



TEACHER'S GUIDE:

**WORK, PLAY AND FREEDOM;
BLUES MUSIC WITH A PURPOSE**

WITH ROBERT JONES

B-2; 19:37 MIN

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the video, “Work, Play and Freedom; Blues Music with a Purpose,” the students will be able to:

1. Identify other ways blues music was used besides to entertain.
2. List the common musical elements of the three songs in the video.
3. Describe what unique musical element is found in the song “Wade in the Water,” an element the other two songs in the video don’t have.
4. Explain the purpose of work songs.
5. Explain the purpose of some spiritual songs, like the one in the video.



1. IDENTIFY WAYS BLUES MUSIC WAS USED BESIDES TO ENTERTAIN.

Video:

Blues songs were sometimes used to help people work, and, to sometimes help people when they traveled to escape from slavery.

2. LIST THE COMMON MUSICAL ELEMENTS OF THE THREE SONGS IN THE VIDEO.

Video:

Rhythm, Rhyme and Melody



3. DESCRIBE WHAT UNIQUE MUSICAL ELEMENT IS FOUND IN THE SONG “WADE IN THE WATER,” AN ELEMENT THE OTHER TWO SONGS IN THE VIDEO DON’T HAVE.

Video:

“Call and Response,” which can be done through voices singing back and forth to each other, repeating the words of the caller, and, can be done by an instrument answering a musical phrase that was sung or played.

Answers to Multiple Choice Quiz:

1. C 2. A 3. C 4. D 5. D

4. EXPLAIN THE PURPOSE OF WORK SONGS.

Video:

Work songs set a rhythm to coordinate the work of people, set the tempo so a group of people can work at the same pace, and, help assure safety by stopping the song so people can stop working at the same time if they need to help another worker who gets hurt.

5. EXPLAIN THE PURPOSE OF SOME SPIRITUAL SONGS, LIKE THE ONE IN THE VIDEO.

Video:

Some spiritual songs have words with double meanings that told people what route to follow to get from slavery in the South to freedom in the North. The songs were sung by people helping one another get to a better life.

Additional Learning, from Robert Jones

“Take This Hammer” is a work song associated with Huddie Ledbetter (aka Lead Belly) and emphasizes how a song can coordinate workers, determine the pace of the work done and even provide a method for workers’ safety.

“Pick A Bale O’ Cotton” is another Lead Belly tune for children that features children mimicking work. What makes the song fun is the tempo steadily increases until it becomes almost impossible to follow.

“Wade In The Water” is what is known as a “coded spiritual,” a song with lyrics that have double meanings. Children in classrooms across the country enjoy singing the lyrics of this song back to the musician, in the style of call and response. Younger children can appreciate the concept of people helping one another to get to a better life, from plantations in the South to freedom in the North.

These songs are representative of the music that ultimately led to what we know today as blues.

QUIZ – MULTIPLE CHOICE

For a Google Form version of this quiz, go to:
[MVBS.org/Teacher-Resources](https://www.mvbs.org/Teacher-Resources)

1. How was blues music used, besides for entertainment?

- a. As a source of employment
- b. To educate people about their history
- c. To help people work, and, to help people when they traveled from slavery in the South to freedom in the North

2. What are the common musical elements among the three songs in the video?

- a. Rhythm, rhyme and melody
- b. Words, blues style, guitar music
- c. Rural theme, short in length, sung by a male

3. What unique musical element is found in the song “Wade in the Water?”

- a. Requires group singing
- b. Slow in tempo
- c. Call and Response

4. What is the purpose of work songs?

- a. To set a rhythm to coordinate the work of people
- b. To set the tempo so a group of people can work at the same pace
- c. To help assure safety by stopping the song, so people can stop working at the same time, if they need to help a worker who gets hurt
- d. All of the Above

5. What is the purpose of some spiritual songs, like the one in the video?

- a. Some spiritual songs have words with double meanings that told people what route to follow to get from slavery in the South to freedom in the North
- b. The songs were sung by people helping one another get to a better life
- c. To have a song appropriate for baptisms
- d. a and b above

QUIZ – SHORT ANSWER

For a Google Form version of this quiz, go to:
[MVBS.org/Teacher-Resources](https://www.mvbs.org/Teacher-Resources)

1. How was blues music used, besides for entertainment?

2. What are the common musical elements among the three songs in the video?

3. What unique musical element is found in the song “Wade in the Water?”

4. What is the purpose of work songs?

5. What is the purpose of some spiritual songs, like the one in the video?

MUSICIAN:



ROBERT JONES

Rev. Robert Jones, Sr. is a native of Detroit and an inspirational storyteller and musician celebrating the history, humor and power of American Roots music. His deep love for traditional African American and American traditional music is shared in live and remote performances that interweave timeless stories with original and traditional songs. For more than thirty years Robert has entertained and educated audiences of all ages in schools, colleges, libraries, union halls, prisons, churches and civil rights organizations. At the heart of his message is the belief that our cultural diversity tells a story that should celebrate, not just tolerate.

Acclaimed photographer James Fraher writes about Robert: “Perhaps the world’s most highly educated blues musician, an ordained minister, a longtime DJ, and a living encyclopedia of blues history, the Reverend Robert Jones is comfortable among juke joint loud talkers, fancy-hatted church ladies, and PhDs alike.”

Rev. Robert Jones makes his home in Detroit while performing throughout the United States, Canada and Europe. An award-winning multi-instrumentalist, he is accomplished at guitar, harmonica, mandolin, banjo and fiddle. He has recorded six albums of original and tradition songs. Robert is the former host of the award-winning radio programs “Blues from the Lowlands” and “Deep River” broadcast on Detroit Public Radio’s WDET-FM Detroit. And, he has taught at music history courses at Wayne State University in Detroit.

In 2017 Robert and Matt Watroba co-founded “Common Chords”, 501.c3 educational organization designed to create community, cultural and historical connections through music and the arts. In 2018 Robert received a Kresge Arts Fellowship for Music Composition and Performance.

BLUES EDUCATION EVALUATION

Your participation in this short evaluation helps ensure future grant funding to support this program. Please submit feedback regarding the course you have just completed, including feedback on course structure, and content.

Please visit the link below!

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THANK YOU!





MISSISSIPPI VALLEY BLUES SOCIETY

Our mission is to ensure the future of a uniquely American art form by fostering greater public appreciation through performance, education, and preservation of the Blues Heritage.

Mississippi Valley Blues Society, a nonprofit organization

The Education Committee is dedicated to increasing the public's knowledge, understanding and appreciation of blues music through live and remote performances and by providing information about the music and its' history, which includes the musicians (past and present) who play it. Education Committee programs are provided for no cost to the public.

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