

## **The Blues: Music of Freedom**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Tony Russell (1997) affirms that blues “. . . is a product of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But its roots twine back before 1900 – years, even decades back – till we lose them in the subsoil of African-American folk music.” The new status of freedom gained for the African- American population was the start of new forms of artistic expressions. The new citizens bring with them a background of repression, suffering, and hard work. While working as slaves, African-Americans found they had places they could use their musical traditions freely, such as the fields where they labored and at church where they prayed. Hollers, spirituals, and work songs they invented were designed to lighten the load of the task. They were also a means of passing along news, plotting escapes, and releasing frustrations. The early blues carried on the tradition of voicing black aspirations and experiences. In light of this background, black musicians found a way to express themselves outside the church and develop a new musical style connected with surrounding musical influences.

This lesson explores both the African-American experience and the relationship of *vivencias* —past living events— to the blues. This exercise introduces the idea of oral tradition and examines the importance of that tradition in African-American culture.

I will also describe the different types of instruments that were and are used in blues music, the themes of the lyrics, and the representations of the sound. I will provide information about rituals and traditions related to each popular musical expression. Finally, I will talk about the formation of modern musical hybrids as part of the intercultural process generated by globalization. This unit examines both the content and form of lyrics in blues songs. In addition to highlighting the basic musical form of a blues song, it also addresses the use of floating verses in blues music, both within the context of the original era in which the songs were sung and also in relation to how this practice is perceived today.

### **OBJECTIVES**

The unit could be used in elementary, middle, and high school. The teacher should be able to adapt the unit to the curriculum and select and search which activities are more appropriate to his/her grade level. In a second through third grade environment the teacher would be able to introduce students to the basic understanding of the meaning of blues music as a sad music and expose them to some examples of music. Students will find the blues in everyday situations. Fourth and fifth grade teachers can explore blues music in conjunction with American black history, introducing students to the social economics in the United States when blues music was developed. Middle school and high school teachers will be able to explain and analyze blues music from a language arts approach and understand music and lyrics.

Since blues music is very broad, the unit will integrate social studies, art/music, and language arts objectives. According to social studies objectives, students will know about the importance of respect for the cultural heritage of other ethnic groups. Students will be able to employ different tools used in Social Studies to analyze and interpret information. Also, they will express ideas

orally based on research and experiences. Regarding Spanish language arts objectives, the students will create written and visual materials related to the topic. They will work with lyrics and poetry related to African American oral traditions and the blues. Students will have the opportunity to improve their reading skills as they read books, Internet sources, and magazine articles related to the topic at hand. Finally, as a part of the art/music curriculum, this thematic unit will help students to describe and analyze different musical sounds. Furthermore, the students will relate music to history, society, and culture. They will understand the contributions that racial groups give our national identity and how examples of music reflect the times during which they were created as a primary source of knowledge.

## **UNIT BACKGROUND**

The introduction of the unit will give a historical approach to blues music centered on the moment in American history when the African-American slaves acquired the new status of freedom. Next will be a description of the evolution of blues from the blues folk singers to the 20th century migration and the development of the cities and the following consolidation of contemporary blues. This section enables students to understand when, where, and why blues music was created and expose students to the sense of this music style.

The next section of the unit will consist of lyrics from different moments in blues music. Students will analyze the variety of themes and relate them to the historical moment. In this section students also will be able to explore the African-American oral tradition and the relationship of this tradition to the blues. Students will be able to experiment with the African percussion in their own classrooms.

The unit will conclude with a lesson plan divided into four units in which I explain how students could become bluesmen. Using different musical media, such as CDs, videos, and instruments, will enable students to create and perform their own blues music.

### **Blues Music**

Since blues music is derived from a folk tradition, no one knows precisely who, when, or where blues music appeared for the first time. It can be said with confidence that the first examples of blues music began to develop in the southern areas of the United States in the third quarter of the 19th century. Blues music could be related to some parameters that are native to these geographical areas like an oppressive social and economic environment. From this “reality” a new kind of sound emerges, searching to express both from and to the heart creating songs of general dissatisfaction. Blues music is defined by *Oxford Dictionary* as a “melancholic music of black American folk origin directly related to informal feelings of melancholy or depression.” In the early days of blues, music performers referred to this new sound as “blue” notes in order to differentiate it from other kind of sounds. Francis Davis (1995) consults *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* for a definition of the blues as “a song of American Negro origin, that is marked by the frequent occurrence of blues notes and takes the basic form ... of a 12-bar chorus consisting of a 3-line stanza, with the second line repeating the first,” and he adds the introduction of basic I-IV-V blues chord structure and flatted notes as “blue notes.” But what it is really interesting is the addition to the definition of the words “not always,” giving blues music the extraordinary property of change and evolution. Almost everybody is able to recognize a blues song. Though there are many different kinds of blues songs, all of them have things in common. These same characteristics are the things that make blues music a unique kind of expression of American culture.

### **The Early Days: The Folk Tradition**

There are so many studies about where the blues came from, and it is unanimous that the African tradition plays an important role in this matter. Gerhard Kubik (1999) establishes that

slave trade was the beginning of the blues. African music tradition crossed the ocean in order to develop new sounds in the new world. Slave traders encouraged dances and music among the captives on slave ships to prevent slaves from falling into despair during the long trip. They also included African instruments like one-stringed bowed lutes, two stringed plucked lutes, flutes, and drums. From these instruments and the way they played them were developed folk instruments like the banjo, an instrument derived from the African lute, the mouth-resonated musical bow from the west central African monochord zithers, or the slide guitar technique inherited from central Africa. All these instruments borrowed techniques from folk instrumentation like harmonica or guitar and together they created blues music.

When the slaves came to the new world they conserved their traditions in order to palliate the reality of hard labor and individual oppression. The field holler developed, creating the base for new sounds during the slavery years. In some of the documented field hollers can be found the blues pattern in the lyrics, repetition, sentimentalism, and lack of plot, but otherwise no instrument was documented. Although field hollers are the major sources for the creation of the blues, this was freer. In 1839 in Georgia was documented the following slave song: "*Oh! My massa told me, there's no grass in Georgia.*" These hollers or "one-verse songs" did not end with abolition, and when black Americans continued labor as free men, they continued over the years to provide words, melodies, and much of their general vocal freedom to the blues singing.

Paul Oliver (1990) says that the patterns of the blues ballad came from the field holler combined with the harmonic accompaniment. This can be interpreted as the beginning of "blue" notes. During the post-reconstruction and the first years of African American freedom older forms of music were abandoned or greatly modified and new forms were invented, like cakewalk, ragtime, jazz, blues, black gospel, first black classical music, poetry, and fine arts. Around the 1890s is when the first blues songs are documented. David Evans (1982) argues that blues was developed in this moment and no other time because the first generation of blacks born out of slavery got to maturity and this generation created the blues.

During these years other songs in Alabama were described as blues songs, but usually with no instrumentation. It is in the first years of the 20th century when blues music shows a quick development. There are several factors that reflect the evolution of blues from the rural blues to more modern urban blues. Folk tradition as an oral tradition in songs, tales, proverbs and riddles has a big impact in the development of blues. The rural blues came from the African-American folk tradition and the early spirituals and hymns. It is in this tradition and oral transmission of themes and sounds that the African heritage is more plausible. Rural blues was found in the southern countryside and small towns, and its music and lyrics were traditional. David Evans (1982) notes the importance of the folk group—people that share an oral tradition with common factors like ethnicity, cultural background, national or regional geography, social and religious tendencies, occupational or aged-based identity—as a developer of music, and black Americans formed a group with many factors in common. Black Americans were a segment of the population that shared problems like oppression, lack of economic opportunities, low educational level, and social injustices. But if we think of black Americans as a group, we can say that not all black Americans listen to blues music; neither do they perform any music at all. It is interesting that not all the blues came from Black Americans. But the majority of it did, and the transmission of knowledge is not proportional to the number of people who learn it. It is not necessary to have all the black population perform blues in order to spread the taste for it. Just one good performer can get a great number of followers and pupils. The black American population is very broad and only a segment is related to blues music.

## **The Black Migration**

In the 1840s black communities from Mississippi, Memphis, Saint Louis, and other southern rural areas were fighting against a lack of opportunities to progress in society. Between 1880 and 1916, about one million black Americans migrated from southern rural areas to the big cities of the north, especially Chicago. Social conditions and economic opportunities had deteriorated for blacks. The existence of the Black Codes (1800-66), which had restricted the civil rights and civil liberties of African-Americans, or the Jim Crow Laws (1876-1965) — state and local laws enacted in the Southern and border States of the United States that mandated “separate but equal” status for African Americans but in reality led to treatment and accommodations that were almost always inferior to those provided to white Americans — has a special role in this matter.

During this era black Americans found themselves in a world of injustices, where they were declared culpable of a crime without any proof and confined to hard labor (a leasing system very attractive for the white man and not so different from the old slavery system). Those were times of humiliation and no education where black society had to conserve its traditional black cosmology. The diaspora from the south did not find a better life in the north. The conditions in the northern cities were not so different from those in the rural south. Black Americans had no possibilities to join the unions, and they always had to accept the least desirable jobs. They had no opportunities to advance, and they began to settle in isolated communities due to hostility from European immigrants like Irish, Italians, or Polish. In spite of this, it can be said that life in the city was still better. The European wars left the industrial north without enough labor and the black community was a good source of workers. David Evans (1982) emphasizes the fact that during slavery times, black men had well-defined roles as anonymous members of a slave society with their basic physical needs taken care of by their masters, but in the new era of “freedom,” black men were unprepared for new responsibilities and racial discrimination. It is in these living conditions in the city where the music performers and the bluesmen struggle to reflect suffering, and this is why the basic theme of blues music does not change too much from rural areas to the city. But in the city the music and instrumentation varies and is inspired and enriched by influences from other musical styles.

The blues performer now is not playing in small bars in front of black country men; instead the performer is in front of a more developed audience, and this means that he has to get a better repertory. It is important to remark that in the early urban blues most performers were women. During 1908-12 performers included some blues music in their acts, and with the appearance of the phonograph in 1920s, music producers realized that there was a potential black market. In 1920 one of the first blues songs titled “Crazy Blues” by Perry Bradford, was performed by Mamie Smith and was recorded and published for Oken Records in New York. Other record companies, enticed by the possible profits, welcomed new performers to the big cities searching for success or even sent recording equipment to the south to look for new talents. Technical improvements like the electric recording process (1925) gave better fidelity to the media, and the radio as free entertainment was crucial to the evolution of blues music. During the thirties Chicago was the main centre of blues music, with the three main recording companies, Victor, Brunswick/Vocalion, Decca, and almost all the popular artists lived in the city

## **From the City to the World**

Blues music continued growing during the post-war period. During these years Chicago was still the center of migration for new musicians looking for their moment of glory. It was common to see musicians playing for shoppers in the streets. During the fifties the guitar and the new amplification method created new forms of expression with distorted sounds, “...the guitar expressed more keenly than any other instrument the anguish and isolation of the black blues singer in white America” (Russell 27). Artists like Muddy Waters with “Hoochie Coochie Man,”

Elmor James with “Dust My Broom,” or Jimmy Reed with “Ain’t That Loving You Baby” got to main street with nationwide hits.

The west and the south coast also developed a powerful blues based in guitars and harmonicas, and cities like Memphis, Atlanta, Dallas, and Houston entered in the blues music map. But in the late fifties the blues scene was almost dead. Even famous musicians like B.B. King or Muddy Waters had problems finding places to play. It was during the sixties, thousands miles away from America in the old and conservative Europe, when blues music was reinvented and imitated by young musicians trying to reach their idols. Bands like The Yardbirds, The Animals, The Rolling Stones, The Kinks, and a few years later Led Zeppelin, among others, defined themselves as Rhythm and Blues bands, and they covered wall-to-wall songs from blues musicians from the other side of the ocean. From the British Explosion, the term used to define this music movement during the sixties, the boundaries of music styles had been more difficult to trace; meanwhile music had been developing over the years. Today there is blues music all around the world. Some musicians are still close to the first parameters of the early African-American blues, and others had to find new methods of expression to show their suffering and isolation, and these always will be part of *blues*.

### **The Lyrics**

Jon Michael Spencer (1993) says that rap is the new blues of the 21st century, and if we analyze the social and economic factors that influenced blues music and rap music, we have to agree with the assertion. Musicians did not perceive this approaching since they do not pay attention to social facets of their creations, for example in Houston, a city with important blues tradition. Joseph A. Kotarba (1997) shows a perfect example of this when he states, “Blues and rap performers are especially notorious for their intergenerational conflict. The following are typical charges: blues musicians often describe rappers as gangsters and trouble makers, whereas rappers see bluesmen as old ‘Toms’ who play old slave songs for the amusement of the audiences.”

The lyrics of the blues came directly from the folk tradition of black American slaves, but words change to fit into new social realities, although emotional states like depression, melancholy, sadness, and loneliness are some themes that are always related to blues music, no matter where or when songs were written or performed. The main themes relate to having problems, being alone, and being in the dark.

Blues lyrics cover a broad range of formal stylistic and textual traits, and whenever enough of these occur together in a single performance, it is called a blues. Evans (1982) affirms that there is dialogue in the blues lyrics showing problems (some of them humorous, trivial, or minorities) and its solutions in order to show the feelings of struggling to succeed combined with awareness of overwhelming difficulties, but always delivered from a single person point of view with an emotional dimension. Lyrics in blues music always have emphasis in feelings and perceptions.

John Michael Spencer (1993) makes the point that the Bible is the principal source of religious authority from slavery to the early 20th century and that the Biblical lore remained deeply embedded in the heritage. In this ambient black blues the rest of the community traditionally viewed the singers as “bad men” or bad black men. Gerhard Kubik in *Africa and the Blues* (1999) relates the evil thing to the fact of African religious traditions stigmatized by Christians as “Devil things,” and this survived in the minds of blues singers. The myth of Robert Johnson selling his soul to the devil in a dirty southern crossroad for the price of fame is a perfect example.

Transforming those parameters from Christian-devil music, blues is a secular music with themes like man-woman situations and joys and the frustration of love, farming and its problems,

industrial work, poverty, alcohol and drugs, sickness and death, gambling, voodoo and magic, crime and prison, natural disasters, or national and local events. Stanley Edgar Hyman, in “The Folk Tradition,” classifies the blues into five major themes, and it is interesting to notice that they are contrasting pairs. Those themes are leaving, travel, journey (escape); dramatic, self-pity; compensatory, grandiose fantasy; abuse and bawdry; and cynicism. Those contradictions, conflicts, tensions, hunger, poverty, and oppression are universal facts not unique to the black community; therefore, it is common to find other musical styles with similar themes. But it is also true that the African-American community has been punished with lack of education and lack of economic opportunities. We can relate this to the main problem areas of life within the black lower class community. It is interesting that blues music rarely approaches nature’s beauty, and if it does, it is only to show the worst face of Mother Nature, like hurricanes, floods, or dry spells. Another theme that never appears is racial discrimination. Although it lies in the background, singers never confronted it directly as the result of institutionalized discrimination and their resignation to the inferior status of blues singers – these were just facts of life, since they did not know anything better.

### **LESSON PLANS: I AM A BLUESMAN**

This lesson transforms students into bluesmen by experiencing the creative process that musicians go through to create blues music. The lesson consists of 4 units.

Note to the teachers: The music in these lessons plans is only suggested. Teachers can use any blues song they find available and that they think is appropriate to the lesson. If the teacher is teaching in a language other than English it is possible to find modern blues music almost in any language.

#### **Unit 1: Feeling the *Blues*** (2<sup>nd</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> grade)

**Objectives:** By completing this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Familiarize him/herself with the meaning of *blues* as a concept and the music style behind.
- Understand that blues music is present in everyday life.
- Evaluate blues songs as primary sources.

**Introduction:** This lesson enables teachers to use blues music in order to explain to students the feelings of music. By studying the content, the rhythm, and the sound of blues songs, students can learn about the feeling of music.

**Concept Development:** Blues music could be related to some parameters that are native to geographical areas where it can be found, such as an oppressive social and economic environment. Blues try to express both from and to the heart creating songs of general dissatisfaction.

**Student Practice:** Listen to some examples of blues music and explain the emotions in the sounds students are listening to. Break students into small groups to discuss the lyrics, sound, and feeling of each song. What do the songs suggest about the condition of the people who sang them and listened to them?

**Assessment:** After listening and discussing the music samples encourage students to create their own *blues* song based in some sad moment of the recent past.

**Closure:** Ask students to create a basic percussion rhythm in small groups to accompany the blues song they created.

## ***Resources***

### Music

- “Trouble So Hard” early 1900s
- Skip James, “Hard Time Killin’ Floor Blues” 1930s

### **Unit 2: Finding the Rhythm** (Elementary School)

**Objectives:** By completing this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Familiarize him/herself with percussion patterns by considering the polyrhythm of African drumming.
- Understand that blues music is present in everyday life.
- Evaluate blues songs as primary sources.

**Introduction:** This lesson focuses on how students can learn basic blues percussion patterns by considering the polyrhythms of African drumming. Students will listen to several blues and non-blues recordings to practice recognizing the “backbeat” in each song. Hands-on exercises will show students how to identify and create a backbeat rhythm.

**Concept Development:** Understanding rhythm in blues music could be related to some parameters that are native to other parts of world such as Africa.

**Student Practice:** Listen to some examples of blues music and non-blues music and analyze and classify different rhythms. Break students into small groups to discuss the rhythms and relate them to African songs.

**Assessment:** After listening and discussing the music samples, students will create their own blues rhythm pattern. Students can use any object in the classroom.

**Closure:** Ask students to create a basic percussion rhythm in small groups and try to mix all the different rhythms together.

**Resources:** Teachers can carry to the classroom any percussion instrument they think can be useful. Otherwise any object in the classroom could be use as percussion instrument such are pencils, rulers, buckets, etc.

### Music

- Drum related African music.
- “Trouble So Hard” early 1900s.
- “Hard Time Killin’ Floor Blues” 1930s.
- “Cross Road Blues” 1937.

**Unit 3: Building your First Blues Guitar.** (Due to complex procedures this lesson is more suitable for 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade in Elementary School)

**Objectives:** By completing this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Familiarize him/herself with the instruments slaves had to use to perform their music and the techniques of the early field hollers and bluesmen.
- Build his/her own instrument.
- Understand that blues music is present in everyday life.
- Evaluate blues songs as primary sources.

**Introduction:** This lesson focuses on how students can build a musical instrument like *one-stringed bowed lute*. This instrument is one example of the African instrument in the work fields during slavery.

**Concept Development:** Understanding the way African American slaves had the ability to recreate their native African instruments and develop them to modern instruments like the banjo.

**Student Practice:** In small groups students have to build their own instrument following the teacher instructions.

**Assessment:** Students will perform music in front of other students with their new basic guitar. Partners can help them with percussion.

**Closure:** Ask students to create a basic music patterns in small groups. Most advanced students can be exposed to the side guitar technique by sliding a piece of glass or metal along the string making different sounds.

**Resources:** Fishing wire or guitar strings, a long piece rectangular piece of wood (i.e. 2" x 4") and a large rectangular, circular, or oval tin can. If is difficult to obtain this materials a rubber bands, long ruler and a plastic glass can be used (note that the results will not be as good).

#### **Unit 4: I Am in a Blues Band** (Elementary School/Middle School)

**Objectives:** By completing this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Familiarize him/herself with the meaning of *blues* as a concept and the music style behind.
- Familiarize him/herself with percussion patterns by considering the polyrhythm of African drumming.
- Familiarize him/herself with the instruments slaves had to use to perform their music and the techniques of the early field hollers and bluesmen.
- Understand that blues music is present in everyday life.
- Evaluate blues songs as primary sources.

**Introduction:** This lesson focuses on how students can experience being part of a blues band using their own experiences and recreating the first moments of blues music.

**Concept Development:** After creating lyrics, percussion rhythm and instrument students can put all the effort together and perform in small groups (three or four students) their first blues music. Students can relate the process of creating their music to the first moments of slaves and African American when blues music was created.

**Student Practice:** Let students practice and experience with their creations.

**Assessment:** Students will form groups (three/four students). They will develop lyrics, percussion rhythm and guitar sounds in order to create a blues song.

**Closure:** Ask students to define their feelings during the creation and during the performance and relate this to the lives of musicians.

**Resources:** Students must use their lyrics, percussion instruments, and first guitar.



## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Accurate presentation about the blues viewed as folksong focusing in the traditional elements and processes.
- Hyman, Stanley Edgar "The Folk Tradition." *Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel: Readings in the Interpretation of Afro-American Folklore*. Alan Dundes, Ed. Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1990.
- Kennedy, Michael. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music*. N.Y.: 1980.  
Derived from the classic *Oxford Dictionary of Music*, this is a good compendium of information for lovers of music of all periods and styles.
- Kotarba, Joseph A. "Black Men, Black Voices. The Role of the Producer in Synthetic Performance Ethnography." Houston, 1997.
- Kubik, Gerhard. *Africa and the Blues*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999.  
Correlations between the African music tradition and the developing of the blues.
- Oliver, Paul. *Blues Fell This Morning: Meaning in the Blues*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Russell, Tony. *The Blues: From Robert Johnson to Robert Cray*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1997.  
Graphic book about with a short introduction with the history of blues and main focused in biographies of artists.
- Spencer, Jon Michael. *Blues and Evil*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993.

### Supplemental Resources

#### Books

- Brooks, Lonnie. *Blues for Dummies*. Foster City, CA: IDG Books Worldwide, 1998.  
Guide through the life and times of the blues, from the acoustic mystique of Robert Johnson and Son House to the urban blues men and women of today.
- Ferris, Dr. William. *Blues from the Delta*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1978.  
Ferris's book is a well-recognized classic study of blues music. The first section, entitled "Blues Roots," provides a highly readable and interesting overview of the history of blues music. The second section, "Blues Composition," is a careful analysis of the various techniques for creating and performing blues music.
- Gussow, Adam. *Seems Like Murder Here: Southern Violence and the Blues Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.  
*Seems like Murder Here* offers a revealing new account of the blues tradition. Far from mere laments about lost loves and hard times, the blues emerge in this provocative study as vital responses to spectacle lynching's and the violent realities of African American life in the Jim Crow South.
- Jahn, Janheinz. "Blues: The Conflict of Cultures." *Write Me a Few of Your Lines: A Blues Reader*. Tracy, Stephen C., ed. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999.
- Lester, Julius. *Black Folktales*. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1969.  
The book consists in short stories about blacks in the south.
- Lomax, Alan. *The Land Where the Blues Began*. N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 1993.  
Alan Lomax traveled the South "from the Brazos bottoms of Texas to the tidewater country of Virginia" in search of the wellspring of American blues.
- Wood, Roger. *Down in Houston, Bayou City Blues*. University of Texas Press, 2003.  
Since 1995, Roger Wood and James Fraher have been gathering the story of the blues in Houston. In this book, they draw on dozens of interviews with blues musicians, club owners, audience members, and music producers, as well as dramatic black-and-white photographs of performers and venues, to present a lovingly detailed portrait of the Houston blues scene, past, and present.
- Woods, Clyde. *Development Arrested: Race, Power, and the Blues in the Mississippi Delta*. London: Verso, 1998.  
Arguing that this folk discourse emerged in response to economic and political restructuring in the Delta during the 20th century, he goes on to show how it constitutes a critique of the plantation South, New South modernization, and the transformation of capitalist agriculture during the so-called Green Revolution.

**Songs** (Chronologic order) Source: PBS.

“The Blues.” <<http://www.pbs.org/theblues/classroom/cd.html#null>>. (Note: Samples of this song can be listened on the web page)

“Lost Your Head Blues” (1926). Written and Performed by Bessie Smith (Publisher: Frank Music, ASCAP). Source: BESSIE SMITH: THE COMPLETE RECORDINGS, VOL. 3 (Columbia/Legacy, 47474).

“Stack O' Lee” (1928). Performed by Mississippi John Hurt (Public Domain). Source: AVALON BLUES: THE COMPLETE 1928 OKEH RECORDINGS (Columbia/Legacy, 64986).

“The Panama Limited” (1930). Performed and Written by Bukka White (Public Domain).

“Hard Time Killin' Floor Blues.” (1930) Performed and Written by Skip James, Publisher: Wynwood Music Company). Source: Public Domain.

“Trouble So Hard.” (1937) Performed by Dock Reed, Henry Reed, and Vera Hall. Written by Vera Hall (Publisher: Warner/Chappell Music). Source: AFRO-AMERICAN SPIRITUALS, WORK SONGS, AND BALLADS (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress Archive of Folk Song, AFS L3).

“Cross Road Blues.” (1937) Performed and Written by: Robert Johnson (Publisher: LEHSEM II, LLC/Claud L. Johnson). Source: ROBERT JOHNSON BOX SET (Columbia/Legacy, 64916).

“Mannish Boy.” (1955) Performed by: Muddy Waters. Written by: McKinley Morganfield, Ellas McDaniel and Melvin London (Publisher: Arc Music Corporation). Source: HIS BEST, 1947-1955 (MCA/Chess, 9370).

“When Will I Get to Be Called a Man.” (1957) Performed and Written by: Big Bill Broonzy (Public Domain).

“John Henry.” (1958) Performed by Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee (Public Domain). Source: BROWNIE MCGHEE & SONNY TERRY SING (Smithsonian Folkways, 40011).

“Shot on James Meredith.” (1966) Performed and Written by: J.B. Lenoir (Publisher: Ghana Music, admin. By Bug Music). Source: VIETNAM BLUES: THE L & R RECORDING (Evidence, 26068-2).

“Three O'Clock Blues.” (1971) Performed by B.B. King. Written by Riley B. King and Jules Bihari (Publisher: Careers BMG Music Publishing). Source: LIVE IN COOK COUNTY JAIL (MCA, 11769).

“Fishin' Blues.” (1971) Performed and Written by: Taj Mahal (Publisher: EMI Blackwood Music, Inc.). Source: THE BEST OF TAJ MAHAL (Columbia/Legacy, 65856).

“Big Chief.” (1971) Performed by Professor Longhair. Written by: Earl King Johnson. Publisher: Shirley's Music, BMI, c/o Don Williams Music Group, Inc. Source: HOUSEPARTY NEW ORLEANS STYLE (Rounder, 2057).

“The Other Woman.” (2000) Performed by Shemekia Copeland. Written by John Hahn and Joseph Anthony Hudson (Publisher: Avarice & Greed Pub., BMI). Source: WICKED (Alligator, 4875).

“Da Thrill Is Gone from Here.” (2002) Written and Performed by Chris Thomas King (Publisher: Young Blues Rebel Music, Inc.). Source: DIRTY SOUTH HIP HOP BLUES (21st Century Blues Records, 2106).

### **Videos**

*Deep Blues: A Musical and Cultural History of the Mississippi Delta.* Robert Palmer. 1982.

This superb documentary vividly illustrates the enduring vitality of country blues, an idiom that most mainstream music fans had presumed dead or, at best, preserved through more scholarly tributes when filmmaker Robert Mugge and veteran blues and rock writer Robert Palmer embarked on their 1990 odyssey into Mississippi delta country..

*Martin Scorsese Presents: The Blues.* PBS. 2003.

Under the guiding vision of Executive Producer Martin Scorsese, seven directors explore the blues through their own personal styles and perspectives. The films in the series are motivated by a central theme: how the blues evolved from parochial folk tunes to a universal language. The seven-part film series includes: *Feel Like Going Home* by Martin Scorsese, *The Soul of a Man* by Wim Wenders, *The Road to Memphis* by Richard Pearce, *Warming by the Devil's Fire* by Charles Burnett, *Godfathers and Sons* by Marc Levin, Red, *White & Blues* by Mike Figgis, and *Piano Blues* by Clint Eastwood.

### **Internet**

The Blues. PBS. <<http://www.pbs.org/theblues/>>.

Multimedia project about the history of blues. The web page offers all the resources needed for the lesson plans.

The Blues Foundation. <<http://www.blues.org>>.

The Blues Foundation is a nonprofit corporation headquartered in Memphis, Tennessee, the home of the Blues. With more than 160 affiliated Blues organizations, and membership spanning the globe, the Foundation serves as the hub for the worldwide passion for Blues Music. The Blues Foundation's website represents a comprehensive collection of resources for Blues scholars and fans. Included on the site are a searchable database of Blues educators and artists-in-residence, a Blues bibliography, and a collection of Blues-based curricula compiled from educators around the country.

Experience Music Project. <<http://www.emplive.org/>>.

Experience Music Project (EMP) provides dynamic, multifaceted, ever-changing experiences through new and exciting explorations of American popular music, which both entertain and engage visitors in the creative process.

Songs of Freedom is a four-disc box set containing music by Bob Marley and the Wailers, from Marley's first song "Judge Not", recorded in 1961, to a live version of "Redemption Song", recorded in 1980 at his last concert. The song "Iron Lion Zion" was first released on this compilation, in what is often considered the original mix (although the original is said to not have included the harmony vocals from the I-Threes). The single releases (and subsequent compilation releases) use a remix which was Since blues music is derived from a folk tradition, no one knows precisely who, when, or where blues music appeared for the first time. It can be said with confidence that the first examples of blues music began to develop in the southern areas of the United States in the third quarter of the 19th century. Blues music could be related to some parameters that are native to these geographical areas like an oppressive social and economic environment. During the post-reconstruction and the first years of African American freedom older forms of music were abandoned or greatly modified and new forms were invented, like cakewalk, ragtime, jazz, blues, black gospel, first black classical music, poetry, and fine arts. Around the 1890s is when the first blues songs are documented. Free 5-8 day shipping within the U.S. when you order \$25.00 of eligible items sold or fulfilled by Amazon. Or get 4-5 business-day shipping on this item for \$5.99 . (Prices may vary for AK and HI.)

A gripping narrative that captures the tumult and liberating energy of a nation in transition, Sweet Soul Music is an intimate portrait of the legendary performers--Sam Cooke, Ray Charles, James Brown, Solomon Burke, Aretha Franklin, Otis Redding, and Al Green among them--who merged gospel and rhythm and blues to create Southern soul music. Through rare interviews and with unique insight, Peter Guralnick tells the definitive story of the songs that inspired a generation and forever changed the sound of American music. Read moreRead less. Previous page. Just why are train songs so important in the music of the Southern States? When James Carr sang of "The Freedom Train"™ he was in part referring to The Freedom Train initiated by Attorney General Tom C. Clark in 1947, who believed that Americans had begun taking the principles of liberty for granted in the post-war years. It was a travelling exhibition that was integrated, both black and white visitors were allowed to mingle freely. It was not without controversy as the cities of Birmingham, Alabama, and Memphis, Tennessee, refused to allow blacks and whites to see the exhibits at the same time. The Freedom Train avoided the cities, amid significant controversy. Then