

Teacher's Guide

Unit of study

Mississippi Music and Musicians

Fourth Grade Mississippi Studies

Prepared by

Mississippi Musicians Hall of Fame

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Introduction

Mississippi has a rich and unique musical heritage. The roots of this history go back before the Civil War, and music has provided an outlet for creative expression of people in the poorest state in the Union (still the highest percentage of citizens on government assistance).

Mississippi is the birthplace of America's music, and her musicians are known the world over. No other state has produced such a high percentage of internationally known, world-class artists.

In addition to contributing to the students' knowledge of Mississippi, this unit should foster pride among students of all races in their state's musical achievements.

Somewhere in a classroom in Mississippi sits another B. B. King, Elvis Presley, or Leontyne Price. They, like many others, have come from poor and modest circumstances, overcoming tremendous hardships. Perhaps this unit will inspire students to greater visions and achievements.

Review of Competencies Covered in This Unit of Study (Mississippi Social Studies Framework)

The competencies addressed in this study of Mississippi music and musicians include

1. Develop an understanding of the state in relationship to the expanding horizon theme.
 - c. Evaluate the impact and interactions among all groups throughout the history of Mississippi (e.g. European, African, Asian, etc.).

- d. Identify the areas and individuals that were significant in development of Mississippi and that helped to forge its unique identity (e.g. cotton as king, Mississippi waterways, music, and literature, etc.).
 - e. Explain the connections between Mississippi and other United States regions.
3. Demonstrate the ability to use social studies tools (e.g., timelines, maps. Globes, resources, a compass, graphs, technology, etc.).
- d. Describe relationships among people, places, and environments (e.g., the Delta and the blues, etc.).
4. Identify the interdependence of economics (self, family, local, and state).
- a. Compare the resources and scarcity of resources in a local region to other regions in Mississippi (e.g., Delta’s rich soil vs. coastal waters).

As the unit of study is outlined, suggested activities will be noted and identified as to how they relate to the competencies.

Study Time Required

This unit of study is suggested for two 50-minute periods. However, three additional 50-minute periods are outlined in case teachers want to extend the unit. Of course, the **units can be modified to fit the time available.**

Resources Needed

The Mississippi music and musicians unit is built around

1. a new book entitled *Mississippi Musicians Hall of Fame - Legendary Musicians Whose Art Has Changed the World*. In the back of the book, a listing of resources from the Mississippi Library Commission is provided.
2. a CD by the same name what will be used to give examples of Mississippi music and musicians.
3. a **Mississippi Blues Musicians** map is also available listing over 300 Mississippi blues musicians and their hometowns (optional).
4. Teacher's Guide (free)

These resources can be ordered from the Mississippi Musicians Hall of Fame. P.O. Box 1270, Clinton, MS 39060.

Other resources will be suggested in the teacher's guide (see addendum entitled Additional Resources).

Format for Teacher's Guide

This teacher's guide is designed in a "*What to do, what to say*" format. That is, suggestions are made for steps the teacher can take and what the teacher can say (script in quotations). Of course, teachers may modify, change, augment, and delete as they wish.

The unit is also designed for teachers who know little about the subject. Every effort is made to guide step-by-step through the activities.

What to do is in **bold**, and what to say is in quotations.

LESSON ONE - 50 MINUTES

What to do-

Equipment needed

CD player with speakers
Chalk or dry-eraser board, power point

Teaching materials needed

CD - *Legendary Musicians Whose Art Has Changed the World*

Lesson one is designed to be a matching game. The object of the game is to have students listen to selections on the CD and guess the style (type or kind) of music and the Mississippi musician. Of course, most of the students will not know the answers but they will have fun guessing.

Each song on the CD represents a style of music that has significance to be explored in Lesson Two and related to the competencies to be developed.

Write the following on the board:

<u>Style</u>	<u>Mississippi Musician</u>
Gospel	*Jimmie Rodgers *Mississippi Mass Choir
Blues	*James Blackwood Blackwood Brothers *Mundell Lowe/Lloyd Wells
Country	*Skeets McWilliams *Charlie Patton
Jazz	*Leake County Revelers *International Sweethearts of Rhythm

Big Band Swing *Little Milton
Rhythm & Blues *Dee Barton

There are six styles of music and ten Mississippi musicians on the CD. Have the students listen to each selection and match (draw a line between) the style (type or kind) and the musician. This can be done through class participation.

Know how to operate the CD player so you can move from song to song and stop when needed.

Set the CD player so that you can play Number 2, *Green River Blues* - Charlie Patton first.

What to say -

“We will have two Mississippi Studies lessons that will be about our state’s musical heritage and history. We will learn

1. how music has helped Mississippi become different from any other state,
2. how music has helped different groups in the state’s history to work together,
3. how music has helped Mississippi connect with other regions of the country, and
4. how different and culturally unlike musicians from Mississippi have become world famous.

To get you thinking about all of this, we are going to play a game. We will call it the *Mississippi Music Game Show Quiz*.

I will play part of a song from the CD; and you are to guess the style or kind of music and the musician. If you know the answers, raise your hand and I will call on you. We will then draw a line connecting the correct performer to the correct style.” (LET THE STUDENT WHO ANSWERS CORRECTLY DRAW THE LINE BUT **REMEMBER TO ERASE THE LINES BEFORE THE NEXT CLASS.**)

“We are going to start with music of long ago and come forward in time up to the present day. For example, our first song was recorded in 1929. That could be about the time of your great grandparents.

Now, let’s get started. Remember, I will play part of a song; and you tell me the style of music and the Mississippi musician - a two part answer.”

Play Number 2 on the CD - *Green River Blues* by Charlie Patton (You do not have to play all the song but play enough so the students get a feel for the style.)

Push stop on the CD player.

“OK! Who can tell me the name of the style and the musician?”

Let students guess. Draw a line between the correct style and musician.

“The correct answer is Charlie Patton, musician, and blues was the style. He was singing *Green River Blues*.

OK, now for the next song.”

Play Number 3 on the CD - *Train Whistle Blues* by Jimmie Rodgers

Anyone know the answer?

Students give answers

“The correct answer is Jimmie Rodgers and the style was country. If you said “blues” you were right and if you said country you were right. The name of the song was *Train Whistle Blues*.

If you don’t know any of the answers, don’t feel alone. Most Mississippians could not answer either, but it’s fun to guess.

Now for our next song.”

Play Number 4 on the CD which is *Dry Town Blues* by the Leake County Revelers.

Call for answers.

“This song was played by the Leake County Revelers in the old-country style. The song was *Dry Town Blues*.

Notice that the songs we have heard have the word blues in the title. We will talk about that later.

Next!”

Play Number 5 on the CD, James Blackwood and the Blackwood Brothers singing *Angels Watch Over Me*.

“Who has the answer?”

It was James Blackwood and the Blackwood Brothers singing *Angels Watch Over Me* and it was in the Southern gospel style.”

Play number 6 which is *Bugle Call Rag* by the International Sweethearts of Rhythm (Swing)

“Who has the answer?”

This big band played in the swing style and was called the International Sweethearts of Rhythm - an all girl band.”

Play number 7 which is *Robins Nest* played by Skeets McWilliams.

“Can anyone tell me what kind of instrument the musician was playing?”

Students guess instrument

“Now, who was he, and what style was he playing?”

It was Skeets McWilliams playing the guitar in the jazz style.

Remember, these are all Mississippi musicians. We will learn more about them and their music in our next lesson.”

Play Number 8 which is a *Medley* played by Mundell Lowe and Lloyd Wells accompanied by the USM Jazz Lab Band

“OK, on this one tell me the two Mississippi musicians featured and the style of music.”

Get answers

“That was a *Medley* of songs played by Mundell Lowe and Lloyd Wells. They were accompanied by the University of Southern Jazz Lab Band. The style is jazz.”

Can someone tell me the instruments they were playing?

They were playing guitars.

We have three more; so do your best to guess.”

Play Number 9 which is *My Dog and Me* by Little Milton. *WARNING - AT THE VERY END OF THE SONG, THERE IS ONE WORD THAT MAY BE OBJECTIONABLE TO SOME.*

“What is the answer?”

It is Little Milton singing *My Dog and Me*, and the style is Rhythm and Blues.

On this next song, the musician does not play or sing. He composed the music and wrote it down for a band to play. You guess who he was and the style of music.”

**Play Number 10 which is *Swing Machine*
composed by Dee Barton**

“Anyone know the answer?”

The composer was Dee Barton, and it was jazz
played by a big band.

Finally, we have one more for you to guess.”

**Play Number 11 which is *Amazing Grace*
sung by the Mississippi Mass Choir**

“What is the answer?”

Student’s response

“It was the Mississippi Mass Choir singing
Amazing Grace and the style was gospel.

OK, let’s review. Tell me the styles of music
we heard.”

Let students name the styles.

“We will learn more about some of the
musicians we heard on the CD, but can you tell
me anything about any of the music styles you
heard?”

**Students may know a little about blues,
which was born in the Delta or about
country music of which Jimmie Rodgers
was the father. If not, tell them.**

“Well, did you know that blues music was
invented by African-Americans who lived
mostly in the Delta of Mississippi?”

Did you know that Jimmie Rodgers is called the father of country music and that he is from Meridian?

Did you also know that most, if not all, of America's music had its roots right here in Mississippi? Mississippi could be called the music state."

If you have time, read to the class the introduction to the blues section in the book on page 13 (*Mississippi Musicians Hall of Fame, Legendary Musicians Whose Art Has Changed the World*). You may need to define several words as you read.

"In our next lesson, we will learn more about how music has shaped the history of Mississippi and its people. "

LESSON TWO - 50 MINUTES

What to do-

Equipment needed

CD player and speakers

Teaching materials needed

***Legendary Musicians* CD**

Mississippi Blues Musicians map

***Legendary Musicians Whose Art Has Changed the World* book**

What to say-

“In our first lesson on Mississippi music and musicians, we learned a little about musical styles and musicians from Mississippi.

In this lesson we will learn more about musical, styles and where they came from, how music contributed to the unique identity of Mississippi and how other regions of the United States are connected to Mississippi.

But first, lets play another game. I want the class to name as many famous Mississippi musicians as you can. If you name ten, you will be a “Silver Winner” and if you name twenty, you will be a “Gold Winner.”

OK, raise your hand if you have the name of a famous Mississippi musician.

Write the names on the board. This is a game for the whole class. You can refer to the book, *Legendary Musicians*, if there are any questions about a musicians.

“Good, you got #_____ famous Mississippi musicians. Did you know that there are more than 400 that we know of?”

Now let’s get back to the lesson. I am going to play part of the songs I played in the last lesson and we will talk about each one of them in more depth.”

Play part of #2 on the CD which is Charlie Patton singing a blues song.

“Who is the musician and what style is he using? Remember we learned this in the last lesson.”

Get students' answers.

That was Charlie Patton singing the blues.
What is the blues and where did it come from?

Get students' answers.

Charlie Patton was the most famous and one of the first folk blues singers. He is called the King of Delta Blues. This recording was done way back in the 1920s. Can you understand what he was saying?

Get students' answers.

Few people could understand what Charlie Patton was saying in his first recordings. That was his way of singing. Blues singers were mostly from the Delta of Mississippi.
Where is the Delta?

Get students' answers. If you have the Mississippi Blues Musicians map, show the class where the Delta is and other features of Mississippi on the map.

“After the Civil War, most African-Americans continued to work on farms and plantations. In the fields they would have chants or would “holler” in rhythm with the work of “choppin” cotton (cutting down weeds). It was a very hard life.

On weekends, they would find relief from the hard conditions by singing and dancing at parties or in what is called “juke joints.” The blues music told stories of the hard times at work and of relationships between men and women. The blues depicted a sad frame of mind. When we say we have the blues, we mean we are feeling sad.

Blues music was born in the Delta of Mississippi. It is a unique form of music and has helped make Mississippi unique. People from all over the world love blues music.”

Optional activity - Have the students make up poems (words to blues songs) and put them to their own made up music. Give them the starting words and let them finish the poem. (This can be a team activity or for individuals.)

Examples of the first lines:

I don't have no money ----

Dog done gone and left me ----

Work has got me down----

At the end of each poem line, have the students clap four steady beats. For example,

I don't have no money XXXX

Days are not so sonny XXXX

This activity lets the students create their own blues music; and it shows how stories were told through music.

This activity could take up a great deal of time depending on how involved the students become. Use your judgement about how long you can afford for the activity to continue.

“Tell me what connection Mississippi blues has with another part of the United States.”

Let the students try to answer.

“During the 1920s, 30s, 40s, and 50s, many southern African-Americans left the south and went north. Many from Mississippi, including blues singers, went to Chicago and Detroit. This is sometimes called the “great migration.” Why do you think they left?”

Let students answer.

“At that time, African-Americans felt that they would have more economic opportunities and would be treated better in the North.

Now let’s go on to another style of music and see how it made Mississippi different. We will see how one Mississippi musician changed the whole world’s way of thinking about music.

I will play his song again and see if you remember who he is and what style of music he is singing.”

Play number 3 on the CD, Jimmie Rodgers.

“Do you remember?”

Get students answers.

“Yes, that was Jimmie Rodgers who is known as the father of country music. He was born around Meridian, Mississippi in 1897 and died in 1933 at the age of 36.

What is it that Jimmie Rodgers does with his voice when he sings?”

Get students' answers.

“It is called yodeling and one of his nicknames was ‘America’s Blue Yodler.’ Because he worked around railroads, another nickname he had was the ‘Singing Brakeman.’

Can you think of anything about Jimmie’s music that is like Charlie Patton’s music?”

Get students' answers.

“Both singers were using the blues style. Jimmie used the blues to create the unique sounds of today’s country music. Jimmie learned the blues from his black musician friends and added his own experience in folk country music. That resulted in what we call “country music” today. Consequently, he became the father of country music.

Do you know who wrote most of his hit songs?”

Let students guess.

“A woman from Meridian, Elsie McWilliams, wrote 39 of Jimmie’s hit songs including the one I played for you.”

If you have time, read the section in the book on Jimmie Rodgers which is on page 75.

“Let’s review some things we have learned in these two lessons.

1. The blues was born in the Mississippi Delta where African-Americans worked in the fields on plantations.

2. Most, if not all, of America’s popular music came from the blues.

3. Music helped form Mississippi's unique identity.

4. Mississippi musicians traveled to Detroit and Chicago to form a strong connection between those cities and Mississippi. This was during the black migration that took place in the 1920s, 30s, 40s, and 50s.

5. Two Mississippi musicians, Charlie Patton and Jimmie Rodgers, were significant individuals in the development of early music in Mississippi.

6. Black and white musicians in Mississippi learned from each other to form new styles of music.”

Include facts from this unit on test.

Optional activities for additional lessons.

Prepare the students for the next lesson which requires a homework assignment.

LESSON THREE - 50 MINUTES

What to do -

Teaching materials needed

Mississippi Blues Musicians map

Or State Highway map

This lesson helps students develop map skills and also their knowledge of musicians who have made the state unique.

Have the students find and bring to class pictures of Mississippi musicians from newspapers, magazines and advertising posters (examples, B. B. King, Faith Hill, Elvis Presley, etc.). Let the students place the pictures on or around a Mississippi map connecting the musician to his or her hometown with string or ribbon. The student will need to research the hometown of the musician.

Point out the different regions of the state -delta, coast, etc. The *Mississippi Blues Musicians* map, described earlier, has the names of Mississippi blues musicians and their home towns and the geographic regions of the state.

Read to the students a little about some of the musicians using the book, *Mississippi Musicians Hall of Fame, Legendary Musicians*

LESSON FOUR - 50 MINUTES

What to do -

Teaching materials needed

None

Have the students take the pictures from the last lesson and make a time line across the board or wall. Have them identify the musicians according to their birth dates and place them at the appropriate dates on the time line. Relate for the students other events that took place at the different times on the time line. Birth dates for the musicians can be found in *Mississippi Musicians Hall of Fame* book.

LESSON FIVE - 50 MINUTES

What to do -

Teaching materials needed

*Mississippi Musicians Hall of Fame,
Legendary Musicians* book

Read to the class the story of Jimmie Rodgers, page 75, and Jessie Rodgers, page 77. Let the students prepare a mini-skit about Jimmie and Jessie to present to the class.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Internet Connections

www.msmusic.org

(with Mississippi Musician's
archives)

www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org

www.marcopolo.worldcom.com

Publications

Oxford American magazine (Fifth
Annual Music Issue), P.O. Box
1156, 404 S. 11th Street, Oxford,
MS 38655 (comes with CD)
phone 1-800-269-6926

Organizations

Mississippi Arts Commission
239 North Lamar Street, Suite
207

Jackson, MS 39201

Phone 601-359-6030

(Ask about the tape, Songs from
Home)

