

Delta State University  
NEH Landmarks Workshop  
The Most Southern Place on Earth  
By Hope Grover, Music Teacher, Burnsville, MN

Topic: **Connecting the Path: Blues Musicians of the Delta**

Subject: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Music History

- I. Essential Questions
  - A. How did the great migration of the 1940s affect the Delta Blues?
  - B. How, and to whom, were/are Delta Blues musicians connected?
  - C. What affect did blues evolution play on Delta Blues musicians?
  
- II. Specific Objectives
  - A. Students will identify several specific push and pull factors that led Blues Musicians away from the Delta.
  - B. Students will demonstrate an understanding of connections between Delta Blues musicians.
  - C. Students will describe how blues evolution had an effect on Delta blues musicians.
  - D. Students will identify what influenced Delta Blues musicians.
  
- III. Materials
  - A. *Blues Masters* DVD
  - B. Laptops with Wireless
  - C. Yarn (8-10 colors)
  - D. Printouts of the Assignment
  
- IV. Procedures
  - A. Introduction
    - i. Begin by breaking the students into groups of four-five students. In these groups, have them make two lists based on their current knowledge from their humanities' classes:
      1. What happened in the US between 1880-1970?
      2. What do you know about the blues?

- ii. Bring the groups back together and form a class list that to frame the time period with. (Have the students put their group names on their papers and turn them in to the teacher.)
- iii. Lead students in a very brief discussion about the time period and what was going on at the time and what they are going to see in the DVD that is coming up next.

#### B. Blues Background in Context

- i. Using the study guide, show volume I of *Blues Masters*. It will take several class periods to show this as you will want to stop multiple times to fill in additional information and to ensure that students all of the items on the study guide. (Note: Study Guide is included)
- ii. When you finish watching volume I, have the students get back into their groups and hand their original lists back out. In their groups, have them circle and discuss which items on list #1. Affected the blues. Then, have them circle items on list #2 that were confirmed through watching the DVD and our discussions.
- iii. Come back together as a class and have each group share one item off of each list that was connected and/or confirmed.

#### C. Delta Blues Musician Project

- i. Introduce the project by connecting it back to what the students just watched. Explain that they will be doing a project to look at the lives of blues musicians. While looking at their lives they are going to discover how their lives influenced their music, how the musicians were connected to each other, and how location caused their music and lives to evolve.
- ii. Handout the project overview and go through the expectations.
  1. Notes: I typically allow 4 days of research and typing to be complete and ready for presentation. It then takes an additional 2 days for presentations and one day to build the string web.
- iii. Break up the students so each student has one of the musicians.
  1. Notes: The lefthand column (with the “L” next to it) are the musicians that left the Delta while the right hand column (with the “S” next to it) are the musicians that stayed in the Delta other than a few tours. I wouldn’t tell the students this, but it is a good FYI for you to know ahead of time.

#### D. Closing

- i. To close the project and prepare students for their writing, we will spend a class period building the web and discussing connections within the web. Through small group conversations and large group discussion we will draw conclusions and about how and why musicians were connected, music evolved, and why music sounded a specific way. I usually use an “Exit Card” at this point to assess if they understood the point of the assignment.

## V. Assessments

There will be several assessments involved within this lesson plan as it covers a week and a half of class. Some of the assessments are informal and some are formal. As always, assessments may need to be adjusted if students need additional standards.

### A. Informal

- i. Group Discussion: There will be several small and large group discussions held throughout this lesson plan. Students will be assessed on their understanding of the material based on their participation within their groups as I move throughout the classroom and listen in on how the groups are interacting with the topics presented.
- ii. Introduction “Blues in Context” Lists: Students will be assessed [by group] as to their level of background knowledge through the use of these lists.

### B. Formal

- i. Internet Entry: The first formal assessment that students will be assessed on will be part of a living encyclopedia on my school webpage. Students will each build the entry of the website that pertains to their musician as the resident expert. It will need to be complete with biography of all questions answered that are listed and at least one photo. A list of references must also be turned in.
- ii. Presentation: Students will be assessed on a 2-3 minute presentation about their blues artist. In this presentation they will be expected to cover the essential material that is listed on the project overview.
- iii. Web: For this assessment, students will be using their knowledge of the blues to add their musician to the web on the wall.
- iv. Exit Card: I will use the exit card after web building and discussion to assess if the class understood the assignment. If the class did not understand the assignment, I will backup and cover

key points again. I will likely use a question such as: How did the great migration of the 1940s affect the Delta Blues? or Why were Delta Blues musicians so connected to each other?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Presentation Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Connecting the Path:**  
**Blues Musicians of the Delta**  
8<sup>th</sup> Grade Music History

## Connecting the Path: Blues Musicians of the Delta

**What The Project Is:** You will become the resident expert of a Delta Blues Musician. You will research this person to find out their background, influences, connections, etc. Then, you will develop an entry on the school website for your musician, give a short presentation on this musician to help other students understand their connections and significance, and add them to a massive web on the classroom wall.

**What To Turn In:** You will turn in two items.

1. **Sources:** On the day that your web information is due, you will need to turn in a typed list of your sources. You will need to use at least five different sources, at least one must be from a magazine or book, and you should follow MLA formatting.
2. **Exit Card:** On the final day of this unit, you will turn in an exit card that will be assessed for understanding. Please be sure that you remember to turn this card in before you leave.

**Work-time:** You will have four full class periods to complete research during class and submit the information onto the webpage. However, you may have to complete some work outside of class to complete your project on time. Each student should have access to a computer with web access during class periods (assuming they follow the school technology use policy).

**Website:** You will research the questions listed below and format them into a short essay format for a web entry. Also be sure to locate at least one picture to include. Note: the discography may be entered as a bullet list.

Minimum questions that should be researched and included in your web information:

- A. Where is this musician from? Did they ever move? Why?
- B. Life Up-bringing (family, education, social status, economic status, etc.)
- C. Professional, education, economic, and social setbacks
- D. How did they chose their song topics?
- E. Instruments used in their music
- F. How were they connected with other Blues musicians?
- G. Achievements, awards, etc?
- H. Did this musician ever change blues styles? If so, why did it happen?
- I. Why is this person remembered?
- J. What were their major artistic influences?
- K. What were their major personal influences?
- L. Discography

Presentation: Construct a short 2-3 minute presentation for the class that will give a concise overview of your musician. Please tell us a few key points about the musician such as: where they were born, what their music evolved to (if it did), and how they chose their song topics. You must include the following two items in your presentation:

1. Which other Delta Blues musicians your musician was connected to.
2. Where they moved to and how it affected them.

## **Blues Musician Project Choices**

### *Delta Blues Musicians (L)*

James Cotton  
Arthur Cradup  
Willie Dixon  
Honeyboy Edwards  
John Lee Hooker  
Howlin' Wolf  
Son House  
Mississippi John Hurt  
Elmore James  
Robert Johnson  
Charley Patton  
Pinetop Perkins  
Jimmy Reed  
Sunnyland Slim (Albert Luandrew)  
Houston Stackhouse  
Eddie Taylor  
Henry "Mule" Townsend  
Muddy Waters  
Booker White  
Big Joe Williams

### *Delta Blues Musicians (S)*

Ishman Bracey  
Willie Brown  
Sam Chatmon  
Skip James  
Tommy Johnson  
Junior Kimbrough  
Jack Owens  
James "Son" Thomas  
Sonny Boy Williamson II

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

**Blues Masters**  
**Notes Outline & Study Guide**  
(Through track 9)

**Track 1-2**

- \_\_\_\_\_ epitomized the sounds of the south.

-By 1900, “Country Blues” showed up and was.... And used what.....was associated with....

**Track 3**

-Pickin’ Cotton was important because.....

-Leadbelly is...

-1820’s Palace Theater...

-Who was “Ma Rainey?”

-In the 1880’s every blues group had to have what.....why?

- \_\_\_\_\_ was said to have been named the father of the blues?

-1860’s brought minstrel shows that led to what...and that was important because...

-1881 Tuskegee College was important because....

#### **Track 4**

-Who was Bessie Smith? Why was she important?

-What happened in 1914 that caused the blues to show up in the Midwest?

-What prevented race riots in 1917 that may have affected the blues?

-What is the 369<sup>th</sup> Infantry?

#### **Track 5**

-1920's Blues showed up where....because

-Mamie Smith is credited with what?

-What are "Race Records?"

-Two events happened at the same time in the 1920's that were polar opposites. What were they?

1.

2.

#### **Track 6**

-Who is Roy Milton? What are the three things he is known for?

-Oct. 1929 people identified with the blues because.....

-Mid 1930's blues were still very popular because....

-During the late 20's and the 30's, the blues did not change in \_\_\_\_\_, but changed a lot in \_\_\_\_\_ except for in \_\_\_\_\_. Why?

### **Track 7**

-Marcus Garvey led by.....

-George Baker led by.....

-1930's brought about a new type of music called: \_\_\_\_\_ which featured: \_\_\_\_\_

-1936 Olympics were important because

### **Track 8**

-\_\_\_\_\_ was developed and became popular across the country very fast as a way for African Americans to dance for entertainment.

-Who was Bennie Goodman? Why is he important?

### **Track 9**

-Who is Ethel Waters? Why do we remember her?

-1939 Marion Anderson's story is.....

-When WWII began, what was the biggest issue facing African American soldiers?

-When African American soldiers came back from the war, what did they find?

**Track 10**

-Who is Big Bill Broonzy? He was a friend of whom?

**\*\*Go to the second Volume\*\***

**Track 1**

-Why did blues albums sell so well after WWII?

-What is the "Race Movie Circuit?"

**Track 2**

-How did the GI bill effect African American soldiers?

-Dance Halls were important because....

**Track 3**

-1940's brought new acts like Billie Holiday who was important because?

-Who paved the way for Ella Fitzgerald?

-Why was Ella so important?

-In 1948 President Truman did what?

-When soldiers returned home after Korea, were they happier? Why?

#### **Track 4**

-Who was Big Joe Turner?

-The “Daddy of the Blues” is....

-How did the blues finally truly cross the color lines?

#### **Track 5**

-Who is Muddy Waters? Who did he influence and what did he create?

#### **Track 6**

-What happened in 1953 that may have strengthened roots in blues and jazz for some people?

-Buddy Guy was....

#### **Track 7**

-In 1964, what passed?

- By the end of the 60's, Blues had changed a bit and was led by several big name leaders. Some of them were:
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
  - 4.
  - 5.

-What was responsible for bringing blues to the west coast in the 60's? How?

-Long Chester started experimenting with what kind of music in blues/jazz?

### **Track 8**

-1965 brought a new diving point in the country with:

- \_\_\_\_\_ was the largest non-violent protest ever.

- Who was Joe Williams?

### **Track 9**

-What happened that caused huge riots to break out and blues/jazz to resurge at Woodstock?

-Who was the artist and what was the piece and artist that was reperformed at Woodstock that was such a huge success?

-Who is BB King? Why is he so important?