

Aretha Franklin

“Music does a lot of things for a lot of people. It’s transporting, for sure. It can take you right back, it’s uplifting, it’s encouraging, it’s strengthening.”

Aretha Louise Franklin was an American singer, songwriter, actress, pianist, and civil rights activist. She began her career as a child singing gospel at the Baptist church, where her father was the minister.

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Discover

1. Aretha is known for her gospel take on rhythm and blues music! You may have heard her popular song, *Respect!* In the quote listed at the top of this page, Aretha describes what music means to her. What does music mean to you? What is your favorite song? Is there a song that reminds you of a specific time in your life or takes you back to your favorite place? Discuss with your troop and play your favorite song for each other. Why is this song your favorite?

2. At the age of 16, Aretha went on tour with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The pair was very close and shared their passion for civil rights. We recently celebrated Martin Luther King Day. What day do we celebrate on? What do you know about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.? What did he do? Discuss with your troop! During your research on Martin Luther King, what are the names of the other civil rights activist you came across? What did they do? Have you heard about them before?

3. Did you know that Aretha taught herself how to play piano from listening to music? She did not know how to read sheet music and didn't learn to read sheet music until she went to the Julliard School, which was after she had been playing piano a very long time. Have you ever taught yourself something without fully knowing the rules or having a "how to" book in front of you? Maybe you taught yourself how to hula hoop or braid a friendship bracelet! Talk about this experience with your troop. Did it take you a few times to figure it out or were you good at it from the very first try? How did it feel to keep trying and to get better at it?

4. Aretha performed at not only one, but three presidential inaugurations. She sang at Jimmy Carter's inauguration in 1977, Bill Clinton's in 1993, and Barack Obama's in 2009. What is an inauguration? When does it happen? Do you know who was recently inaugurated into the White House in 2021? Research and discuss with your troop.

Connect

5. Aretha was dubbed as the "Queen of Soul" after a memorable performance headlining at the Regal Theater in Chicago. She is known for her belting voice and rhythm and blues style. What do you hope you

are known for? What would you like to be dubbed? If you could be the “Queen of _____” what would it be? Discuss with your troop.

6. Over her six decades of singing, Aretha sold over 75 million records. In 1966, when Aretha rose to fame, records were about \$3 each. In today’s dollars that would be about \$25 per record. How much money would Aretha make in today’s world by selling 75 million records? How much money did she make back in the 60’s? Compare your answers with your troop.
7. Aretha appeared on the cover of Time magazine in 1968. Google the image of the Time magazine cover of Aretha Franklin. Then draw your own version of the magazine cover. After learning more about Aretha what words, symbols or objects would you include in your drawing to describe her?
8. Aretha was the first women to be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1987. Do some research on other performers in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Have you heard of any of them? Create a poster or flyer announcing that Aretha has been inducted into the hall of fame. Design it in small groups within your troop and then vote on the best poster.

Take Action

9. In 1967, Aretha Franklin recorded her popular song “Respect.” This song became the soundtrack for not only the civil rights movement but also the women’s rights movement. Listen to the song. The YouTube link is below. What about the song makes it an anthem for feminism and civil right activism? Why do you think it was so widely popular? Discuss with



your troop. Decide what the anthem would be for this time in history. What is going on in the world? Do we have songs that are speaking to these events? Decide what the anthem would be for today and share with your troop, your friends or your family. Do they agree or disagree?

<https://youtu.be/JzqGZjFnYnA>

10. Aretha not only advocated for civil rights for African Americans and rights for women, she also was a fierce supporter for Native American rights. How does the Native American rights movement compare or differ from the African American civil rights movement? Do you have Native American heritage in your family? If not, what is your heritage? Talk with your parents about your heritage and where your family comes from. Put together a family tree to show your troop and friends.