

Lesson Objectives (suggested grade levels: 4-8)

In this lesson, students will be able to recognize various types of roots music and identify the origins of certain musical styles.

National Standards*Social Studies:*

Culture: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity.

People, Places & Environments: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, place, and environments.

English Language Arts:

Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g. libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

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Materials

Various materials to make homemade instruments (instructions and an exact materials list can be found at

<http://homeschooling.gomilpitas.com/explore/homemademusic.htm>)

Lesson 1: Teacher Instructions

Each lesson is intended to prepare students for a visit to *New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music* and to follow up on that visit after your return to the classroom.

The **Pre-Visit** worksheets are designed to stimulate the students' curiosity about the exhibition and to encourage the students to explore their own musical roots. The **Visit** activities invite the students to collect information and apply their new-found knowledge in the classroom. The **Post-Visit** activities draw on their own heritage and the information learned during their museum visit. All of these activities can be completed in groups or by individual students.

Pre-Visit

Several days before visiting the exhibit, make copies of *Worksheet 1: What is Your Favorite Music?* and *Worksheet 2: A Music Interview: Do You Remember?* for all of the students. Hand out both sheets a few days before the visit so that students have enough time to interview friends and/or family.

Visit

Before going to the exhibit, divide your class into four groups. Each group will receive a different worksheet, either *Worksheet 3: Sacred Songs*; *Worksheet 4: Country*; *Worksheet 5: Blues*; or *Worksheet 6: Dance*.

All four forms should be used as students explore the exhibition. Make sure each student has a pencil (not pen) to write down the information. (Pens make permanent marks, and museums generally prefer the use of pencils in their exhibits.) You may wish to collect the papers from the students before leaving the exhibition.

Post-Visit

After returning from your visit, targeted classroom activities will help the students apply information learned during the exhibition visit. These activities involve higher-level thinking skills such as interpretation, synthesis, thinking hypothetically and/or expressing judgment.

PRE-VISIT

Worksheet 1: What is Your Favorite Music?

Background

“Roots music” is a relatively new term. It first appeared in print and conversation in the early 1980s. Originally, it meant “roots of popular music or rock and roll,” but today it has come to mean all music that has grown out of older folk traditions.

Roots music is sacred and secular (religious and non-religious), rural and urban, acoustic and electric, simple and complex, old and new. Performed by one musician or by an entire band, in concert halls and on back porches, roots music is America’s sound.

The exhibit you will be visiting is about American roots music. Answer these questions about your favorite music before you go to the exhibition:

1. What is your favorite kind of music and why?

2. Ask family and friends what their favorite songs are and write down the titles, words from the songs, and the artists’ names in the chart below:

Family/Friend name:	Favorite Song/ Lyrics	Artist:

PRE-VISIT*Worksheet 2: A Music Interview: Do You Remember?***Background**

New Harmonies features several styles of music:

- Sacred music (religious music including spirituals, gospel, and hymns)
- Country music (Appalachian folk music, country western, bluegrass, western swing)
- Blues (rural and urban varieties)
- Dance (Cajun, zydeco, tejano, conjunto, polka, klezmer)
- Folk revival (a popular resurgence of other roots music styles)

Ask friends or family members the following questions. Be sure to read the description of that particular style of music before asking the question. Remember to jot down whom you interviewed.

Sacred Music: Early American sacred music, into the 1800s, included native chants, British hymns, and African religious music. These music forms blended into spirituals, and eventually, gospel music.

1. Please record any experiences you have had with religious music or spirituals.
2. Have you ever been to a powwow or heard Native American drumming?
3. Did you know that Elvis Presley's favorite music was gospel music. Other current artists are also inspired by gospel music. Name some artists.
4. Have you or your family/friends ever listened to Mahalia Jackson, the Soul Stirrers, Marion Williams, or Blackwood Brothers? Can you name others?

Country: Early Country music was influenced by folk songs brought by immigrants from the British Isles. Over time, country music began to morph into new sounds rooted in regional styles like Western Swing and Bluegrass.

5. Have you ever heard of the Carter Family or Jimmie Rodgers? If so, name a song they performed.

6. Name three country musicians and a song by each. Have you heard Patsy Cline or Hank Williams played on the radio?

7. Name three instruments often played in various forms of country music.

Blues: Blues influenced many other styles of music like country, gospel, and even helped form rock and roll, and rap. Influential blues musicians include Robert Johnson, B.B. King, and Ma Rainey.

8. Think about the name "the blues." What subjects do blues artists sing about?

9. What instruments do you think blues musicians play and why?

Dance: American immigrants bring cultural traditions with them. When those traditions combine with other roots music styles, new sounds are created. Whether they perform Cajun, zydeco, tejano, conjunto, polka, or klezmer, musicians use their accordions and other instruments to produce rhythmic music often associated with dances and cultural celebrations.

10. Have you ever heard an accordion or seen someone play it? What type of music did they play? Where did you hear or see the accordion?

11. The accordion came to America with German and Italian immigrants. Where are your family's roots? What instrument(s) do you associate with those cultures?


Revival: In the early 1960s, a folk and roots music revival began in America, led by the success of such artists as the Kingston Trio, Joan Baez, and Bob Dylan. These songs, popular on college campuses in the 1960s, often had a political message and inspired civil rights and other social advocates.

12. Name three folk revival artists and as many song titles as you can.

VISIT*Worksheet 3: Sacred Songs***Background**

The foundations of American music lie in the religious yearnings of Native Americans, European settlers, and Africans brought to the colonies in bondage. Some European settlers came to the New World to escape religious persecution, and they brought with them songs and hymns steeped in their religious traditions. In the colonies, Africans retained as many music traditions as possible. The drums and rhythms of West African religious music would have a tremendous impact on American hymns. As these distinct cultures came together on North American soil, their spiritual music blended to express a new American diversity.


Complete the following questions as you go through the section on Sacred Songs.

1. Describe the music played by Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans. What instruments were used? Why does the music sound the way it does?
2. What are three ways that spirituals sound different from gospel music. What are the roots of each of these styles of music?
3. Listen to the gospel audio. Describe how Southern gospel sounds different from gospel. List three artists from each style.
4. List all the instruments you found that were used in the *Sacred Songs* section of the exhibition.
5.  Listen to the examples of sacred music available at the gospel music stand and at the listening station. What song was most interesting to you in this section? What did you like about the song (singer, instrument/s, beat, or lyrics)?

VISIT*Worksheet 4: Country***Background**

The origins of modern country music can be traced to folk songs and ballads brought to North America by settlers from the British Isles. In America, musicians all over played country music and added their own creativity and regional playing styles to develop new sounds and rhythms. Jimmie Rodgers, a guitar player and singer from Mississippi, added the influences of blues musicians to his music and became country music's first major star. In the West, musicians combined Mexican music with American country music to create country western or western swing music. In the East, musicians in the Appalachians used faster rhythms and vocal harmonies to create a style known as bluegrass.


Complete the following questions as you go through the section on Country.

1. What are other names given to what we now know as "country" music? What instruments were used by early country musicians? Name famous early country music artists mentioned in the exhibition.
2. Why did these distinct styles of country music develop?
3. List all the instruments you found that were used in the *Country* music section of the exhibition:
4.  Listen to the samples of country music available at the listening station. What song was most interesting to you in the *Country* music section of the exhibit? What did you like about the song (singer, instrument/s, beat, or lyrics)?

VISIT
Worksheet 5: Blues
Background

Robert Santelli, blues scholar and *New Harmonies* exhibition curator, said that “the Blues was so deep and so wide, it made room for everybody and touched nearly everyone in American music.” African Americans used the blues to sing away their sorrows, provide comic relief in the face of unbearable social conditions, and celebrate their culture. During the Great Depression, thousands of African Americans moved into urban areas in search of new opportunities. Blues artists who moved to cities like Chicago soon developed “urban” blues traditions and made the blues famous worldwide.


Complete the following questions as you go through the section on the Blues.

1. What do you think the quote above by Robert Santelli means?
2. What was it about blues that helped listeners feel connected to the music?
3. What are some of the social and economic realities that blues musicians sang about?
4. What was distinctive about the vocal patterns that blues musicians included in their songs?
5. List all the instruments you found that were used in the *Blues* section of the exhibition. Why would blues musicians often make their own instruments?
6. What are some of the differences between rural and urban blues? Did urban artists use different instruments?
7.  Listen to the samples of blues music available at the listening station. What is your favorite song in the exhibit? What did you like about the song (singer, instrument/s, beat, or lyrics)?

VISIT
Worksheet 6: Dance
Background

American roots music draws inspiration from many sources, blending songs with origins from around the world. Cajun is a blend of French lullabies and folk songs, black Creole music, dance tunes, and country music. In French-speaking, southwest Louisiana, a blend of Cajun music and the blues surfaced after World War II. Later, rhythm and blues entered the mix, and the result was called zydeco. Tejano music evolved in Texas and the Southwest from Mexican dance and folk, American country, jazz, polka, and Cajun music. Each music style features the accordion.

Complete the following questions as you go through the section on Dance.

1. What are some of the instruments, rhythms, and themes that bind together the music styles listed in this section?
2. Where might you hear each of these musical styles played today? Why do you think these styles retain such strong cultural connections to the communities in which they developed?
3. Compare and contrast these two styles of music by listening to the samples in the section and at the central listening station. What do they have in common? What makes them different? Do they play different instruments, or are they the same?
4. Where did tejano and conjunto music develop? What musical styles were combined to form tejano music?
5. What are the differences in instruments used in polka and klezmer? Why are polka and klezmer often associated with celebratory occasions?
6. List all the instruments you found that were used in the *Dance* section of the exhibition:
7.  Listen to the samples of each genre of music available in the *Dance* section and at the listening station. What is your favorite song in this section of the exhibit? What did you like about the song (singer, instrument/s, beat, or lyrics)?

VISIT*Worksheet 7: My Favorite Artist*

Use this sheet to write down information about a musician in New Harmonies that you found interesting. Put your worksheet in a safe place. You may be using it when you get back to the classroom!

Name of musician: _____

Style of music associated with the musician: _____

1. What is important about this artist and her or his musical style?

2. What are some of the songs or lyrics associated with the artist?

3. Why are you interested in this artist? Have you heard this musician's songs before? Do you know of the musician through your family or friends?

4. Imagine that your favorite musician was just starting out in the music business. If you were trying to convince a music executive that they should give this artist a big record deal, what would you say?

POST-VISIT***Activity 1: Sing Your Song*****Background**

The songs featured in the exhibition are excellent examples of American roots music. Each is a classic song that resonates with Americans for many reasons.

This activity will allow each group of students to share their selection with classmates and to discuss their interest in songs they noted as their favorites on *Worksheets 3, 4, 5, and 6*.

1. As a class, or as a group at the end of the visit, have students share their favorite songs and explain why they selected the song.
2. Work with a music teacher or visit the Smithsonian Global Sound website at <http://www.globalsound.org> to locate recordings and lyrics and have students practice or perform the songs in music class. Lyrics for many of their favorites also may be found at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/kids/music.htm>.
3. Discuss whether or not the students found their favorite music in the exhibit.
4. Ask the students if they knew any of the music before they visited the exhibit. Are they inclined to purchase a CD or download music by any of the musicians they learned about?
5. Create a scenario where your students are designing their own exhibition about roots music in the year 2030. Name some of today's musicians who might be included in the exhibit?

POST-VISIT***Activity 2: Build an Instrument*****Background**

Many instruments used in roots music are homemade by musicians. Whether created to reflect their local musical traditions or to produce specific sounds, roots musicians find creative ways to turn ordinary items into versatile musical instruments.

The diddley bow is a simple stringed instrument, often built of wood planks and stretched wire that was commonly built and played by African-American sharecroppers in the Mississippi Delta. It probably originated in West Africa. Many well-known blues musicians, including B.B. King and Muddy Waters, played the diddley bow before they learned to play the guitar. This activity challenges students to think about why musicians build instruments, how they use them, and what sounds originate from homemade instruments.

1. Ask students to do research on homemade instruments like blocks, spoons, beans in a bottle, stretched strings, pot lids, and combs. Have each student select an instrument and build it! Ideas for building additional instruments can be found at:
<http://homeschooling.gomilpitas.com/explore/homemademusic.htm>
2. Have students play their instruments as they sing a song they selected from the exhibition.
3. Encourage students to write their own songs and play them using the instruments they've created. Students could form bands or perform solo acts. Set up a variety show of different acts.
4. Discuss why there are so many homemade instruments in American roots music.

POST-VISIT***Activity 3: Share Your Voice*****Background**

Music has great appeal to individuals. Listeners may be attracted to the subject of a song, to an instrument, to the rhythm, to the lyrics, or to an artist. This activity asks students to report on a musician in the exhibit that they found most interesting and challenges them to learn more about the backgrounds of the artists.

Have your students pull out *Worksheet 7: My Favorite Artist*. Encourage them to use the worksheet when thinking about the questions below.

1. Have students share information about their favorite musicians with classmates. Ask students to explain why they liked the musician and talk about the type of music performed by the artist.
2. Ask students to complete further research, at the library or on the Internet, on the musician and locate a song performed by the artist. Have them write down song lyrics and interpret what they believe the words mean.
3. Hold a mock Grammy Award ceremony in the classroom. Have students vote for their favorite song. Invite the student(s) whose song was selected to deliver a mock acceptance speech in the style of that musician.