

Lesson Objectives (suggested grade levels: 9-12)

In this lesson, students will research various types of roots music and identify the instruments used in various musical styles. Students will apply this knowledge to create an exhibition or written assignment on the history of music communication and production.

National Standards

Social Studies:

Time, Continuity, & Change: Social Studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of *the ways human beings view themselves in and over time*.

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 conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

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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Activity 1: *Build an Exhibition: Music Communication and Production*

Materials

Various materials to build a small exhibition (posterboard; foamboard; and pictures of musicians, people listening to music, or instruments gathered from magazines or printed off websites; markers; and construction paper)

Lesson 4: Teacher Instructions and Background

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 consider their own musical interests. The **Visit** activities invite the students to collect information and apply their new-found knowledge in the classroom. The **Post-visit** activities draw on the information students gathered 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: Is Music Part of Your Life?* for all of the students. Allow students time to consider their own musical interests before visiting the exhibition.

Visit

Before going to the exhibit, divide your class into four groups. Each group will receive a different worksheet, either *Worksheet 2: Sacred Songs*; *Worksheet 2: Country*; *Worksheet 4: Blues*; or *Worksheet 7: Dance*. Also, make copies of *Worksheet 6: Instruments of Roots Music* for every student in the classroom.

All 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 student 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: *Is Music Part of Your Life?*

Background

Music is all around us—on the radio, on television, on the computer. As you prepare to visit *New Harmonies*, think about how music is a part of your life.

1. What type of music do you listen to? What are some things you like about that type of music?
2. Do you like to sing? Name some of the songs that you like to sing. Write down the words to one of your favorite songs.
3. Do you know how to read music? Do you sing in a choir or group? Describe some of your experiences singing with a group.
4. Do you play an instrument? If so, what instrument? Do you play in a band? What type of music does your group play? What have been some of your experiences playing for others?
5. Do you have family/friends who either sing or play an instrument? Who are they, and what do they play? Do any of them perform in public? Have you seen them perform in public? What is it like to watch them?

VISIT**Worksheet 2: *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 the Protestant religious tradition. 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?
2. What are three ways that spirituals sound different from gospel music. Why is the music different? 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 of each style.
4. List all the instruments you found that were used in the *Sacred Songs* section of the exhibition.
5. Make notes here or on the back of this sheet about references to the recording of sacred music or media development. Then go to the *Recording Roots Music* section of the exhibition. Write down all the different ways you can find that roots music was recorded. What role do you think recording has played in preserving American roots music and making it popular?

VISIT**Worksheet 3: *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 incorporated Mexican music with American hillbilly 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. Make notes here or on the back of this sheet about references to the recording of country music or media development. Then go to the *Recording Roots Music* section of the exhibition. Write down all the different ways you can find that roots music was recorded. What role do you think recording has played in preserving American roots music and making it popular?

VISIT*Worksheet 4: Blues***Background**

Robert Santelli, the *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 black 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 means?
2. What was it about blues music that helped listeners make emotional connections with 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. What are some of the instruments used by blues artists? 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. List all the instruments you found that were used in the *Blues* section of the exhibition.
8. Make notes here or on the back of this sheet about references to the recording of blues music or media development. Then go to the *Recording Roots Music* section of the exhibition. Write down all the different ways you can find that roots music was recorded. What role do you think recording has played in preserving American roots music and making it popular?

VISIT**Worksheet 5: *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?
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. Make notes here or on the back of this sheet about references to the recording of music or media development. Then go to the *Recording Roots Music* section of the exhibition. Write down all the different ways you can find that roots music was recorded. What role do you think recording has played in preserving American roots music and making it popular?

VISIT

Worksheet 6: *Instruments Used in Roots Music*

Background

Look for descriptions and details about these five instruments as you research your style of music in the exhibit.

Answer the questions below as you go:

	List styles of music in which instrument was used	Describe the instrument's sound	Was the instrument ever altered (shape or amplification)? How is it used today?
Guitar			
Harmonica			
Banjo			
Accordion			
Diddley Bow			

POST-VISIT

Activity 1: *Build an Exhibition: Music Communication and Production*

Background

The means available for producing and distributing music to the public have changed significantly over the past two centuries. In the 1800s, songs were distributed through sheet music and broadsides. Musicians played locally, at home or at local events, or performed on theater circuits. Later, the phonograph made it possible to record musical performances and distribute them on records. In the 20th century, new taping technologies made mass production and distribution of music even easier. The debut of radio meant that nearly everyone had access to music. At the beginning of the 2000s, music became even easier to obtain, as digital music players made it possible for individual listeners to download songs over their computers and carry music with them.

This activity encourages students to create an exhibition that shows how each of the musical styles featured in *New Harmonies* moved into wider distribution.

1. Have students discuss the answers they recorded on Worksheet 1: *Is Music Part of Your Life?* How many students in the class have a musical background? How many like to sing and/or read music?
2. Review the information the four groups researched during the visit to the *New Harmonies* and discuss students' general reactions to the exhibition.
3. Students will have enough information to write their own paper or create an exhibition panel on the distribution and recording of the style of music they studied. Or, the class can work in teams to develop an actual, full-length exhibit. You may want to invite a staff member from your local museum to talk about developing a successful exhibition.

General guidelines for exhibit development:

- Based on the student discussions detailed above, begin to create an outline for the exhibit.
- Create a title for the exhibition to help students focus on their topic.
- Create a timeline with objects/pictures to show changes in music distribution and communication from social and religious gatherings to performances to records to radio to iPods, etc.

- Define the changes in music production and give musical examples.
 - Discuss the effects of recording and mass producing music on the development of American roots music.
4. Ask a local musician, music teacher, or disc jockey to visit with your class and review your new music exhibition. The visitor may also share thoughts on changes in music production and communication.