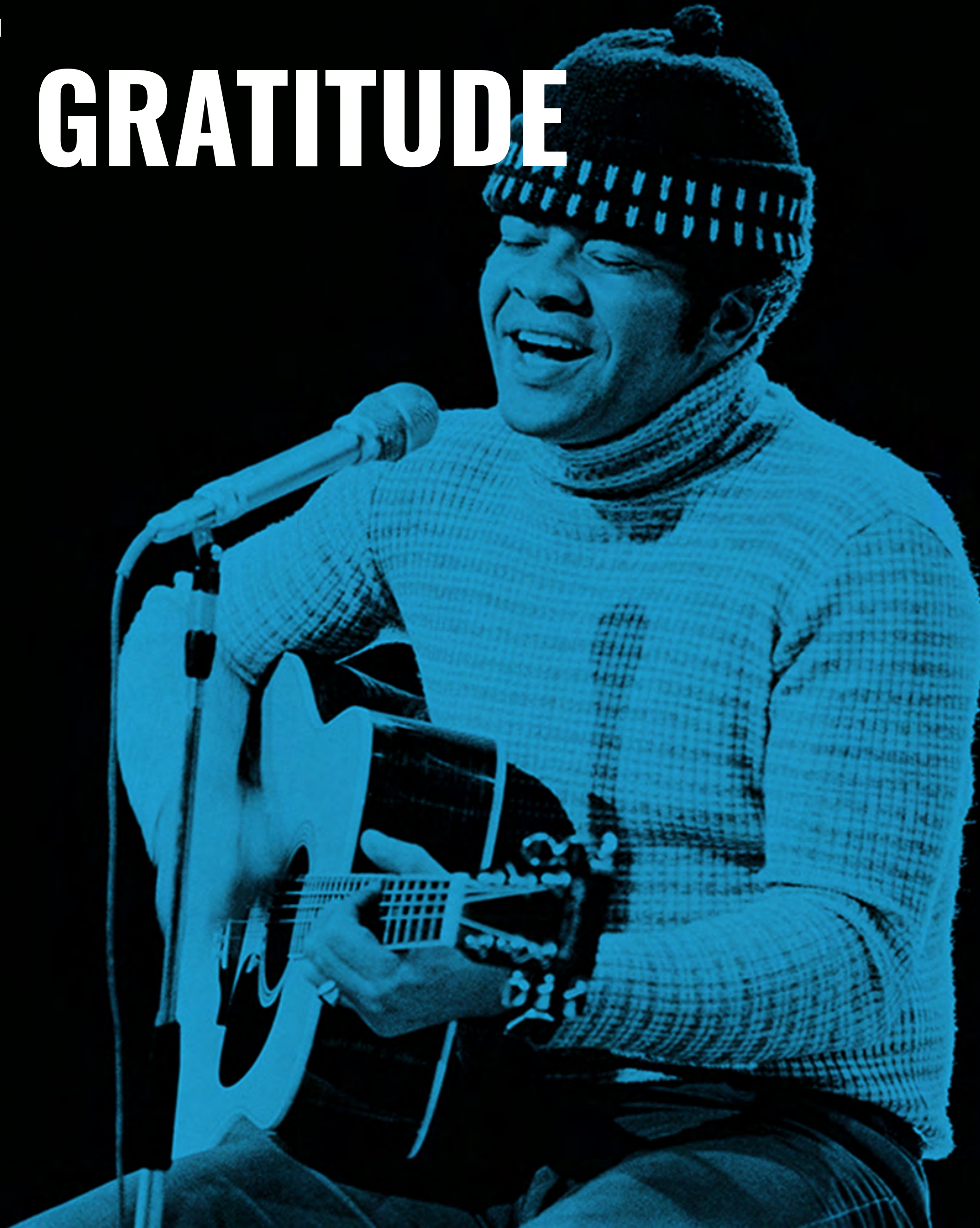


LEAN ON ME: EXPRESSING GRATITUDE AND CARE WITH MUSIC

Est. Time: 45 minutes

Subjects: ELA, General Music, SEL

Age Range: All Ages




★ *TEACHROCK* ★



How does Bill Withers' "Lean on Me" express gratitude and the importance of mutual care?

In this lesson you will:

- Discover the musician Bill Withers
 - Investigate the inspiration behind Withers' song "Lean on Me," and its lasting cultural impact
 - Identify the first responders, frontline workers, and helpers that risk themselves to protect their communities
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Bill Withers was an American singer-songwriter who is known for his warmth, intelligence, and compassion towards others.


He grew up in a coal mining town in West Virginia.

Watch [this video](#) to learn more about his early life.





Consider or ask a friend:

- How did Bill Withers learn about kindness and compassion as a child in a coal mining community?
 - Why might those traits be valued where he grew up?
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One of Bill Withers' most famous songs is "Lean on Me." It was recorded in 1972, and inspired by the mining community where he grew up.


Listen to the song and **read the lyrics.**





Consider or ask a friend:

- How might the message of “Lean on Me” be important to coal mining communities?
 - What might the phrase “Lean on Me” mean in this song?
 - In what ways might the message of the song be important to communities outside of Withers’? Can you think of a specific example of a community that might value the song’s message?
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Since it was written, “Lean on Me” has become an anthem to community support.


On January 20, 2009, people throughout the United States came to see Barack Obama’s Inauguration Ceremony. Around 4,000 people got caught in a tunnel and could not get to the ceremony.

Read this article and watch the videos to see what happened.





Consider or ask a friend:

- How do you think the people in the tunnel felt that morning?
 - How might these people's mood have changed when everyone started singing "Lean on Me"?
 - In what other situations might singing "Lean on Me" be helpful or appropriate?
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Bill Withers died of cardiovascular disease on March 30th, 2020, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.


On April 18th, Stevie Wonder performed “Lean on Me” during the Together at Home televised concert, which raised money for healthcare workers during the Coronavirus.

Watch Stevie Wonder’s performance [here](#).





Consider or ask a friend:

- In what ways might “Lean on Me” be an appropriate song during the coronavirus pandemic?
 - The Together at Home event was held for healthcare workers, but they are not the only group of people risking their health to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic. Who else could be considered a helper during the pandemic?
 - What sorts of people do you “lean on” to stay fed, healthy, clean, and safe?
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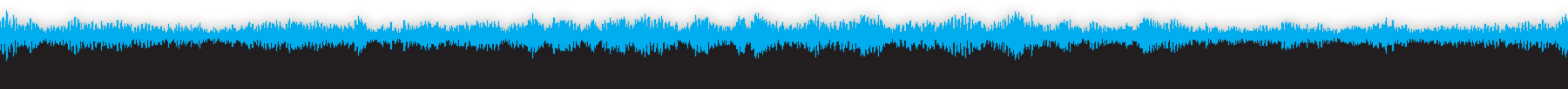
SUMMARY

- Bill Withers was born in a mining community in West Virginia, and went on to become one of the most cherished songwriters in American history
- Withers' song "Lean on Me" was inspired by the close-knit mining community in which he was raised, and since has become an anthem for mutual care and community
- During times of crisis, "Lean on Me" is one way many people express gratitude to the front line workers and helpers that protect our communities



BE CREATIVE

Identify a person or group of people you might “lean on” during the Coronavirus pandemic. Examples might include healthcare professionals, grocery clerks and stockers, delivery people, sanitation workers, public transit employees, or teachers.



BE CREATIVE

Use chalk to write a thank you message to the person you've chosen, somewhere they might see it. For instance, write a note to delivery people at the front of your home or building, or a note to sanitation workers where trash pickup occurs.

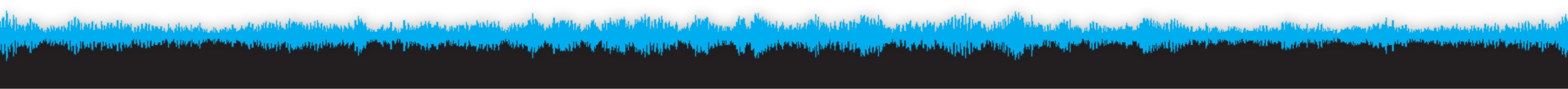
Also consider writing a friendly letter to the person you chose, thanking them for the work they do for your community. See [this link](#) for advice on writing the letter. We'd love you to share the letter with the world as well, see the "Connect" slide for instructions.



BE MINDFUL

Many cities across the country are thanking frontline workers everyday at 7PM by cheering, making noise, or singing out their windows. With friends and family, sing “Lean on Me” during this time. See who in the community might join you!

Using **these instructions**, conduct a virtual or in-person Gratitude Circle with family and/or friends, as a way to reflect on what you are grateful for.



BE CURIOUS

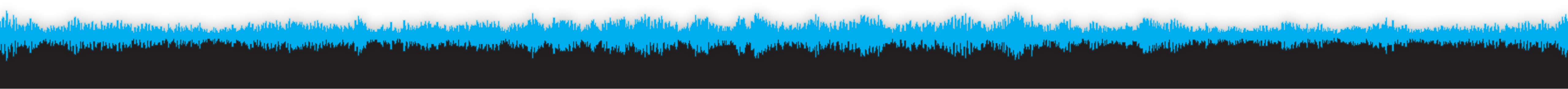
To learn more about Bill Withers!

Explore his discography [here](#), read [this article](#), or listen to [this interview](#).



CONNECT

Share with us! Either you or an adult in your life can share a picture of your chalk message, your thank you letter, or a video of you singing “Lean on Me” with TeachRock on **Instagram** or **Facebook**, email to **info@teachrock.org**, or Tweet it to **@TeachRock** and tag it with **#LeanOnUs**





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Visit us at teachrock.org for hundreds of other free arts-rich resources for every age range and classroom.

Please check back to teachrock.org/distancelearning frequently as we will update the material daily!