

# FREEDOM

## Pre-task : Music in traditional settings

Most activities, chores and responsibilities in our old, traditional and rural settings were carried out with the accompaniment of song, humming, measured foot stomping or hand clapping. Whether domestic, out in the veld looking after livestock, planting and hoeing weeds or harvesting as a community, the spirit of working together towards any achievement was woven together through harmonic singing.

Forced by colonialism to leave traditional life and migrate to the mines and emerging cities, those songs were transformed, as the languages and styles mixed, into new expressions. In any mine, the various processes were executed by singing labourers.

It was the same with railway and road construction. The synchronicity and the bind beyond various cultures from Lesotho, Malawi, Zimbabwe and South Africa, were expressed in song.

Music and song became the unfettered and free art form, accompanied by dance at times, to forge the necessary and new harmonies, the new urban identities and the new Africans of the city.

## **Music and the struggle for freedom**

Because of the exploitation and harsh conditions of work and life in the mines, because of police harassment for all types of permits, because of the arrests and prison experiences, the resistance and desire for social and political changes, led to strikes, fights with the police and political mobilisation.

In the Johannesburg context, they were: the 1922 miner's strike; the 1930s disturbances of the Industrial Commercial Union; the 1940s protest against the imposition of Apartheid in 1948; the ANC-led Defiance Campaigns of the 1950s; the 1960s Pan Africanist Congress uprisings in Langa, Cape Town and Sharpeville.

The cohesion, the courage, and the daring spirit of the young males and females protesting their undesirable existences were cemented by chants, songs, hymns and more music. Again, music became the reliable conveyor belt for people's emotions. Music created memories in the chapters of the freedom struggle. Music galvanised Africans, Coloureds, Indians and progressive Whites never to retreat in the face of saracens, dogs and police rifles.

In the popular urban music forms like marabi, kwela, mgqashiyo, African jazz, acapella harmonies, choral choirs, music was an excellent terrain of escape, of

camouflage to maintain the spirit of freedom, without overtly protesting. Music applied poetic words, hidden metaphors and instrumentation to keep the light of freedom alive.

## **The questions aim at testing your grasp of the relationship between South African music and Freedom**

1. When Hugh Masekela got to New York, Miles Davis said to him, “Don’t play our style of music, play your style of music.” In other words, don’t imitate us, be authentically yourself. How would you describe your own authentic musical expression?

2. Culture and music have played an important role in freedom through the likes of Paul Simon’s Graceland, Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela, Ray Phiri, Johnny Clegg and Lucky Dube. These artists took South African music to the world. How would you create a musical expression that is able to cross borders?

3. Where in the town, village or city where you live, do you go to experience culture, music and freedom.

Share with us what happens there?

4. Research your favourite South African exiled musician and name one thing about his or her journey that resonates with you?