

7 WORSHIPING IN THE DELTA

Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6-8.7

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

Religious worship is as varied as everything else in the Louisiana Delta. Some preachers sing or chant the Word while others pride themselves on preaching without a written text. Music is the heart of many services, and this too, varies greatly. Today many congregations sing spirituals that were once sung by enslaved Africans. A cappella music with no musical accompaniment still occurs in some churches, though more often musical instruments ranging from pianos to guitars and drums are possible.

Gospel music is an important part of the Delta heritage, and gospel quartets are a mainstay. The classic quartet sound uses four-part harmonies with each chord having four notes. Many quartets sing a cappella to further the effect.

One event, particular to the Louisiana Delta region and quite spectacular to see is the Easter Rock which combines music and movement. This traditional ritual happens on the Saturday evening before Easter Sunday. The church pews are moved so that they face the middle aisle of the church and a long table covered with a white tablecloth is placed in the aisle. The participants are dressed in white and walk around the table filled with lamps, cakes, and Easter eggs, chanting songs. Rockers chant songs in unison, and move around the table in the shuffle step from side to side which echoes like a drum on the wooden floor. Hand clapping and foot stomping accompany the singing. Later, everyone enjoys the table's gifts.

Another traditional sacred ritual that no longer occurs in many places, but still happens in the Louisiana Delta is river baptisms. Accompanied by traditional spirituals, participants reenact the baptism of Jesus. These baptisms represent the hope of renewal for those who take part.

Worship unites the Louisiana Delta region displaying the strengths of common features and the distinctiveness of individuality.



DELTA PIECES ESSAYS

- 'Like a River Flowing with Living Water': Worshiping in the Mississippi Delta
http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/DeltaSIworship.html
- Sacred Music in the Delta: From Shaped Note to Quartet Singing
http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/DeltaSinging.html

- “Everyone Rockin’ Together”: Continuity and Creativity in the Louisiana Delta Easter Rock
http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/easterrock.html
- “Take Me to the Water”: African American River Baptism
http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/creole_art_river_baptism.html

LOUISIANA VOICES LINK

- Louisiana Voices Educator’s Guide Unit IV Part 2 Lesson 2: Rites of Passage
http://www.louisianavoices.org/Unit9/edu_unit9_p2_lesson2.html

OTHER RESOURCES

- For an update on river baptisms in Northeast Louisiana check out this USA Today article:
http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/religion/2009-08-04-riverbaptism_N.htm



ANSWERS: WORSHIPING IN THE DELTA CLOZE ACTIVITY

The worship culture of the Louisiana Delta is very complex. One reason is that cultures from [Africa](#) and [Europe](#) came to the Delta, interacted, and they now have [adapted](#) similar religious traditions.

Singing the Word

The central figure in the folk religious community is the [preacher](#). Although both African Americans and Anglo-Americans perform the folk chanted sermons-and may go beyond chanting to actually singing the sermon-the tradition has been most fully developed in the [African American](#) community.

Songs of the Spirit

[Gospel](#) music has contributed tremendously to the Mississippi River Delta region’s unique musical [heritage](#). Anglo-American settlers moved to the Delta, they brought their [fiddling](#), [ballad-singing](#) and [sacred music](#) traditions.

Sacred Rituals

Rites of passage such as [birth](#), [death](#) and [marriage](#) mark a change in person’s socio-religious position. Baptism in the Delta region, a ritual of [purification](#) and [initiation](#), is a significant [rite of passage](#). Another sacred ritual in rural African-American churches is the [Easter Rock](#) ceremony.

Spiritual Spaces

The religious experiences of many people are tied to specific [places](#) where [rituals](#) are performed. Others construct their own sacred places.

Name _____

Date _____

WORSHIPPING IN THE DELTA CLOZE ACTIVITY

TASK: The essay below has important information, BUT there are words missing! Please help by following the steps below and filling in the blanks.

STEP 1: Read the essay “Like a River Flowing with Living Water: Worshiping in the Mississippi Delta from the Delta Pieces site at http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/DeltaSlworship.html.

STEP 2: Fill in the blanks with words that make sense to you.

STEP 3: Check your answers with the Answer Key, which your teachers will give you or read to you.

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The worship culture of the Louisiana Delta is very complex. One reason is that cultures from _____ and _____ came to the Delta, interacted, and they now have _____ similar religious traditions in common.

Singing the Word

The central figure in the folk religious community is the _____. Although both African Americans and Anglo-Americans perform the folk chanted sermons—and may go beyond chanting to actually singing the sermon—the tradition has been most fully developed in the _____ community.

Songs of the Spirit

_____ music has contributed tremendously to the Mississippi River Delta region's unique musical _____. Anglo-American settlers moved to the Delta, they brought their _____, _____ and _____ traditions.

Sacred Rituals

Rites of passage such as _____, _____ and _____ mark a change in a person's socio-religious position. Baptism in the Delta region, a ritual of _____ and _____, is a significant _____. Another sacred ritual in rural African-American churches is the _____ ceremony.

Spiritual Spaces

The religious experiences of many people are tied to specific _____ where _____ are performed. Others construct their own sacred places.