionally involved only fifth graders who were presenting the annual promotion program or historical holiday programs. These patriotic programs reminded everyone in attendance that "*THIS IS AMERICA,*" and that they truly are *AMERICANS*. Some of the programs were presented outside of Mifflin School. The students performed for many diverse groups and thereby gained real life experiences beyond their own environment and school community. Audiences included other elementary and secondary public schools, and adult audiences at Mini-Kane Hospital, Bidwell Learning Center, the Grant Building, Century III Mall, and the Hilton Hotel.

On Friday, May 24, 1991, the “show went on the road.” Three buses transported the students across the city to Lemington Elementary School where they performed for a predominantly African American audience. The reception that the Lemington staff and students had prepared for Mifflin was spectacular. Lemington was decked out in red, white, and blue—the hallways and the classrooms were patriotically decorated, and the students were dressed in their finest red, white, and blue outfits. The gymnasium where the reception was held was patriotically decorated; the tables were dressed in red, white, and blue tablecloths with matching stars and stripes napkins; the large sheet cakes were artfully decorated and iced with flags, and the red and blue punch completed the theme. It was evident that Mifflin’s chorus members were honored guests, and that another group of young Americans were spreading red, white, and blue seeds of patriotism. It proved to us that “PATRIOTISM IS CONTAGIOUS!!!”

After the enthusiastic and sincere reception at Lemington School, the students boarded their buses for the journey across the city to Brashear High School for an afternoon performance. A welcoming committee was patiently awaiting the students’ arrival, and refreshments were served immediately. Brashear is one of the largest high schools in the city, and its stage is in keeping with its size. Mifflin’s students were overwhelmed by the immensity of the stage and the auditorium. They were very apprehensive at first, but as soon as Mr. Ligons started the music and gave them their usual encouraging cue to begin, and upon hearing their audience clap and cheer their approval of the performance, the children’s apprehensions quickly dissipated, and they performed like “pros”.

As a final expression of their enjoyment and approval, the mixed audience of 350 teenaged Americans gave the younger Mifflin students a standing ovation as they clapped, cheered, and whistled. Before we left each of the buildings, we were invited to return for future performances of any other programs we were to present in the future.

Respect for individual rights, equality, individual and group responsibility were all evident in Mr. Ligons and my classrooms and in the extra activities which we conducted in the best American tradition. Our students came to realize that the fundamental freedoms that they enjoy belong not only to them, but to each and every American of whatever race, religion, or color on an equal basis. Our students were also made aware that our fundamental freedoms were won at the cost of self-sacrifice and bloodshed and must be preserved at all cost by their own sacrifices, their own dedication to their country, and to the preservation of its fundamental freedoms.

Philosophically, Mr. Ligons and I believed that teachers have many golden opportunities to encourage young people to extend themselves to their fullest

potential—that we have many opportunities to help each student develop self-confidence, self-pride, and his/her individual personality, and to find the place where he or she can make the greatest contribution to the group, thereby affording the greatest satisfaction to himself or herself and the acceptance and appreciation of the group.

The 1977 version of the multicultural program, “*Mifflin Puts Its Stamp on Christmas*,” was revised and updated to celebrate the 1991 Christmas season. On December 20th three buses loaded with 140 chorus members and staff headed to radio station KDKA (which was collecting for Children’s Hospital) and to the Hilton Hotel in downtown Pittsburgh. One of the first challenges we encountered was getting all 140 students safely through the streets and crowds to KDKA and then to the Hilton Hotel. The next challenge was getting all 140 students through the Hilton’s enormous revolving door. After bag lunching in the Hilton’s beautiful and festively decorated lobby, the students sang the musical selections from “*Mifflin Puts Its Stamp on Christmas*” as the stamp slides were projecting on an oversized 20 foot screen.

It was hard to estimate the number of people in this moving audience. Hotel guests, business men and women, shoppers, hotel personnel, and passersby stopped and listened for varying amounts of time. In the course of the performance it was guesstimated that 500 people had their holiday spirits uplifted by the booming melodic voices of these young Americans who sang their hearts out.

In keeping with the Hilton’s style, dapper tux-clad waiters served ice-cream punch and fancy Christmas cookies to the songsters who were displaying their very best manners. This visit to a prestigious hotel was certainly a first for many of them and maybe even the last for some. At least they can say, “We were there with Mr. Ligons and Mrs. Sebastian.”

In 1992 Freedoms Foundation of Valley Forge made a return visit to Pittsburgh. This time it was to bring the Valley Forge Teachers Medal to Mr. Frank Ligons. His entry entitled “*MARCHING ON. . .*” was submitted by his patriotic partner and friend and, for the third time in Mifflin’s history, Mr. Ligons was the only Pittsburgh teacher who was honored that year.

***Mifflin is the place where first we met—
Where voices, hands, and hearts are one.
Patriotism is the thing our kids won’t forget
Even when their days at Mifflin are done.***

Adaptations

To satisfy the curriculum unit or project requirement for the seminar Pittsburgh's Mass Media, I plan to engage my 8th grade United States History students in a patriotic musical journey through history to be performed as part of the dedication ceremony of Mifflin's renovation project. Our American adventure titled "***Our American Song***" will embrace our songs, stories, dance, history and heritage. This will also be the culmination of my 50 year patriotic career at Mifflin School. Hopefully, a new flag bearer (waver) will emerge from the ranks to carry on Mifflin's patriotic tradition.

"***Our American Song***" can be adapted to a vast variety of age groups, both young and old, and can be utilized in many different ways. A program like this can be as elaborate or simple as you choose to make it.

I attribute my (our) success to a number of factors. Working as a team with cooperative and creative individuals and utilizing the strengths of each member instead of doing it alone was our key to success. Sharing responsibilities helps to eliminate some of the stress. Test the waters by starting with a short program of your choosing. (See appendices for an example.) Then gradually increase both the length and the sophistication of the production. Slowly increase the scenery, backdrops, lighting, and utilize the ideas that present themselves as the students develop their talents. Engaging *all* of the students in the class added to the success of each program. There is always something that the children can do that gives them ownership of the project. Once they claim ownership, your problems diminish. It sometimes takes a little while to do this, but it does happen. Remember, *patience is a virtue!* Selecting the right kind of audience for their performance helps considerably. Parents are always happy when their child/children have an active role, regardless of how small or large it may be.

Through the course of many years and through the vast variety of programs that were performed at Mifflin, we found that talents were brought out in students who would probably never have discovered them otherwise. Some of our former students are pursuing theatrical and musical careers. Others attribute their ability to speak in front of an audience as contributing to their success today, regardless of their profession. There is no doubt in my mind that all of the knowledge and experience that I, too, gained from the multitude of activities had a positive influence on my ability to speak extemporaneously, I think, to many diverse audiences. I recollect and still remember when I was a teenager and was faced with a whole auditorium of parents, mine included, and the fear that I felt until I began my speech. I've never forgotten the words—"*This is my diploma. It is a documentary symbol of free public education upon which rests the perpetual being of a democratic form of government...*" I had an unexpected opportunity to practice these skills recently when I was given the task of giving the welcome

and introducing the guest speakers at Mifflin’s Reunion Celebration and Dedication. It took this reunion celebration of about 400 people to make me aware of the impact that I had on so many students. It certainly was very gratifying to learn this. This rewarding experience will never be forgotten.

Little did I ever dream that I would spend 51 years helping to provide free public education to so many wonderful children from diverse ethnic backgrounds and cultures. I think one reason why I loved my job was due to the facts that –

No two days were ever the same, and no two kids were, either.

Classroom Activity ~ *This performance will be on stage before a live audience.*

Our American Song
Mifflin’s Patriotic Historical Musical Revue

Deleted: ¶

There are moments in a nation’s life, just as there are moments in individual lives, when people see beyond the usual. Such are the moments of greatest triumphs, of greatest happiness. Such moments may be recalled through signs and symbols—signposts on the road to what has been and what may be.

Deleted: ¶

The greatest of America’s symbols is our flag. America has put its dreams and visions into our flag. The American people love our flag, live for it, fight for it, and die for it. The flag has stood for them just as they have stood for it through two centuries. Some have grown indifferent to it; some have tried to downgrade it; but the vast majority, the good, solid Americans, know that a symbol and what it stands for must stay together.

We stand for our flag and pay it special honor because our deepest feelings of patriotism are connected with our flag, which more than any other thing is the symbol of the United States of America. It represents the very soul of our people and our nation.

Thoughtfully, then, and reverently, as Americans who love our flag and the country for which it stands, let us salute our flag together. Please stand and remain standing while we sing the “Pledge of Allegiance” and “Stand Up for the Flag of America.” We will be happy to have you join us if you wish.

THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
STAND UP FOR THE FLAG OF AMERICA

Perhaps the reason we feel the need to sing about as well as talk about our country and its symbols is that America built the heritage of the singer and the singing heart. Since all who really want to sing will find their song, men and women who found no songs in their hearts in the Old World and who felt the need

to sing, came to the New World. In the wide open spaces of America there was room for many different tunes to be sung at the same time.

THE CONSTITUTION SONG

As the United States developed and prospered, it became evident that the United States would be a different nation from almost every other country because its citizens came from every nation in the world. It has been a land of opportunity, and people of every country in the world come here to find theirs.

AMERICA

Even though America's songs are mostly about Americans, we also sing of other people and offer them a helping hand.

GIVE ME YOUR TIRED

A nation creates music as it grows. The composers only arrange the sounds they hear as the people work and play, live and die. Our American music is unique, for America created it as it grew. Our American song is a good song, a true song, worthy to be sung alongside any of the great songs of the world. And even in this day of doing your own thing, of singing your own song, we try to sing *Our American Song* together for the benefit of mankind.

CHORAL SPEAKING AND SINGING

From the very beginning Americans sang,

1. They sang when their liberty was in danger
(O Say Can You See)
2. When their freedom was won
(When Johnny Comes Marching Home)
3. They sang as their wagons moved westward
(Happy Trails)
4. And their dust rose against the sun
(Over hill, over dale, as we hit the dusty trail)
5. They sang as they followed their leaders
(Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord)
6. In the War Between the States
(I wish I was in the land of cotton)
7. They sang as they crossed wide oceans
(My Bonnie lies over the ocean)
8. To defend human rights and fates.
(We shall overcome)

THEY SANG AS PROUDLY AS WE SING TODAY.

From the mountains to the prairies,
To the oceans white with foam,
God Bless America, my home sweet home.

America has cherished its uniquely American songs, its stirring tunes, its songs of vigorous work and light-hearted play. America has also cherished her song like poems that record the dauntless deeds and the valiant spirit of America's men and women. She has also cherished excerpts from famous documents or speeches which, though written in prose, sing of the hopes of all Americans who have ever set feet on Freedom's Road. As we sing their songs and read their words, we come to know what manner of people were the early Americans who dared to declare their independence from England. We come to know the qualities of mind and soul that made the three million inhabitants of thirteen colonies feel that they were a people capable of winning and holding freedom.

When Patrick Henry, the most famous orator in the colonies, made his "Liberty or Death" speech in the Second Virginia Convention on March 23, 1775, tension was high. The Virginia lawmaking body, the House of Burgesses, had been dissolved by the royal governor from England, the colonists' petitions to England had been repeatedly ignored, militiamen were drilling. His speech ended with these immortal words:

"Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

These words have sung out for liberty through the century. They have never been set to music, but they sing on and on in men's minds and will not be stilled. We do however, have a favorite song that speaks out loudly and clearly of our cherished liberty.

LIBERTY CHERISH SWEET LIBERTY

Listen now to a special SOUND of a different kind, one that represented liberty in 1776 and still does to all Americans who know our history.

AUTHENTIC RINGING OF THE LIBERTY BELL

Other words that have not been stilled through the centuries are those with which Thomas Jefferson introduced the Declaration of Independence.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

In the last paragraph the Declaration states that *"these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States"*, and the final sentence contains this solemn promise: *"And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor"*.

Those words sing out beautifully of humanity's dependence on its Maker and its fellow man for a life that is beautifully free and, therefore, a life to sing about. They have been set to music in such songs as "*Born Free*" which we will sing for you at this time.

BORN FREE

No one knows who wrote the American ballad, *Yankee Doodle*, or what its original words were, but we do know that the tune was well known in the colonies as early as 1767 and the words which Americans now sing to that tune were composed later. They were probably written by supporters of King George and Parliament who wished to ridicule the country-bumpkin appearance of the colonial troops. The Yankees, however, good-humoredly accepted the Redcoats' taunting picture of themselves and adopted "*Yankee Doodle*" for their own uses. Then, minding the music and the step, they marched forward to undying fame. Through the years *Yankee Doodle* has remained a favorite with Americans. It is an excellent marching tune, and years later George M. Cohan wrote his version of *Yankee Doodle*. His was a *Yankee Doodle Dandy*.

YANKEE DOODLE

DANCE ROUTINE to YANKEE DOODLE DANDY (Patriot's Medley)

Mifflin students have their own special version of *Yankee Doodle*. It's known as *YANKEE DOODLE CAT!* We hope you like it as well as we do.

YANKEE DOODLE CAT

We had a cat whose fur was red,
But all his spots were white.
And sure enough his eyes were blue,
A patriotic sight.
But such an independent cat,
Nobody ever tamed him.
I guess it's plain to see why
Yankee Doodle's what we named him.
Yankee Doodle Kitty
He was so slick and fat,
No other cat for miles around
Could lick our Yankee Doodle Cat.
But then one day he didn't come
To supper when he should.
We looked and looked
And called and called
Around the neighborhood.
At last we tried the schoolyard,

And you can't guess where we found him
A-sittin' on the flagpole
With the Stars and Stripes around him
Yankee Doodle Kitty
You should have figured that,
A-singin' from the flagpole
Was our Yankee Doodle Cat.

The music was spirited but the times were sad, for it was a time of war. Young men went a soldiering and young women grew lonely. As they sat spinning, they sang songs such as "*Johnny Has Gone For a Soldier.*"

JOHNNY HAS GONE FOR A SOLDIER

When the Revolutionary War was over, men turned their thoughts to establishing a government for the newly formed nation. Their first attempt failed. Their second attempt, the Constitution of the United States, became the fundamental law of the land. In the preamble, or introduction of this document, the men who drew up the Constitution stated the purposes for which the government was formed. We will present it in choral speaking at this time so that you may hear how it sings out for the rights of mankind.

'PREAMBLE TO THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION'

"We, the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

To the singing of hearts, the ringing of axes, the creaking of iron-rimmed cart wheels, and the clanging of hammers, the nation grew. Slowly, a network of canals spread across the East. Gradually the railroads crept north, south, and west toward the Mississippi. White-winged sailing ships carried the American flag to scattered ports on all of the seven seas. And as strong-armed men toiled to dig the canals, lay the tracks, and set the sails, they sang.

AMERICA, THE GREATEST AND BEST MEDLEY

O Susanna, Home on the Range, Dixie, Shenandoah, I've Been Working on the Railroad

Gold was the magic word that turned the eyes of the young nation toward the Far West. From all over America, by land and by sea, men rushed to the gold fields of California. Behind the Forty-niners came a flood of pioneers—whips cracking, oxen bellowing, wagons rolling westward as clouds of dust blew against the sun.

The flood of settlers poured slowly on over the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails. Farms were homesteaded; towns sprang up; cowboys began to drive vast herds of cattle up to the railroad that in 1869 joined the East and West. As they labored, they sang. They sang of their hopes, their fears, and their days of toil. And many poets, inspired by the fearless conquerors of the West, wrote of a pioneer's courage and their gallant fight against hardships and loneliness in this manner as they built *THE PROMISED LAND* which today is our fifty states.

FIFTY STATES IN RHYME

There were play songs as well as work songs. Any special occasion—a wedding, a christening, or a husking bee was the signal for neighbors to gather. Then young and old danced to the merry fiddle and let their voices blend in happy carefree song. “*Turkey in the Straw*,” for example, dates back to 1815, and millions of people have sung its endless verses and jiggled its rollicksome rhythm.

Deleted: ¶

TURKEY IN THE STRAW

Most beautiful of all American folk songs are the spirituals, folk songs with religious themes. Composed and sung by slaves on the old plantations of the South, the spiritual gave expression to the faith of a people in bondage and their longing to find the road to heaven. Today, the rich melodies, deep feelings, and personal tone of these songs have made them beloved of all Americans. And “*Every Time We Feel the Spirit*” we sing one of our favorites.

LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING

As we sing on through America's history, tribute must be paid to the American soldiers of the great wars. We need to recall the songs they sang and the cause for which they laid down their lives. The wars of this century have taken our armed forces all over the world. Our next songs express the readiness of our fighting men to go abroad to fight for the freedom America has always prized so highly.

*OVER THERE
GOD BLESS THE USA
DESERT STORM*

In all parts of the world America's war dead lie. They died to preserve the Freedom we Americans cherish. Bugles blow above them in such places as Flanders Fields.

IN FLANDERS FIELDS

In Flanders Fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard be amid the guns below.

We are the Dead.

Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Fields.

Written by *John McCrae* 1915

Deleted: -

Wars are caused by man, by man-made institutions, and by the way men have organized their society. What man has made, man can change. Our next song reminds us that all men can seek peace in a beautiful, constructive way.

LET THERE BE PEACE ON EARTH

Everything is part of our American song—our flag, our Declaration of Independence, our Constitution, our world leadership, our resolution. It is the freshest, liveliest song in the world. And it's ours.

Ours to enjoy
Ours to protect
Ours to preserve
Ours to transmit. . .
Intact. . .
To future generations. . .
Yet unborn.

OUR AMERICAN SONG

Is a good song,
A Golden Dream Song
Flying High.

GOLDEN DREAM

We hope our program has proven that our country is rich in patriotic and national music. The songs are a very part of our history and our development as a nation, for they have been born of the great events which have shaped our destiny and have flowed spontaneously from hearts and souls inspired by the events of the moment. New periods of national enthusiasm and fervor will come, such as 9/11 in 2001. New songs will be sung—but there will always remain a deeper reverence for the older songs, for they are the very essence of that something which we call love of country.

We hope that this program also will keep fresh in memory some of those songs, born of circumstances, which should be known and sung and loved by every American.

Every American – you and us! ! !

AMERICA'S OUR HOME
THIS IS AMERICA

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Calkins, Lucy McCormick. *The Art of Teaching Writing*. New Edition.
Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1994.

A description of what writing workshop looks like in the classroom at various levels including many classroom examples.

McDougal Littell. *Creating America, A History of the United States, Beginnings through Reconstruction*. McDougal Littell Inc., 2002.

The Pittsburgh Public Schools use this text in the United States History curriculum for students in the eighth grade scholars' program.

Stuckey, Sterling, and Salvucci, Linda Kerrigan. *Call to Freedom, Beginnings to 18 77*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2003.

The Pittsburgh Public Schools use this text in the United States History curriculum for students in the mainstream eighth grade program.

Tompkins, Gail E. *Teaching Writing: Balancing Process and Product*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 2000.

Tompkins explains the teaching of writing in elementary and middle school.

WEBSITES and CDs

www.mcdougallittell.com

McDougal Littell Inc. *America's Music, Songs from America's History*.

ISBN-0-618-03721-7 Bar Code: 9780618037216.

Excellent selection of songs from the various eras in the building of our nation.

Primary Source Explorer. *An Interactive Journey through America's Documents*.

ISBN 0-618-03708 X, McDougal Littell, Inc.

An excellent source of important quotations from America's documents.

St. Clair Entertainment Group. *God Bless America United We Stand!* P.O. Box 34512, 2001 Place Vertu, Montreal, QC. Volumes 1, 2, & 3.

ISBN O-618-03721-7 Bar Codes: 7 7796600822 6, 7 7796600832 5,

7 7796600842 4

This 3 volume set of CDs contains a wide variety of America's important songs.

http://www.amishacres.com/aa_musical_theatre/1998_season/1776/1776.htm

Good background information for the musical *1776*.

APPENDICES

*This is an example of a short program that could be used as a starting point for the larger activity, **OUR AMERICAN SONG.***

Dream a Dream

We are gathered together this afternoon for a very special celebration. It is a birthday party to honor, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who was born on January 15, 1929. When he was born, his parents at first named him Michael, but upon the urging of his grandfather, changed his name to Martin Luther, which better suited him.

When Dr. King was growing up, not all people in the United States because of the color of their skin, were treated equally, even though Thomas Jefferson had written in our Declaration of Independence that—“*All men are created equal with certain inalienable rights such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*”

Dr. King's skin was black, the same as some of you who are African Americans. But regardless of the color of one's skin, everyone's heart is the same color. All of our hearts are red and it is in our hearts that we find love—which is most important to all people and which was most important to Dr. King.

I AM AS ONE

We would like to do two things this afternoon during our birthday party for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. First, we would like you to lift your hearts with love, and then lift your voices high as we perform today's program entitled, “***Dream a Dream.***” We're sure that somewhere out there he will be watching and listening.

MY COUNTRY 'TIS OF THEE, arranged by Ruth E. Bowman

Today's program honors the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who was born in Atlanta, Georgia, seventy-six years ago—January 15, 1929.

HEAVEN IS SO HIGH
(American Negro gospel song)

Dr. King's early years were spent playing with his brother and sister, attending school (where he was an outstanding student), delivering newspapers,

and trying to understand the prejudice of the white community against the black people and the unequal treatment of them under the law.

I'M GONNA SING WHEN THE SPIRIT SAYS SING!
(American Negro Spiritual, arranged. by Ruth Roberts)

Deleted: ¶

In high school Martin excelled in public speaking and spoke from his dad's pulpit when he was 17 years old. His sermon was so well received that he decided to become a minister like his father and Grandfather King.

THIS TRAIN
(American Negro Spiritual arr. by Ruth Roberts)

Martin Luther graduated from Morewood College in Atlanta, from Crozier Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania, where he was president of the senior class, and from Boston University where he received his doctorate. He also studied at Harvard.

He married Coretta Scott in 1953 and became the minister of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama in 1954.

HE'S GOT THE WHOLE WORLD IN HIS HANDS
(American Negro Spiritual arr. by Ruth Roberts)

In December of 1955 there was trouble in Alabama when a black woman, Mrs. Rosa Parks, refused to obey the law ordering all black persons to go to the back of the bus and leave all front seats for white persons. She was arrested for staying seated when ordered to give her seat to a white person. Dr. King asked the black people to protest against the unfairness of such laws by not riding buses until they were treated the same as white passengers on the bus. No black person rode the Montgomery buses for a whole year.

DO, LORD, REMEMBER ME
(American Negro Gospel Song arr. by Ruth Roberts)

The Supreme Court of the United States in 1964 said the unfair laws had to be changed. Black people did not have to give their seats to white people. Due to the success of this first non-violent protest Martin Luther King, Jr. was recognized as the non-violent leader of his people in their struggle for equal rights.

GLO-RY, GLO-RY HAL-LE-LU-JAH!
DO, LORD, RE-MEM-BER ME

In 1957 Dr. King became president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). This position enabled him to travel from city to city spreading his ideas, leading protest marches and sit-ins. These marches brought violent protests against the marchers by people who didn't want the laws changed and also brought criticism of Martin Luther King, Jr. by other black leaders for not instructing his people as they did theirs to protest violently. King's people continued to sing "*WE SHALL OVERCOME*" as they marched along peacefully. Listen closely to the haunting melody of this song,

WE SHALL OVERCOME

In 1963 Dr. King led thousands in a march to Washington, DC, where he made his famous speech called “*I HAVE A DREAM.*” It was a dream about fair laws for everyone. We are going to recite it for you now.

I HAVE A DREAM

Leading marches and sit-ins caused Dr. King to be jailed 17 times. While in jail he carried on his work through his writing of letters and books urging people to register to vote and to continue their nonviolent protests.

THE OLD ARK'S A-MOVERIN'
(*American Negro Spiritual*)

In October, 1964, Dr. King won a very special honor, The Nobel Peace Prize which is given each year to the person who is judged to have done most to bring peace to the world.

LET THERE BE PEACE ON EARTH

Dr. King continued to work and plan until April 4, 1968, when he was shot as he stood on the balcony of a Memphis motel and died an hour later. This tragedy shocked the nation and the world. President Johnson proclaimed April 7th as a national day of mourning for Dr. King. A memorial march was led by Mrs. King and the four King children through Memphis on April 8th. Hundred of marchers in other cities also paid tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

A mule drawn caisson carried the casket of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. toward the campus of Morehouse College for memorial services. Dignitaries and friends followed the caisson.

FREE AT LAST
(*American Negro Spiritual arr. by Ruth Roberts*)

Dr. King, the foremost leader of nonviolent civil rights movement, was dead at 39, but his work for justice continues to have an effect in the minds and hearts of people of good will throughout the world.

We honor him in closing with the reading of a few of our original personal tributes to him and with the singing of “*Dream A Dream*” composed by Ed Robertson.

(The number of students who will be selected to read their tributes will vary depending on the allotted time of the program.)

Background: A rainbow balloon sculpture provided a colorful background for the huge birthday party. With the help of staff and dedicated parents who arrived at 6:00 a.m. the morning of the performance, our “Dream” became our rainbow colored reality.

Deleted: ¶

¶

Deleted: ¶