

Blues Journey

Subject: Reading

Grade Level: 6-8

Main Idea: The blues influenced much of modern music (R & B, Rock & Roll, Jazz, Hip Hop, and Rap). A study of blues artists, making a timeline, conducting interviews, and analyzing lyrics will provide students with a framework to show how factors such as life experience, current times, musical trends, and persona shaped their music.

Specific Objectives:

- TLW research and report on a blues artist
- TLW construct a timeline of their artist with at least eight dates
- TLW construct ten questions about the blues and interview four people
- TLW choose lyrics from their artist and write in their own words what the artist is trying to communicate
- TLW give an oral presentation on their artist to include a visual presentation

Procedures:

A. Introduction/Motivation: Posters will be displayed around the classroom of various blues artists as well as black and white pictures, CD's and other realia that can be obtained.

1. Cross Road Blues by *Robert Johnson* will be playing in the background as students enter the room.
2. Read aloud **Blues Journey** by *Walter Dean Myers*.
3. Discuss the book asking higher order questions while reviewing blues concepts previously covered.

B. Study/Learning: A prior meeting with the librarian will ensure that resources are available for student use. The music teacher will also be available as a resource to students.

1. Introduce **Blues Journey** research project using a prepared backboard as a model on Bob Dylan.
2. Distribute written research project explanation, and rubric to each student.
3. Sticky notes with the names of Blues artists will be on the board. Students will pick an artist to research at the end of class.

4. Research will include: Comprehensive facts about the artists' personal life, public persona, who and/or what influenced his/her music, instruments they play, and a list of songs artist wrote or performed. Overarching questions to answer will include: Did you artist leave behind a legacy? Did they receive any awards or honors? What connection can you find to your chosen artist and a contemporary artist? (Research will be display on backboard).
5. Develop a timeline of your artists' life that includes at least eight important life/career circumstances. (Your timeline will be displayed on your backboard).
6. Based on your knowledge of the blues and what you learn researching your artist, generate ten questions about the Blues and interview four adults. An example of a question could be "Who is your favorite Blues artist?" Arrange your questions and answers in a grid to display on your backboard.
7. Choose a song your artist wrote or performed that you like. Display the lyrics and underneath the lyrics in your own words, write your interpretation of what the artist is trying to communicate. (*At this point, reference back to **Blues Journey** by Walter Dean Myers pg. 19*). Analyze the lyrics together as a class, interpreting the message the artist is trying to communicate. Choose another set of lyrics. Students will work together in pairs to interpret the message. Reconvene as a group to discuss analysis.
8. Include a bibliography with at least three sources, one to include a book.
9. Present your information on a backboard. (Refer to Bob Dylan model). Include pictures, articles, artifacts, and other resources related to your artist to make your project visually appealing.
10. Closing activity for the day will be a **Ticket Out the Door**. Each student will be given a piece of paper with the following quote: *The Blues are true facts of life expressed in words and song, inspiration, feeling and understanding*. Students will write down their interpretation of the quote. This activity will be repeated after all projects have been presented.

C. Culmination: Culmination will be an oral presentation of the artist. Along with the presentation, student will show a video clip of artist performing or play a selected song.

D. Evaluation: Evaluation will be guided by a rubric.

E. Extension:

1. Rewrite the lyrics to one of your artist songs
2. Draw a poster advertising an upcoming show for your artist.
3. Play a Blues song on an instrument.
4. Sing a Blues song.

5. Make an instrument used during the Blues such as a diddley bow or palimbo thumb piano.
6. Invite a local Blues musician into the classroom.
7. Study Florida Folk life Music through the Florida memory project state library and archives of Florida.

F. Materials/Resources:

Websites

www.blueshighway.org

www.bluesforpeace.com

www.highway61blues.com

www.bbkingmuseum.org

www.deltabluesmuseum.org

www.soulsvilleusa.com

www.pbs.org/blues

www.yearoftheblues.org

<http://bluesland.net/thang>

www.memphisrocknsoul.org

www.msbluestrail.org

www.birthplaceoftheblues.com

Readings

The Weary Blues by Langston Hughes

To Midnight @ Leroy's by Langston Hughes

Blues Fantasy by Langston Hughes

Po Boy Blues by Langston Hughes

Books

Blues Journey, (2003) Walter Dean Myers; Holiday House: New York, NY

The Blues of Flats Brown, (2000) Walter Dean Myers; Holiday House: New York, NY

Blues Journey Project

Student Name: _____ Period: _____

CATEGORY	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Artist Research	30	25	15	10
Lyric Analysis	10	7	5	2
Bibliography	10	7	5	2
Interviews	10	7	5	2
Timeline	10	7	5	2
Oral Presentation	30	25	15	10
Total Number of Points				
Final Grade				