

Story Songs: Connecting Art with Nature with Mark Vollmer and Jim Eaglesmith

Grades 1 – 3

Discovering Nevada’s natural environment through earth science, poetry, and singing. Learn about Nevada’s fascinating landscape through photographs, music, and creative writing. This lesson brings to life the story of how Nevada’s fascinating geology supports all animals & plants. From this presentation students will create a new verse to the state song “*Home Means Nevada*”.

Materials: note-taking/journaling materials (paper & pencil), 2 stones or sticks collected from outside for use as percussion instruments, PDF of song “One Community”

The Lesson:

1. Introduce the lesson and what the student will do during the program.
2. 5-minute Nevada geology slide show. Student takes notes.
3. Pause video & go outside & take notes of surroundings: Are there stones – what color/shapes are they & are they round or have sharp edges? How big are they? If there are no stones, are there sticks? How long & how thick? Also, foliage/tree observations, animal sounds, sky activity, anything nature oriented. Before going back inside, student collects 2 stones or 2 sticks to be used as percussion instruments.
4. Student writes down what inspired them/what they learned from the slide show & from their exploration outside.
5. Using key words selected from their journal, student creates a new verse to the song “*Home Means Nevada*.” Here are some sample words to help the student get started: lakes, lava, rhythm, sunrise, iron, rivers, earth, nature, sunset.
6. Perform song “Home Means Nevada”, including the new verse, with stones/sticks as percussion.

Connection to the Nevada Academic Content Standards for the Fine Arts

- Creating: Conceiving and developing new artistic work and ideas.
- Performing: Realizing artistic ideas and work through interpretation and presentation.
- Connecting: Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context.

ESS1.C The History of Planet Earth: Local and regional patterns of rock formations reveal changes over time due to earth forces such as earthquakes.

MU:Cr2.4.1 Demonstrate, select, and organize musical ideas for an improvisation, arrangement, or composition to express intent.

VA:Cr1.K-1.1 Engage in exploration and imaginative play with materials.

W.K-2.7 Participate in shared research and writing projects.

MU:Pr4.5.1 Sing and play instruments to age-appropriate literature.

Connection to Literacy:

- *Active listening* – throughout the lesson, viewing & taking notes during the Nevada geology slide show, listening to the sounds of nature outside, and listening to the song “Home Means Nevada” to help establish foundation for songwriting/performing.
- *Vocabulary* – geology terms appropriate for grades 1 - 3 during the slide show, music terms during the songwriting and performance process.

- *Reading* –read previously written verses of “Home Means Nevada”
- *Writing* –write in their journal about geology slide show, observations from outdoor excursion, and songwriting.
- *Expressing ideas* –express and interpret in the creation of a new song verse.

Resources

StorySongs: Celebrating the Land and Community”, part of a Spark the Imagination video series presented by Sierra Arts Foundation and City of Sparks.

Part 1: <https://www.facebook.com/SierraArtsFoundation/videos/2710582465932677/>

Part 2: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1391045031090599>

Part 3: <https://www.facebook.com/SierraArtsFoundation/videos/600994613855583/>

“StorySongs: From the Soul of the American West” visual/music DVD by Mark Vollmer and Jim Eaglesmith. Jim’s original music tells captivating stories of the landscapes of the Great Basin Desert, Sierra Nevada, and the American Southwest with their human interactions, matched to Mark’s award-winning outdoor photography. Available from the artists, and from <https://timelessproductions.com/story-songs/> .

“Mother Nature’s Child” DVD by Fuzzy Slippers Productions. Video explores how nature plays a role in children's health and development.

“EarthSongs” CD by Douglas Wood. Easy-to-listen and to-learn acoustic songs about nature. A companion to the book below.

The Earthsong Book: A Songbook for Earth-Lovers of All Ages by Douglas Wood. Songs celebrating the earth and its critters for young and old.

Everybody Needs a Rock by Byrd Baylor. Tips for finding “a special rock that you find yourself and keep as long as you can--maybe forever.”

Geology Activity Book: Packed with Activities and Geology Facts by Jenny Jacoby. Little children can discover more geology at home by reading the simple explanations and doing the beautifully illustrated activities on each page.

50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth by the Earthworks Group. Simple inspiring projects, tips, and little-known facts that puts a kid's own carbon footprint into perspective.

About the Artists

Mark Vollmer

A widely published photographer, freelance writer and instructor, Mark Vollmer is based in Sparks, Nevada. His long-time collaboration with Reno singer/songwriter Jim Eaglesmith includes their live science/music/visual art edutainment program “StorySongs” for schools, libraries, & museums. Since 2009 they have enjoyed grant-funded support from Nevada Arts Council, National Endowment for the Arts, Pioneer Center Youth Programs, Sierra Arts Foundation, and Great Basin Outdoor School. Their very popular DVD “StorySongs: From the Soul of the American West”, was released in 2010 and funded by the NAC & NEA.

Contact: mvaznv@gmail.com

(775)223-6438

www.facebook.com/mark.vollmer.58/

Jim Eaglesmith

A lifelong eclectic songwriter, storyteller, performance artist and author, Jim believes that the underlying truth to all mythic cultures was embodied in the music, dance, and stories, and that borrowing from these traditional ways helps to bring inspirational ideas to the artistic environments of 21st Century Edutainment.

Contact: jimeaglesmith@gmail.com (775)338-7151 <https://www.facebook.com/jimeaglesmith>



Nevada Arts Council Teaching Artist Roster

The Nevada Arts Council Teaching Artist Roster is an online resource for schools, organizations and communities seeking to engage teaching artists. Roster artists are experienced in collaborating with schools and communities to conduct arts learning and cultural experiences in, through and about the arts.

Explore the roster at <https://www.nvartscouncil.org/rosters/teaching-artists/>