

The 'Refugee' Blues

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"The Most Southern Place on Earth" NEH Seminar

Subject: Intermediate/Advanced ESL/ELD
(English Language Development)

Grade Level: 6-8

Overview: Discovering the roots of the blues in the context of the history of the Mississippi Delta serves as a springboard for English Language Learners, born in refugee camps to draw parallels between the blues musicians' journey during the Great Migration and their own refugee experiences. The themes of displacement, insecurity and the hope for a brighter future underlie both the bluesmen traveling on the Blues highway and the immigrants' journey. Students will explore their own immigration experiences by interviewing a family member and writing a personal narrative. Based on the information gained from the interview, students will write their own blues lyrics, then set it to music using blues loops in Garage Band.

Learning Objectives: Students will

1. Learn key vocabulary to understand an expository text on blues history
2. Locate main ideas in an informational text
3. Write a personal narrative using interview notes
4. Make connections between an important aspect of American culture and their own personal experiences
5. Use technology resources to do research
6. Create their own 'refugee' blues

TESOL Standards

Goal 2, Standard 1 To use English to achieve academically in all content areas: Students will use English to interact in the classroom

Goal 2, Standard 2 To use English to achieve academically in all content areas: Students will use English to obtain, process, construct, and provide subject matter information in spoken and written form

Goal 2, Standard 3 To use English to achieve academically in all content areas: Students will use appropriate learning strategies to construct and apply academic knowledge

Procedures:

Building background knowledge:

1. Carousel Activity: posters/pictures of the Mississippi plantations tenants' shacks, juke joint, blues singer, levee camp, Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, Burmese singers posted on walls around the room.
2. Students in pairs walk around the room, and silently write a question on a sticky note and post it next to each picture
3. Teacher starts playing blues music for a few minutes; students walk around the room again, and write a comment on the posters. Collect sticky notes and post all questions on a sheet or board.
4. Debrief activity. How did listening to the music help interpret the pictures? What connections are there between a plantation and a refugee camp?
5. Using pictures as visual aids, teacher introduces key vocabulary: plantation, blues music, sharecropper, juke joint, blues highway, see glossary

Reading and Research:

1. As a class, we will read an article on the history of blues music in the Mississippi Delta. Students highlight key information that answers the questions relating to the blues and the Blues Highway: who, what, when, where, how and why.

2. Students share information and teacher transfers responses on chart paper that students copy
3. Students in pairs use pre-selected websites to add five pieces of information to the chart
4. Students share out and add all the information to their chart
5. As a homework assignment, students will interview a parent/family member about their family's journey to the States using the same key questions. They need to add three facts/details to each response.
6. In class, they use their interview notes to write a one-page personal narrative

Studying and Writing the Blues

1. Introduce blues music by playing 3 blues songs
2. Pass out the lyrics, and have students compare and contrast the lyrics in small groups using a 3-way Venn diagram
3. Have a spokesperson from each group share out
4. Discuss what conclusions we can draw about blues music: themes, mood, structure and meaning
5. Writing the blues. Students will re-read their narrative.
6. Using the "trim the fat" strategy, they will use a yellow highlighter to mark 10 details they may want to use for their blues lyrics.
7. With a green highlighter, they select 6 out of the 10 details.
8. Using the selected details, students will write 3 stanzas of blues lyrics, 3 lines each that encapsulates the essence of their immigration story.
9. Students use loops in *Garage Band* on Mac computers to write music for their blues, and record their blues song.
10. Students share their blues at a class 'Blues Festival'.

Web resources:

www.blueshighway.org

www.yearoftheblues.org

www.bbkingmuseum.org

www.pbs.org/blues

www.highway61blues.com

www.deltabluesmuseum.org

<http://bluesland.net/thang>

www.bluesforpeace.com

<http://www.arts.state.ms.us/crossroads/music/music1.html>

www.msbluestrail.org

www.birthplaceoftheblues.com

Images/Pictures/Art on Mississippi History and the Great Migration

http://www.phillipscollection.org/migration_series/index.cfm

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/>

Extension/ enrichment Activities:

1. Students research and report on a musician/singer from their own culture using recordings.
2. Invite a local guest musician from the immigrant community to perform and lecture on music
3. Students prepare Power Point presentations about blues musicians on the Blues Highway

Evaluation/Assessment

1. After the reading and research lessons, the teacher projects out the sheet with the sticky note questions. Each student writes a response to a question as an exit slip.
2. Personal narrative will be scored for Ideas and Conventions
3. Students' blues projects will be evaluated using a rubric

BLUES PROJECT RUBRIC

Structure: Project follows the blues structure and format	Exceeds 5	Meets 4	Close to meeting 3	Does not follow format 2
Ideas/Content: Project includes relevant, sufficient and specific information	Exceeds 5	Meets 4	Close to meeting 3	Information is too broad or insufficient 2
Blues instrumentation in Garage Band is effective and engaging	Exceeds 5	Meets 4	Close to meeting 3	Does not meet 2

ROOTS OF BLUES GLOSSARY

Blues Highway: US Route 61, a highway that many blues musicians took to travel north

Delta blues: blues music from the delta region of Mississippi

The Great Migration: during the first half of the 20th century millions of plantation workers moved north to work in cities

Jim Crow laws: segregation laws after the Civil War that prevented African Americans in the South from achieving the same power and equality as Whites.

Jook joint: a place for drinking, dancing and playing music in the South for African-Americans

Levee camp: places where mostly African Americans built earthen levees that held rivers in their channels

Plantation: large farm where cotton and rice was grown in the South

Sharecropping: when a tenant worked a piece of the landowner's land and received a portion of the crop in exchange