



GIVING AMERICA BACK THE BLUES

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How did the early Rolling Stones help popularize the Blues?

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The Rolling Stones ultimately made their mark as the nonconformist outlaws of Rock and Roll. But before they were bad boys, the Stones were missionaries of the Blues. The young Rolling Stones — Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Brian Jones, Charlie Watts, and Bill Wyman — were white kids who hailed from working- and middle-class Britain and set out to play American music, primarily that of African Americans with roots in the South.

In so doing, they helped bring this music to a new, largely white audience, both in Britain and the United States.

The young men who formed the Rolling Stones emerged from the club scene fostered by British Blues pioneers Cyril Davies and Alexis Korner. These two men and their band, Blues Incorporated, helped popularize the American Blues, whose raw intensity resonated with a generation of Britons who had grown up in the shadow of war, death, the Blitz, postwar rationing, and the hardening of the Cold War standoff. Much of the Stones' early work consisted of faithful covers of American Blues artists that Davies, Korner, and the Stones venerated: Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Slim Harpo, Jimmy Reed.

The early Stones in particular helped make the Blues wildly popular among young Britons. As the Stones' fame grew and they became part of the mid-1960s British "invasion" of America, they also reintroduced the Blues to American listeners, most notably young, white audiences with limited exposure to the music.

But almost from day one, the Stones were more than a Blues cover band. If at first their Blues covers were somewhat imitative, in time they put an increasingly original spin on their Blues recordings. Additionally, they soon enough ventured beyond the Blues to other American genres, covering songs by R&B and Country artists. In this lesson, students will investigate the Stones' early musical development and their burgeoning relationship with American Blues.



OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):

- The influence of the Blues on the British club scene in the early 1960s
- How the Blues influenced the early recordings and performances of the Rolling Stones
- How the Rolling Stones re-interpreted the Blues for British and American audiences
- The early musical development of the Rolling Stones, including forays into other styles of music beyond the Blues

2. BE ABLE TO (SKILLS):

- Trace artistic developments to the historical context in which that art was created
- Analyze and hypothesize on the attraction of Blues music for white, middle-class artists and audiences
- Common Core: Students will answer questions about a text taking into account the writer's point of view to gather evidence to be used in the summative assessment (CCSS Reading 6; CCSS Reading 8; CCSS Speaking and Listening 2)
- Common Core: Students will draft a thesis and incorporate evidence from multiple sources to support a thesis (CCSS Writing 2)
- Common Core: Students will design a postcard using images and text, writing from the point of view of a tourist (CCSS Writing 3; CCSS Speaking and Listening 5)

ACTIVITIES

PRE-LESSON PREPARATION:

For homework the night before the lesson, ask students to read Handout 1: British Blues Article, 1965, a story from a British music publication titled “The Animals, the Rolling Stones: English Artists Find ‘Soul’ Music is More Than Skin Deep.”

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY:

1. Play the video clip of Bono discussing the origins of the Rolling Stones.
2. Write or display the following quote on the board from Rolling Stones’ guitarist Keith Richards, quoted in *The Rolling Stones: 50* (Hyperion, 2012):

“When we play it’s all about the feel; that’s the all-important ingredient. The music we play comes out of the blues and you can’t play the blues without feeling. As we developed into the pop side of things and then into rock, the blues were ever present, giving us those right feelings.”

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY (CONTINUED):

3. Briefly discuss:

- Based on what you read in the assigned article, what is the Blues, and where does this style of music come from?
- According to Bono and Keith Richards, what is the relationship between the Rolling Stones and the music of black America?
- What questions does the article raise about the notion of white Englishmen playing a style of music created by African Americans?

PROCEDURE:

1. Students will imagine that they are visiting London during the period 1963-65, and will be given a series of primary source materials to guide them through their “travels.” Working either individually or in small groups (at the instructor’s discretion) they will write and illustrate four picture postcards to an American cousin who lives in Chicago, reporting and commenting on what they see and hear. The postcards will center on visits to British Blues clubs, seeing the newly-formed Rolling Stones in person and on television, and hearing the Stones’ first records.
2. Distribute the four packets of materials (one for each postcard) to each student or group: Packet for Postcard 1, Packet for Postcard 2, Packet for Postcard 3, and Packet for Postcard 4. In addition to the source material, each packet includes a writing question and notes about the writer’s point of view. These notes may be helpful in getting started students who have difficulty writing, and may be offered or withheld at the teacher’s discretion.

Videos for Postcard 1

- Pete Townshend of the Who discusses growing up in Post-World War II Britain
- Cyril Davies and Long John Baldry, “Night Time is the Right Time” (1963)

- Cyril Davies and Long John Baldry, “Got My Mojo Working” (1963)

Videos for Postcard 2

- Muddy Waters, “Rolling Stone” (1958)
- Slim Harpo (1957) and the Rolling Stones (1964), “I’m A King Bee”

Videos for Postcard 3

- Muddy Waters, “I Just Want to Make Love to You” (1954)
- The Rolling Stones, “I Just Want to Make Love to You” (1964)
- The Rolling Stones, “Little Red Rooster” (1965)

Videos for Postcard 4

- Larry Williams (1959) and the Rolling Stones (1965), “She Said Yeah”
- The Rolling Stones, “Not Fade Away” (1964)
- The Rolling Stones, “Around and Around” (1964)
- Chuck Berry, “Around and Around” (1958)

3. Distribute Handout 2: Postcard Templates. For each postcard, students should examine the writing questions, the writing point of view, and the artifacts indicated in the materials section. Depending on teacher choice, students should then be required to:

- Complete the postcard in class; or

- Start the postcard in class and complete at home; or
 - Take notes and complete the postcard at home
4. Each completed postcard must have two components:
- Front: art and text that depict some aspect(s) of the postcard topic
 - Back: a written note to a relative about the topic
5. Before students begin writing, inform them that their postcards will be assessed based on their success in (1) developing a thesis in response to the writing questions; (2) creating postcard text in support of the thesis and (3) incorporating evidence from the artifacts.

SUMMARY ACTIVITY:

Have students to present their postcards to the class, and discuss the themes they chose to emphasize.

WRITING PROMPT:

Why were the Rolling Stones and their audiences attracted to the Blues, and how did the Stones help reinterpret this music that was originally created by disenfranchised African Americans?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Assign students to complete an extended correspondence between the postcard writer and postcard recipient. For short responses, the correspondence may be an exchange of postcards. For deeper, more substantive writing the correspondence may be an exchange of letters. In the case of the latter, encourage students to include artifacts in the envelopes — clippings, drawings, images, articles. [For an example of how construct a chain of correspondence, see the book *Griffin and Sabine: An Extraordinary Correspondence*, by Nick Bantock.

STANDARDS

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

College and Career Readiness Reading Anchor Standards for Grades 6-12 for Literature and Informational Text

Reading 6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Reading 8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

College and Career Readiness Writing Anchor Standards for Grades 6-12 in English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects

Writing 2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Writing 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening for Grades 6-12

Speaking and Listening 2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Speaking and Listening 5: Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

SOCIAL STUDIES – NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES (NCSS)

Theme 1: Culture

Theme 9: Global Connections

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

Core Music Standard: Responding

Select: Choose music appropriate for a specific purpose or context.

Analyze: Analyze how the structure and context of varied musical works inform the response.



Interpret: Support interpretations of musical works that reflect creators' and/or performers' expressive intent.

Evaluate: Support evaluations of musical works and performances based on analysis, interpretation, and established criteria.

Core Music Standard: Connecting

Connecting 11: Relate musical ideas and works to varied contexts and daily life to deepen understanding.

RESOURCES

VIDEO RESOURCES

- Rolling Stones – Around and Around (1965)
- Rolling Stones – Little Red Rooster (1965)
- Muddy Waters – Rollin' Stone (1960)
- Cyril Davies – Got My Mojo Working (1963)
- Slim Harpo and the Rolling Stones – I'm a King Bee
- Pete Townsend – Post-War England
- Bono – The Rolling Stones
- Rolling Stones – I Just Want to Make Love to You (1964)
- Cyril Davies and Long John Baldry – Night Time is the Right Time (1963)
- Chuck Berry – Around and Around (1958)
- Muddy Waters – I Just Want to Make Love to You (1954)
- Rolling Stones – Not Fade Away (1964)
- Larry Williams and The Rolling Stones – She Said Yeah

FEATURED PEOPLE

- Chuck Berry
- Bono
- Cyril Davies
- Howlin' Wolf
- Alexis Korner
- The Rolling Stones
- Muddy Waters
- Larry Williams

HANDOUTS

- Handout 1: British Blues Article, 1965
- Handout 2: Postcard Templates
- Packet for Postcard 1
- Packet for Postcard 2
- Packet for Postcard 3
- Packet for Postcard 4