



Mississippi Music and Musicians
Ninth Grade Mississippi Studies
Teacher's Guide

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www.msmusic.org

This project sponsored in part by a grant from the Mississippi Arts Commission
In cooperation with the Mississippi Department of Education



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P O Box 1270 • Clinton, MS 39060

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 (Taken from the Mississippi Social Studies Framework - Ninth Grade)

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

1. Explain how (music) history has influenced the development of Mississippi.
2. Analyze the historical significance of key events in the state's development. (The unit will include the study of the diverse contributions of the citizens of the state.)
3. Describe the relationship of people, places, and environment through time.
4. Trace the effects of migration to and from the state.
5. Compare various people who have had an influence on Mississippi history.
6. Analyze the ways Mississippians have resolved conflict and adapted to change and continue to address cultural issues unique to the state.
7. Identify how changes in one environment can produce changes in another.
8. Examine the cultural impact of Mississippi artists and writers.
9. Evaluate the impact of Mississippians on the fine arts.
10. Give examples of contributions made by selected Mississippians.

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.



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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.



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Lesson One

What to do

Equipment needed

CD player with speakers

Chalk or dry-erase board, powerpoint

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. In educational terms, this is like a pre-test to see how much students already know.

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:

Style

Gospel

Blues

Country

Jazz

Big Band Swing

Rhythm & Blues

Mississippi Musician

*Jimmie Rodgers

*Mississippi Mass Choir

*James Blackwood

Blackwood Brothers

*Mundell Lowe/Lloyd Wells

*Skeets McWilliams

*Charlie Patton

*Leake County Revelers

*International Sweethearts of Rhythm

*Little Milton

*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,



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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



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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



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“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?”



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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

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



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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. Charlie’s picture is on page 35 in the Legendary Musicians book.

“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.)



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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 sunny 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?”



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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 earned 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.

1. Have students research Mississippi blues artists and report on them to the class.
2. Invite a blues musicians or country music musicians to perform for the class.
3. Have a contest to see which student can write and perform the best blues song.



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

“In our next few lessons, you will be asked to research Mississippi musicians and report your findings to the class.”

Lessons Three, Four, and Five

What to do

Equipment needed

Computers with internet connections

Teaching materials needed

Mississippi Musicians Hall of Fame book = Legendary Musicians

School library

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

Lesson three, four, and five are designed to be independent or team in nature. Allow students to research Mississippi musicians on the internet or in the book and report their findings to the class. Encourage students to find musicians from their home town and not all to report on the same person. Many students will not know the vast number of musicians that come from Mississippi. Exploring and researching will help them understand the great number of artists from the state.

Research can be done on the internet at www.msmusic.org - click on the Music Archives page and follow the directions. Students can also use a search engine to find Mississippi musicians by name. www.allmusic.com - research can be done on artists, albums, songs, styles, and labels. Over 60,000 artists are listed. You may want to write the assignment on the board or give the students a handout.

What to say

“Today, I would like for you to research musicians from Mississippi and report your findings to the class. Not only do I want you to tell the class about the musician but I want you to

1. tell how the musician influenced the development of Mississippi;
2. trace the effects of his or her migration to and from the state;
3. analyze how, or if, the musician helped to resolve conflict and adapted to change that helped the state; and
4. describe what impact the musician had on fine arts and the contributions he or she made to the world’s music.”



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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

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Phone 601-359-6030

(Ask about the tape, Songs from Home)