

### Lesson Objectives (suggested grade levels: 9-12)

In this lesson, students will develop an understanding of the history of American Roots Music and to develop a post-1990 exhibit panel.

### 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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### Post-visit

Activity 1: *What's Next?*

Activity 2: *Be an Exhibition Curator*

### Materials

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

## Lesson 6: Teacher Instructions and Background

Each lesson is intended to prepare students for a visit to *New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music* and to expand on their understanding of the exhibition with a Post-visit activity in the classroom. The information in *New Harmonies* brings us up to the early 1990s, but popular music has changed a great deal since then. This lesson will link the music of the past to music of today and help the students understand the history of their music.

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 the information they collected 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: What's on Your Playlist?* for all of the students. Hand out both sheets a few days before the visit so that students have enough time to interview friends and/or family.

### Visit

Before going to the exhibit, divide your class into five groups. Each group will receive a different worksheet, either *Worksheet 3: Sacred Songs*; *Worksheet 4: Country*; *Worksheet 5: Blues*; or *Worksheet 6: Dance*. The fifth group will receive *Worksheet 6: Revival and the Themes of American Roots Music*.

All five worksheets should be used as students explore the exhibition.

Make sure each student has a pencil (not pen) to write down the information. (Pens make permanent marks, and museums generally prefer the use of pencils in their exhibits.) You may wish to collect the papers from the students before leaving the exhibition.

### Post-visit

After returning from your visit, the 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.




**VISIT****Worksheet 2: *Sacred Songs*****Background**

The foundations of American music lie in the religious yearnings of Native Americans, European settlers, and Africans brought to the colonies in bondage. Some European settlers came to the New World to escape religious persecution, and they brought with them songs and hymns steeped in the Protestant religious tradition. In the colonies, Africans retained as many music traditions as possible. The drums and rhythms of West African religious music would have a tremendous impact on American hymns. As these distinct cultures came together on North American soil, their spiritual music blended to express a new American diversity.

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*Complete the following questions as you go through the section on Sacred Songs.*

1. Describe the music played by Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans. What instruments were used? Why does the music sound the way it does?
2. What are three ways that spirituals sound different from gospel music. Why is the music different? What are the roots of each of these styles of music?
3. Listen to the gospel audio. Describe how Southern gospel sounds different from gospel. List three artists of each style.
4. List all the instruments you found that were used in the *Sacred Songs* section of the exhibition.
5.  Listen to the examples of sacred music available at the gospel music stand and at the listening station. What song was most interesting to you in this section? What did you like about the song (singer, instrument/s, beat, or lyrics)?

## VISIT


### Worksheet 3: *Country*

#### Background

The origins of modern country music can be traced to folk songs and ballads brought to North America by settlers from the British Isles. In America, musicians all over played country music and added their own creativity and regional playing styles to develop new sounds and rhythms. Jimmie Rodgers, a guitar player and singer from Mississippi added the influences of blues musicians to his music and became country music's first major star. In the West, musicians incorporated Mexican music with American hillbilly music to create country-western or western swing music. In the East, musicians in the Appalachians used faster rhythms and vocal harmonies to create a style known as bluegrass.

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*Complete the following questions as you go through the section on Country.*

1. What are other names given to what we now know as "country" music? What instruments were used by early country musicians? Name famous early country music artists mentioned in the exhibition.
  
2. Why did these distinct styles of country music develop?
  
3. List all the instruments you found that were used in the *Country* music section of the exhibition:
  
4.  Listen to the samples of country music available at the listening station. What song was most interesting to you in the country music section of the exhibit? What did you like about the song (singer, instrument/s, beat, or lyrics)?

## VISIT


### Worksheet 4: *Blues*

#### Background

*New Harmonies* exhibition curator Robert Santelli said that “the Blues was so deep and so wide, it made room for everybody and touched nearly everyone in American music.” African Americans used the blues to sing away their sorrows, provide comic relief in the face of unbearable social conditions, and celebrate black culture. During the Great Depression, thousands of African Americans moved into urban areas in search of new opportunities. Blues artists who moved to cities like Chicago soon developed “urban” blues traditions and made the blues famous worldwide.

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*Complete the following questions as you go through the section on the Blues.*

1. What do you think the quote above means?
2. What was it about blues music that helped listeners make emotional connections with the music?
3. What are some of the social and economic realities that blues musicians sang about?
4. What was distinctive about the vocal patterns that blues musicians included in their songs?
5. What are some of the instruments used by blues artists? Why would blues musicians often make their own instruments?
6. What are some of the differences between rural and urban blues? Did urban artists use different instruments?
7. List all the instruments you found that were used in the *Blues* section of the exhibition.
8.  Listen to the samples of blues music available at the listening station. What is your favorite song in the exhibit? What did you like about the song (singer, instrument/s, beat, or lyrics)?

## VISIT


### Worksheet 5: *Dance*

#### Background

American roots music draws inspiration from many sources, blending songs with origins from around the world. Cajun is a blend of French lullabies and folk songs, black Creole music, dance tunes, and country music. In French-speaking, southwest Louisiana, a blend of Cajun music and the blues surfaced after World War II. Later, rhythm and blues entered the mix and the result was called zydeco. Tejano music evolved in Texas and the Southwest from Mexican dance and folk, American country, jazz, polka, and Cajun music. Each music style features the accordion.

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*Complete the following questions as you go through the section on Dance.*

1. What are some of the instruments, rhythms and themes that bind together the music styles listed in this section?
2. Where might you hear each of these musical styles played today? Why do you think these styles retain such strong cultural connections to the communities in which they developed?
3. Compare and contrast these two styles of music by listening to the samples in the section and at the central listening station. What do they have in common? What makes them different?
4. Where did tejano and conjunto music develop? What musical styles were combined to form tejano music?
5. What are the differences in instruments used in polka and klezmer? Why are polka and klezmer often associated with celebratory occasions?
6. List all the instruments you found that were used in the *Dance* section of the exhibition:
7.  Listen to the samples of each genre of music available in the *Dance* section and at the listening station. What is your favorite song in this section of the exhibit? What did you like about the song (singer, instrument/s, beat, or lyrics)?

## VISIT

### Worksheet 6: *Revival and the Themes of American Roots Music*

These are the five themes that provide context for the development of American roots music.

*Draw a line from the theme to its correct description:*

<i>Ingenuity</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>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>Freedom</i>	<i>Every musician finds his or her own way.</i>
<i>Democracy</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>
<i>Diversity</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>

Review the *Revival* section of the exhibition. Pay close attention to the small kiosk called "Americans Stand Up and Sing Out."

1. Why was there a roots revival?
2. What effect did this have on American roots music?
3. List some groups and songs that came from the roots revival:
4. What are the latest influences on the American roots music tradition?
5. Why did the musicians seen in the kiosk use music to make their voices heard? List some of the songwriters and singers in this movement.

## POST-VISIT

### Activity 1: *What's Next?*

#### Background

The *New Harmonies* storyline ends in the 1990s, and roots music continues to evolve. In this activity, students will develop the next section of *New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music*. Students will link the music of the past to the music of today. They will consider what new influences will shape the future of American roots music.

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1. Lead a discussion about popular music today. Allow the students to share information recorded on *Worksheet 1: What Music Do You Listen To?* From their responses, determine what music is most popular with your students and create a graph to show the results.
2. During the museum visit, students filled out different worksheets about roots music. Divide the class so that students who completed the *Sacred Songs* worksheet are sitting together, as so forth. Discuss the information gathered from the four different groups. Allow each group to share their information with the class.
3. Review the banner themes (ingenuity, independence, freedom, democracy, and diversity) and their connection to the development of American roots music. Allow the students who completed the *Revival and the Themes of American Roots Music* worksheet to share their information with the class.

## POST-VISIT

### Activity 2: *Be an Exhibition Curator*

#### Background

*New Harmonies* ends around 1990. It is your task to curate the next section of the exhibition on how roots music will continue to evolve. Working with a team of “experts” on sacred, country, blues, dance, and revival/protest songs, you will determine which of today’s artists and songs will form the next chapter in the American roots music.

Consider inviting a museum professional to talk with the class about what makes a successful exhibition.

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Divide the class into exhibition development teams. Each team should include an “expert” on sacred, country, blues, and dance music, as well as revival and protest songs.

1. Give each team member a copy of *Worksheet 7: What’s Next?* Exhibition development teams will coordinate and design the next section of *New Harmonies*. The teams will reflect on popular music today and consider the styles of music that were explored in *New Harmonies*.
2. “Experts” on each genre of music will address the influence of their style of music on the music of today.
3. The teams will also discuss the influence of rock and roll and rap music.
4. Together, the exhibition development teams will determine how they think American roots music may sound in the future.
5. Now, it’s time to create the exhibition! The exhibition teams can use tri-fold boards to build the exhibit sections. Have the students complete the following:
  - What is the title for the exhibition section?
  - How is it organized? Develop an outline for the section.
  - Consider size of images, font, hierarchy of information, how to properly credit image sources, and the flow of the exhibition storyline.
  - Include at least four examples of post-1990 music with an explanation of how it has changed and, yet, is still connected to American roots music. Include examples from the different genres

(sacred, country, blues, dance). Choose visuals to go with the information you have decided to use.

- Discuss how the music relates to the main themes of the exhibit.
- Review the revival information in the exhibit and consider its importance to the future of roots music.
- Look at different lyrics in the *Stand Up and Sing Out* section. What are some of the ways American roots music affects our lives and lifestyles? Are there examples of events/occurrences since 1990? Define these events and musical styles.
- Choose lyrics from songs to include in the exhibition sections. Many lyrics can be found at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/kids/music.htm>
- Write a script (text that accompanies the pictures and visuals) and identify images to include in the exhibition. Make sure there is a point of view and the label copy is not too wordy.

Ask a local musician, music teacher, or disc jockey to visit with your class to discuss their exhibit.

Teacher Answer Key for Worksheet 6

**Worksheet 6: *Revival and the Themes of American Roots Music***

*Draw a line from the theme to its correct description:*

