

Delta State University
NEH Landmarks Workshop
The Most Southern Place on Earth
Lesson Plan- Day 2
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Subject- The Blues, music, social studies, writing

Grade Level- 2nd grade-5th grade

Main Ideas/ Conceptual Understanding/ Goals

Students will be able to discuss and identify the elements typically found in a blues song, including the twelve-bar blues chord progression, the blue notes sung or played for expressive purposes at a slightly lower pitch than that of the major scale, the most common structure of a line, repeated once and then followed by a single line conclusion, the so-called AAB pattern, the mood of the blues which can include misery, oppression, and humor and common topics of the blues including personal woes, a lost love, the cruelty of police officers, oppression at the hands of white folk, hard times, farming, devils, gambling, floods, and dry periods." The students will use this knowledge to write and perform their own blues songs.

Procedures

Introduction/Motivation

The teacher will read the class The Middle Child Blues by Kristyn Crow. A discussion will follow of what "the blues" is, and what made Lee blue in the story. Then the class will brainstorm a list of ideas of things that might make them feel blue.

Study/Learning/Whole Group

Previously, the class has discussed the history and makeup of the blues using a PowerPoint presentation. They studied some major blues artists of the time. The teacher will have the students review major points they remember from this presentation, and possible chart them. (If a review is necessary, you might use Blues Singers: Ten Who Rocked the World to reexamine major points covered in the PowerPoint.)

Together, the class will look at some classic AAB lines on the board of classic blues songs. With the guidance of the teacher, we will develop and some of the aspects of a blues song including the AAB pattern, and the twelve bar progression. Then we will use this information to write a short set of blues lines together as a class.

Small Group

Students will work independently or in pairs to write their own blues songs using a rubric that includes the elements typically found in the blues.

Culmination/ Whole Group

Students will share the songs they have created.

The students will summarize what they have learned about the Blues.

Follow-Up

Students can make a Diddley Bow to add to their performance. They can explain what they've learned about the blues and perform for other classes.

Materials/Resources

1. The Middle-Child Blues by Kristyn Crow, A clever, bluesy riff on middle-kid angst Lee has the low-down, big-frown, sulkin'-all-aroundtown blues. His older brother gets all the big-kid privileges, and no one expects his little sister to do anything but be cute. And sometimes his family even leaves him behind! But when Lee breaks out his guitar and finally makes his voice be heard, he draws a big crowd. It turns out lots and lots of people share his middle-kid pain—and he loves how being stuck in the middle is making him the center of attention.
2. Sample blues lines to look at so that students can see the usual format
3. A rubric for writing your own blues song
4. Diddley Bo directions
5. paper, markers

"Rebecca, Rebecca, get your big legs off of me,
Rebecca, Rebecca, get your big legs off of me,
It may be sending you baby, but it's worrying the hell out of me."

