

Lesson Objectives (suggested grade levels: 9-12)

In this lesson, students will be able to identify important American roots music musicians and compare and contrast present-day popular music with American roots music.

National Standards

Social Studies:

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

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*.

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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Materials

Laser/inkjet printer labels or name tags

Lesson 5: 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 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: A Music Interview: Do You Remember?* and *Worksheet 2: Name That Tune* for all of the students. Hand out *Worksheet 1* a few days before the visit so that students have enough time to interview friends and/or family. Distribute *Worksheet 2* and complete the activity in the classroom the day before or the day of your visit. Students may do this activity individually or in groups.

Visit

Before going to the exhibit, make enough copies of *Worksheet 3: Describe Your Musician* for all of your students. Write a different musician's name at the top of each worksheet. Every student should have a different name written on his/her worksheet. It will be the students' responsibility to find out everything they can about their assigned musician (from the information provided in the exhibit).

Mahalia Jackson
Fisk Jubilee Singers
Jimmie Rodgers
Gene Autry
Son House
Muddy Waters
Curley Taylor
Leonardo "Flaco" Jimenez
Li'l Wally Jagiello
The Kingston Trio
Joan Baez
Woody Guthrie
R. Carlos Nakai

Lydia Mendoza
Thomas Dorsey
Carter Family
Blind Blake
Sonny Boy Williamson
Ida Cox
Boozoo Chavis
Narciso Martinez
Dave Tarras
Bob Dylan
Pete Seeger
Aunt Molly Jackson
Bill Monroe

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. To conduct the activity, collect *Worksheet 3: Describe Your Musician* from all the students and make a complete set of copies for each student. Then, put all of the musicians' names on a set of sticky address labels or name tags for the activity in the classroom.

PRE-VISIT

Worksheet 1: *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 a few friends or family members the following questions. Remember to write down whom you interviewed.

Sacred Music: Early American sacred music 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 and that other current artists are inspired by gospel music? Can you name some?
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 British folk songs. Over time, country music was incorporated 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.

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 these 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 combined with other roots music styles, new sounds were 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 that area?

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, that often had a political message, were popular on college campuses in the 1960s.

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

PRE-VISIT

Worksheet 2: *Name that Tune!*

Background

There are five important themes in *New Harmonies*. These themes define the social and political background in which American roots music developed.

Review the following themes and their definitions.

Theme	Definition
<i>Freedom</i>	<i>Musicians are free to choose, to change, or to hang on to what's important to them in their music. Country singers borrow from the blues. Blues musicians pick up a thing or two from country. In music, barriers fall.</i>
<i>Democracy</i>	<i>In American roots music everyone is invited to participate. Music is an avenue for people to make their voices heard.</i>
<i>Independence</i>	<i>Every musician finds his or her own way.</i>
<i>Diversity</i>	<i>American roots music comes from many different peoples from many different parts of the world. As waves of immigrants came to America, they added their music traditions to the mix.</i>
<i>Ingenuity</i>	<i>Many roots musicians are creative in developing new songs and new instruments. Singers swap songs and rhythms. Spoons and washboards become musical instruments.</i>

As you read through these definitions, think of a musical example that represents each theme. List your song choice beside the appropriate theme below.

Theme	Song(s)
Freedom	
Democracy	
Independence	
Diversity	
Ingenuity	

VISIT

Worksheet 3: *Describe Your Musician*

Use this sheet to write down information you find on the musician assigned to you by your teacher. There may not be enough information on all the musicians to fill in every section.

Musician Name: _____

Dates (life dates or first big hit): _____

1. Where is the musician from? (Where were they born, and/or where did they become famous?)

2. Identify whether the musician is a vocalist, instrumentalist (name the instrument the musician is best known for playing), and/or song writer:

3. Example of lyrics they sang or wrote:

4. What's their style of roots music (sacred, country, bluegrass, blues, tejano, conjunto, klezmer, etc.)?

5. Name the theme(s) that best describes their music and explain your choice:

6. Miscellaneous notes (role in music history, special honors, or nickname):

POST-VISIT**Activity 1: *Test Your Knowledge*****Background**

This activity allows students to compare their *Pre-visit* interview questions with the information they gathered during their exhibition visit. Each student will then be challenged to see if they can correctly remember the information they learned at the museum.

1. Ask the students to get out their *Pre-visit* interview worksheets (*Worksheet 1: A Music Interview: Do You Remember?*)
2. Using *Worksheet 1*, talk about the students' (and their friends and families) impressions of American roots music. Did students believe that the people whom they interviewed had a comprehensive understanding of roots music? Have students share some of the responses that they gathered.
3. Next, give the students time to read the information about the various musicians (*Worksheet 3: Describe Your Musician*). Be sure that each student has a copy of all of the worksheets or have several sets of copies for the students to share. How do the interview details compare with the information that was actually in the exhibition?
4. Here's the hard part! What do the students actually remember about the music and musicians in the exhibition? Ask the students some or all of the following questions and present an award/prize to the student who gets the most correct answers.

TEST THE STUDENTS' ROOTS MUSIC KNOWLEDGE!

- Which musician is considered the first star of tejano music and was known as "la alondra de la frontera" or "the lark of the border"? (*Answer: Lydia Mendoza*)
- Which musician is credited with creating the "high lonesome" sound associated with bluegrass music? (*Answer: Bill Monroe*)
- Which musician is known for writing the classic folk song "This Land is Your Land"? (*Answer: Woody Guthrie*)
- Which Midwestern city became a center for the development of urban blues music when thousands of African-Americans moved there in search of opportunities in the early 1900s? (*Answer: Chicago*)

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- Name the gospel group shown performing with Elvis Presley in the exhibition. (*Answer: The Jordanaires*)
 - Which musician is most famous for his recording of “Back in the Saddle Again” and became a film star in the 1930s? (*Answer: Gene Autry*)
 - Who’s trademark cry was “Boozoo! That’s who!”? (*Answer: Wilson “Boozoo” Chavis*)
 - What everyday item formed the basis for the rub boards used by zydeco and Cajun bands? (*Answer: a washboard*)
 - Which New Orleans-born artist is considered the queen of gospel music? (*Answer: Mahalia Jackson*)
 - Name the musical style that originated in eastern Europe and features both the accordion and clarinet? (*Answer: Klezmer*)
 - Which musician, born in Minnesota, became recognized as one of the leaders of the 1960s folk revival and created songs like “Blowin’ in the Wind”? (*Answer: Bob Dylan*)
 - Which musician is known for adapting the traditional flute melodies of Plains and Woodland Indians to create his own unique style of flute playing? (*Answer: R. Carlos Nakai*)
 - What family, through its recordings of traditional Appalachian mountain songs, became the first successful popular country music group in the late 1920s? (*Answer: The Carter Family*)
 - Which blues musician created his own unique style by incorporating jazz and ragtime into his music? (*Answer: Blind Blake*)
 - What brand of guitar did many blues musicians play? (*Answer: Stella*)
 - Which musician is recognized as the creator of Chicago-style polka? (*Answer: Li’l Wally Jagiello*)
 - Which musical group helped to raise awareness of African American spiritual music by combining traditional songs with the formality of European classical music and performing throughout the United States and Europe? (*Answer: Fisk Jubilee Singers*)

- Which musician is considered the first star of country music? His songs combined blues-inspired guitar playing with his trademark yodeling. *(Answer: Jimmie Rodgers)*
- Which musician is best known for adding electric guitars to blues music and creating Chicago-style urban blues? He is known as “the father of the Chicago blues.” *(Answer: Muddy Waters)*
- Which musical group helped create a place for folk music on American radio in the 1950s and 1960s with their 1958 recording of “Tom Dooley”? *(Answer: The Kingston Trio)*
- Name the stringed musical instrument often used by country musicians that actually originated in Africa and was brought to North America by enslaved Africans. *(Answer: Banjo)*
- Name the high-powered musical style that combines Cajun dance music with rhythm and blues. *(Answer: Zydeco)*
- Name the composer and musician who began his career playing in blues diva Ma Rainey’s band, but became even better known later in life as the writer of hundreds of gospel songs, including “Precious Lord, Take My Hand.” *(Answer: Thomas Dorsey)*
- You might eat soup or cereal with them. Blues musicians make great music with them. Name these everyday items. *(Answer: spoons)*
- Which musician was known for her passionate songs that supported the civil rights and peace movements in the 1960s, making her one of the biggest stars of the folk revival? *(Answer: Joan Baez)*
- What instrument, used in many different kinds of music including tejano, polka, zydeco and Cajun, has a small keyboard with piano-like keys and is squeezed to produce music? *(Answer: accordion)*
- Which musician, who was inspired by the styles of German and Czech accordionists in Texas, helped create conjunto music? *(Answer: Narciso Martinez)*
- Which musician wrote the folk revival songs “If I Had a Hammer” and “Turn, Turn, Turn”? *(Answer: Pete Seeger)*
- Which musician became the first blues musician to be popular on the radio? He began a radio show in 1941 called “King Biscuit Flour Time.” *(Answer: Sonny Boy Williamson)*

- Which musician was a labor activist during coal miners' strikes in the 1930s and wrote "Hungry Ragged Blues"? (*Answer: Aunt Molly Jackson*)
- Which musician was known as one of the creators of the Delta blues style and, inspired by his own spiritual struggles, often sang songs about the battles between good and evil? (*Answer: Son House*)
- Which musician is one of the biggest stars of tejano music and said "American roots music is the sharing and blending of different kinds of musics, like a brotherhood thing"? (*Answer: Leonardo "Flaco" Jimenez*)
- Which blues "diva" sang "Wild Women Don't Have the Blues"? (*Answer: Ida Cox*)
- What instrument is klezmer musician Dave Tarras best known for playing? (*Answer: clarinet*)
- Zydeco and Cajun musicians like Curley Taylor are generally associated with what state? (*Answer: Louisiana*)

POST-VISIT

Activity 2: *Who Am I?*

Background

This game helps to familiarize students with more of the musicians from the exhibit so that they can then compare and contrast the different musicians with popular musicians of today.

Before beginning, give the students a few minutes to review all of their Musician Information Forms (worksheet 3).

1. Using sticky labels or name tags, the teacher should put a label with the name of one of the musicians on the students' backs.
2. Now students need to figure out whose name is on their back. They will do this by moving around and asking questions of classmates.
 - Students can only ask one question at a time of a classmate. After the question is answered, they need to move on to another student to ask another question.
 - Beginning questions could be: "Am I a male or female?", "Do I sing or play an instrument or both?", "Am I from Kentucky?" The questions need to be specific, and not general questions such as "Where am I from?", or "What instrument do I play?" Students then should define the style of music of their performer.
 - When students have figured out who they are, the class might want to discuss the musicians in more detail.

For Further Discussion:

1. Students should assign the musicians to the themes (freedom, democracy, independence, diversity, and ingenuity) which most closely reflect their music. Why might musicians appear in more than one category? Explain choices.
2. Compare these musicians to popular musicians of today. Are the themes still appropriate in today's music climate? Give some examples of how musicians today would or would not fit into these themes.
3. Compare/contrast lyrics and instruments to what is found in popular music today.
4. Is your region/locale known for any type of special music or musicians? If so, identify them and describe how they might or might not fit into American roots music.