

## **Strange Fruit – Metaphors, Music and Place – Jazz and Hip Hop as Reflective of the Times**

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### **Abstract**

This unit is inspired by the lyrics from the song “Strange Fruit,” made famous by Billie Holliday. By studying the development and history of swing music and hip-hop music, students will begin to understand how music reflects what happens in society. This unit will use student-driven inquiry to uncover how Holliday and her contemporaries are alike and different from hip-hop artists. The inquiry will draw upon film footage, lyrics, popular culture, and historical text to show the interaction between music and the social context which created art from Greenwich Village and beyond. It will use music videos, lyrics, documentary films and dramatic films. The lyrics from the song “Strange Fruit” will be used to demonstrate the power of metaphors and figurative language. The unit will concurrently, analyze and interpret lyrics, poetry and film to appreciate the social context which helped create popular music. The project is designed for middle school students (grades 6<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup>). It will cut across the curriculum by incorporating music, art, social studies, reading and writing. The unit will culminate in a performance of students’ original spoken word or music lyrics set to jazz and hip-hop beats, and presentations of digital stories reflecting the role that music played during the Holliday’s pre-civil rights era along with the influence hip-hop has had for the post-civil rights generation.