

# **GUTS, GUMPTION AND GO-AHEAD**

## **Annie Mae Hunt Remembers**

### **A Discussion Guide**

**LENGTH:** 24:00      **LEVEL:** Grades 7 & Up

**PURPOSE:** Although the video records the history of one remarkable woman, like all histories of individuals, her history is played out against a much larger one — that of a country and its people. The independence and determination of Annie Mae Hunt will empower the viewer with a sense of their own family history and provide a feeling that, with resolve and hard work, they too can achieve their goals. For many, Annie Mae is a symbol of strength and survival. Her story remains one of pride and achievement, resiliency and self-determination for women of all colors and backgrounds, regardless of their individual histories and aspirations.

**INTRODUCTION:** Granddaughter of a freed slave, Annie Mae Hunt spent her life in Texas picking cotton, ironing shirts, and cleaning other people's houses. Through her own determination, she went into business for herself and was able to buy her own house, educate her children and become an active voice in community politics.

Her story is about freedom and education, work and marriage, childbirth and motherhood. It is about the strengths, the contributions, and the heartaches of the black working woman. But, her story is also one that speaks to the problems and concerns shared by all women.

**SYNOPSIS:** The program opens with Annie Mae reflected in a mirror. She begins her family history by telling the viewer who she is. The use of archival footage, stills, and music sets the tone throughout the video. From her own home Annie Mae relates the oral history passed on to her by her Grandmother and recounts the events of her own life and those of her mother. The influence of Grandma Tildy is reflected throughout the video as Tildy's voice is heard not only recounting events but also speaking directly to Annie Mae.

The viewer learns of Tildy's life as a slave: the vivid memory of her mother being taken away and sold, of Annie Mae's Uncle Theodore, the illegitimate son of the Young Mawster and Tildy, and of "catchin' babies".

Annie Mae's story reveals a portrait of a woman who, through sheer determination and a rare independence, worked for 19 years as a seamstress and as an Avon salesperson and provided a better life for herself and her family. Viewers hear of her involvement in community politics,

registering black voters and actively supporting the election of local candidates. Always wanting to attend a presidential inauguration, excitedly and with a great sense of accomplishment, Annie Mae describes her trip to Washington, D. C., by Greyhound Bus to attend the inauguration of Jimmy Carter.

The video concludes with Annie Mae's image again in a mirror as she reflects on her life and family. She speaks directly to Tildy, who so strongly influenced her. Connecting the generations of her family, she tells Tildy about her own six children, 26 grandchildren and 22 great grandchildren — all of whom, like Annie Mae, have "GUTS, GUMPTION AND GO-AHEAD."

## **Classroom Activities**

**Objectives:** To learn more of what life was like for Annie Mae and better understand her accomplishments. To learn more of your own history and enhance self-esteem through an awareness of one's own unique abilities.

### **I - Popular Culture**

**Using the Library** - find books and video programs that reflect attitudes and depict life for and about African Americans: Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn, Alex Haley's Roots (novel and TV series), The Souls of Black Folk by W. E. B. DuBois, novels by James Baldwin. **Films:** *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pitman*, *Places in the Heart*, *Mississippi Burning*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Discuss how popular culture portrays African Americans. Are these representative of the people you know? How do these depictions reflect life for African Americans today?

**Music** is an important part of GUTS, GUMPTION AND GO-AHEAD.

Listen to music from various historical periods. Determine:

- 1) What importance music plays in the lives of the people?
- 2) How are the times reflected in the music?
- 3) How is the human condition (spirit) reflected in various forms of music?

Note: Some forms of music that might be considered are work songs, gospels and spirituals.

**II - Current Events** - Bring to the classroom newspaper and magazine articles that report discrimination and/or conditions effecting African Americans, stories that deal with racial injustice and/or violence among the races.

Be prepared to discuss: 1) What attitudes and/or conditions brought about or contributed to the event? 2) Could the event have happened in your community, with what results? 3) What can be done to foster positive attitudes and conditions between the races and eliminate hostilities? (cite examples of programs in your community that foster better relations among and/or improve conditions for the races) 4) As an individual, what can you do?

**III - Classroom Speakers and Discussion** - Invite prominent and knowledgeable African Americans and other minorities to speak to your class on topics such as: discrimination in housing, employment and education; the effect of voting and other civil rights legislation; what obstacles minorities face, what obstacles have been overcome, and what remains to be done.

Through the experiences of these people, try to imagine what differences and attitudes would exist in your life if you had not been born the person you were.

**IV - History Lesson** - Compare and contrast life among the white and black (and/or other minorities) population during the 1900s, 1920s, 1940s, 1960s, with the present. What were conditions like? What was going on in your state and in the country during these times that effected life for minorities? How were blacks viewed, minorities in general? How have things changed? How are they the same? Look at and collect old newspaper reports that help to illustrate the conditions and events.

**V - Personal History** - Annie Mae's story is not only one that spans history but also a personal one. Compare your life (childhood, education, home life, etc.,) with Annie Mae's, her grandmother, and mother. Is it better? How? What qualities of Annie Mae's life contributed to her character? What role does family play in determining the choices an individual makes? How does it affect an individual's sense of self?

Make a **Family Tree** tracing your unique heritage. Whether you use the traditional "tree" pattern or choose to compile a written history of your family, include information on the full names, dates and places of births, deaths, and marriages for members of your family. Other sources for information are: the memories of family members, family quilts, birth certificates, church records, family bibles, photo albums, school records and yearbooks. Old newspaper records can be useful as they often publish

marriages, print obituaries, and sometimes even record births.

**Write an Essay based on:** family; interesting members of your family; your family's heritage; the oral history passed down through the generations of your family.

**TO LEARN MORE. .** When Annie Mae was born in 1909, Grandma Tildy was 62 years old. Tildy's youth was spent in slavery, a condition that existed in America since the 1600s and thrived for well over 200 years. As a young child, Annie Mae lived on a plantation in a county of Texas where conditions of slavery still existed. Her life reflects the hardship of being black and living in the south during a time of turbulence and great change.

There are many books, periodicals and journals in community and school libraries dealing with slavery, events of the civil war and those surrounding the civil rights movement — historical accounts and personal narratives. Your local and state historical societies are excellent resources on local, state and world history. Cultural museums, The Smithsonian Institution, private foundations and associations concerned with preserving heritage are important resources, also.

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