



Background and Timeline

AFL, originally The Songs Inspired by Literature Project, was founded in 2000 by singer-songwriter Deborah Pades after her *Angela's Ashes*-inspired song proved effective in raising awareness and support for literacy. After consultation with literacy programs, learners, educators, librarians, and others in the field, the project secured start-up funding from the California State Library and the creative participation of a host of artist partners. The first products were two benefit CDs designed to draw attention and support for literacy providers. *Chapters One* and *Two* incorporated songs donated by established artists such as Bruce Springsteen, Suzanne Vega, Tom Waits, David Bowie, Grace Slick, Roseanne Cash, and Steve Earle, connecting listeners to books written by John Steinbeck, George Orwell, Colette, Homer, Shaara, and others. Other songs were chosen from hundreds of entries to SIBL song contests.

AFL set out to raise awareness of and funds for the adult and family literacy movement. In just 3 years, AFL has been covered by all the major media outlets including National Public Radio, Public Radio International, Associated Press, New York Times and Rolling Stone Magazine.

Teachers at all levels enthusiastically adopted the CDs as exciting, effective, and engaging learning resources, prompting AFL to develop related lesson plans for educators to download from the web site. We receive many phone calls, emails, and letters of support from educators, for example:

“For many [adult men prisoners], the song touched upon a familiar circumstance in their childhood—poverty, hunger, parental alcoholism and abandonment. I believe it is their ability to relate to the main character that will entice my students to read the book. One student has already begun to read the book with a tutor and dictionary by his side. At the end of class, one man asked me, “You mean people really want to read a book like that?” I told him it was on the NY Times Best Sellers list for weeks, and that there are shelves of books just waiting to be opened. He said that he has a story, too. Perhaps the SIBL Project will inspire new writers as well.”

Literacy Specialist, Vision Literacy—Correctional Facility

“In national studies regarding literacy and educational achievement, Tennessee always ranks near or at the very bottom, so educators here have lots of work to do. Many of our college students in the public universities, though literate, are not proficient, critical or enthusiastic readers. I want to use the SIBL CD to help change that, for, although reading is low on the list of favorite things to do for so many students, listening to music ranks pretty high. I am always looking for places where the arts intersect, and I find multimedia approaches most appealing. Thanks to SIBL for providing this opportunity!”

English and Composition Teacher at the University of Tennessee at Martin

“I am constantly on the lookout for ideas to connect the world of literature with my 21st century students. I have incorporated music in all of my classes and the students always seem to take something away from the combination – it’s such a natural marriage – and now with your project, I am inspired to take another step in the direction of school age literacy. Thank you!”

High School Teacher from Half Moon Bay, CA

Artists for Literacy has gained overwhelming support from teachers, literacy providers, and learners who recognize the potential of music as a cutting-edge, spot-on partner to literacy, a creative and contemporary way to motivate reading-challenged youth and young adults.

Artists For Literacy / The SIBL Project History

November 1999	Founded by Deborah Pardes, singer/songwriter, to connect low level readers to literature through music
January 2000- February 2001	General Research of Literacy needs Refined strategy to engage musicians for literacy
December 2000	Trademarked “The SIBL Project”™ Songs Inspired By Literature
February 2001	Received non-profit status
February 2001	Received \$60,000 grant from California State Library
April 2001	SIBL Project Web site inaugurated (www.siblproject.org)
May 2001	International Songwriting Contest for Songs Inspired By Literature for content for benefit CD
June 2001	Secured gratis licenses for song by Bruce Springsteen, Suzanne Vega, Aimee Mann, Grace Slick and Ray Manzarek (The Doors)
July 2001- On-going	Partnerships established with BMI, California State Library, American Bookseller Association, Library of Congress-Center for the Book, California Council for the Humanities, KQED Adult Education Network, Bay Area Literacy Coalition
August 2001	Featured non-profit on Craig’s List
September 2001	Contest closed. 357 songs received representing writers from 34 states and 5 countries
November 2001	Juried selection process results in top 10 songs chosen to be featured on CD
October 2001 – March 2002	Design (donated by Big Wig Design / Rich Leeds) and production of 30,000 copies of Chapter One – Songs Inspired By Literature Secured permissions from publisher to use images of books
March 2002 – On-going	Promotion and distribution of Chapter One including library and literacy partners, on- line partners, Barnes & Noble, Borders 26-city radio tour, including interviews with NPR’s “All Things Considered” and Voice of America. Over 40 print reviews/ interviews including USA Today, San Francisco Chronicle and UTNE Reader
May 2002	Launch of 2 nd Annual International Songwriting Contest for Songs Inspired By Literature

September 2002	Second contest closed. 350 songs received
October 2002	Secured gratis licenses for songs donated by Tom Waits, David Bowie, Rosanne Cash, Steve Earle and Vicki Randle
November 2002	Juried selection process results in top 10 songs chosen to be featured on Chapter Two CD.
December 2002	Over 12,000 Chapter One CDs sold
January 2003	Curriculum summit held sponsored by AFL and the California State Library. Attendees establish groundwork for education model
March 2003	Chapter Two – Songs Inspired By Literature released
March 2003– On-going	Promotion and distribution of Chapter Two. Media coverage includes articles in New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Performing Songwriter Magazine, Rolling Stone Magazine, Billboard Magazine
April 2003	AFL turns focus to innovative multi-media educational materials for the traditionally under-served low-literacy group aged 14 to 22
May 2003	AFL receives grant for strategic plan needed to design a learning tool “SIBL in the Classroom Chapter Three”