



Excerpts from Lyrics for Songs in This Lesson

Nas, "Bridging the Gap" (2004)

By Nasir Jones and Olu Dara

The blues came from gospel, gospel from blues
Slaves are harmonizin' them ah's and ooh's
Old school, new school, no school rules
All these years I been voicin' my blues
I'm a artist from the start, hip-hop guided my heart
Graffiti on the wall, coulda ended in Spofford,
Juvenile delinquent
But Pops gave me the right type'a tools to think with
Books to read, like X and stuff...

[Olu Dara—Nas' Father]

I was born in Mississippi, I was young and runnin' wild
Moved to New York City, where I had my first child
I named the boy Nasir, all the boys call him Nas
I told him as a youngster, he'll be the greatest man alive...

[Nas]

Nas, Nas you don't stop, Olu Dara in the house, you don't stop
Muddy Waters, Howling Wolf, you don't stop
From the blues to street hop you don't stop

Son House, "Death Letter Blues" (1968)

By Son House

I got a letter this mornin', how do you reckon it read?
It said, hurry, hurry, yeah, your love is dead
I got a letter this mornin, I say how do you reckon it read?
You know it said, hurry, hurry, how come the gal you love is dead?

I grabbed up my suitcase and took off down the road
When I got there she was layin' on a cooling board
I grabbed up my suitcase and I took off down the road
When I got there she was layin' on a cooling board



Bessie Smith, “Homeless Blues” (1927)

By Porter Grainger

Ma and pa got drowned, Mississippi you the blame
My ma and pa got drowned, Mississippi you the blame
Mississippi River, I can't stand to hear your name

Homeless, yes, I'm homeless, might as well be dead
Oh you know I'm homeless, might as well be dead
Hungry and disgusted, no place to lay my head

Charley Patton, “Mississippi Bo Weevil Blues” (1929)

By Charley Patton

Sees a little bo weevil keeps movin' in the air, Lordie
You can plant your cotton and you won't get a half a bale, Lordie
Bo weevil, bo weevil, where's your native home? Lordie
“A-Louisiana raised in Texas, least is where I was bred and born,” Lordie...

Sucks all the blossom and leave your hedges square, Lordie
Bo weevil, bo weevil, where your native home? Lordie
“Most anywhere they raise cotton and corn,” Lordie
Bo weevil, bo weevil, you oughta treat me fair, Lordie
The next time I did you had your family there, Lordie

Lightnin' Hopkins, “Cotton” (1959)

By Lightnin' Hopkins, Mack McCormick and Roy Eldridge

I don't weigh but 95 pounds, 100 pounds is too much load for me to pull
I don't weigh but 90 pounds, boy, 100 pounds is too much load for me to pull
I get straightened up in the field — “Hey! Stoop down Lightnin', go ahead on boy and get
your sack full”
(spoken) They was talking about cotton

I stood straight up in the field, lookin' around trying to find me some shade
Lord, have mercy, poor Lightnin' trying to find him some shade
Poor mama sittin' down with her pencil and paper
Figurin' up every dime that the family made