

Name : _____ Date: _____ Block: _____

The Blues: Country Blues and the Sound of Rural Poverty

“As I began to get into the history of the music, I found that this was impossible without at the same time, getting deeper into the history of the people. [The Blues] was the history of the Afro-American people as text, as tale, as story, as exposition, narrative...the music was the score, the actually expressed creative orchestration, reflection, of Afro-American life.”

-Amiri Baraka (writing under the name LeRoi Jones), Blues People

Blues music was and continues to be an influential style of music to rock and roll. But as we know, music does not exist in a vacuum and is influenced by the society out of which it grows. The Blues was a music performed by poor African Americans for audiences of poor African Americans, and a reflection of their common experiences in the Jim Crow South. The Blues were one of the few forums though which poor, rural African Americans of the late 19th and early 20th centuries could articulate their experiences, attitudes, and emotions.

Locations: Where are you going?	Focus: What will you learn at each stop?
Yazoo City, Mississippi	Poor southerners, black and white alike, lived in the shadow of natural disaster. Examine songs, paintings and imagery to learn about the floods, pestilence and drought that threatened the lives of southern field workers.
Hillhouse, Mississippi	Even though slavery was abolished after the Civil War, black and white tenant farmers lived a life of grinding poverty under the rules of sharecropping. Examine the texts to learn about this economic system.

TO DO:

1. Use a map of Mississippi from an online source such as Google Maps to locate the following places on the map on the back of this handout:
 - a. the Mississippi River
 - b. the Gulf of Mexico
 - c. Alabama
 - d. Tennessee
 - e. Arkansas
 - f. Louisiana
 - g. **Yazoo City, Mississippi**
 - h. **Hillhouse, Mississippi**
2. Answer the attached questions by visiting my website www.mhsschoir.weebly.com/the-blues.html

