

# 8 MAKING MUSIC IN THE DELTA

## Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6-8.3

*Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).*

Blues has deep roots in the Delta, but did not become known to the rest of the country and the world until its early recordings in the 1920s and 1930s. The Delta has a rich heritage of its very own special brand of music: the blues, and its cousins, rockabilly and jazz. Gospel influenced all of these musical forms.

The roots of blues grow deep into the region and became known to the rest of the country and world through early recordings from the 1920s and 1930s. Blues music comes from a combination of spirituals, work songs, field hollers, chants, ballads, and European and African folk music. You can hear some samples of Po' Henry and Tookie: Delta Blues Duo, [http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles\\_Essays/DeltaHandT.html](http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/DeltaHandT.html).

In earlier days, residents used handy materials such as cigar boxes to make guitars. Blues musicians today use acoustic or electric guitars and harmonicas as well to accompany their lyrics. Today the repetitive rhythm of blues music is often assisted with bass playing. The lyrics often relate to the troubles of life and repetition in reinforcing an important idea or concept. For example, the following blues song concerns the Mississippi Flood of 1927.

*Backwater rising, Southern peoples can't make no time  
I said, backwater rising, Southern peoples can't make no time  
And I can't get no hearing from that Memphis girl of mine.*

— Blind Lemon Jefferson

Louisiana Delta native Jerry Lee Lewis is credited with being an early innovator in both rock music and the related rockabilly. His greatest hits included “Whole Lot A Shaking,” and “Great Balls of Fire.”

Today musicians like Po' Henry and Tookie, Kenny Bill Stinson, and Gray Montgomery, instrument builder Hilton Lytle allow the traditional Delta music to be preserved for future generations. For sample recordings check out the following by scrolling down to the audio on the pages below.



## DELTA PIECES ARTICLES

- Performer and Songwriter Kenny Bill Stinson: “Mixing Country Music with the Blues”  
[http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles\\_Essays/Deltastinson.html](http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/Deltastinson.html)

- Po Henry and Tookie: Delta Blues Duo  
*[http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles\\_Essays/DeltaHandT.html](http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/DeltaHandT.html)*
- Vidalia's One-Man Band, Gray Montgomery: "Several Different Musicians Rolled into One"  
*[http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles\\_Essays/DeltaMontgomery.html](http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/DeltaMontgomery.html)*
- Easter Rock: A Description  
*[http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles\\_Essays/EasterRockDescription.html](http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/EasterRockDescription.html)*

#### LOUISIANA VOICES LINK

- Louisiana Voices Educator's Guide Unit VI Lesson 6: Louisiana's Legendary Musicians  
*[http://www.louisianavoices.org/edu\\_outline.html](http://www.louisianavoices.org/edu_outline.html)*

#### OTHER RESOURCES

- To learn more about Louisiana Delta blues, rockabilly and soul, check out the following:  
*[http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles\\_Essays/creole\\_art\\_hayride\\_boogie.html](http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/creole_art_hayride_boogie.html)*
- Check out the Delta Music Museum at *<http://www.deltamusicmuseum.com>*



#### ACTIVITY

1. Cut one 8 inch square of construction paper for each student. You can use one or various colors. Squares of scrapbook paper with a pattern that resembles a quilt also works well.
2. Cut 4 six inch squares of white cardstock for each student.
3. Have students listen to the following samples of Mississippi Delta music here:  
*[http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles\\_Essays/deltaeducatorsmusic.html](http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/deltaeducatorsmusic.html)*
  - Kenny Bill Stinson – rockabilly
  - Penola Caesar – gospel
  - Po' Henry – blues
  - Greg Montgomery – rock 'n roll
4. For each music segment, they should use one square.
5. They should label the square with the music type and then write words or lyrics, or draw pictures to describe the music.
6. At the end of the four music samples, they should choose the square they like best.
7. It should be backed by one of the 8 inch squares and put on the bulletin board.