



TEACHER'S GUIDE:

**FIVE NOTES, MANY VOICES; THE
FOUNDATION OF BLUES MUSIC**

WITH ROBERT JONES

B-3; 15:49 MIN

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the video, “Five Notes, Many Voices; The Foundation of Blues Music,” the students will be able to:

1. Recognize the characteristics and sound of the minor pentatonic scale.
2. Understand that the minor pentatonic scale is not unique to blues music.
3. Recognize and discuss the instruments, the Quills and the Banjar.
4. Explain how some early American music got its unique sound.



1. RECOGNIZE THE CHARACTERISTICS AND SOUND OF THE MINOR PENTATONIC SCALE.

Video:

The minor pentatonic scale has five notes though, when played, you hear six notes with the first and last notes being the same.

2. UNDERSTAND THAT THE MINOR PENTATONIC SCALE IS NOT UNIQUE TO BLUES MUSIC.

Video:

The minor pentatonic scale can also be heard in African and Native American music.



3. RECOGNIZE AND DISCUSS THE INSTRUMENTS, THE QUILLS AND THE BANJAR.

Video:

The quills may have pre-dated the flute as they were easy to make with what was available through nature, using reeds from a body of water. The banjar, now called a banjo, had its origins in Africa with a drum as its base and strings added on top. The minor pentatonic scale can be played on both instruments.

4. EXPLAIN HOW SOME EARLY AMERICAN MUSIC GOT ITS UNIQUE SOUND.

Video:

People in this country played whatever instruments they had, to play the music they needed, sometimes creating a new sound.

Additional Learning, from Robert Jones

The five-note scale can be found in:

1. *Native American flute music*
2. *Early African American banjo music*
3. *Appalachian fiddle music*
4. *Early African American spirituals*
5. *Early African American worksongs*
6. *Traditional Blues music*

Answers to Multiple Choice Quiz:

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

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 many notes compose the minor pentatonic scale?

- a. 8
- b. 7
- c. 5

2. What other cultures use the minor pentatonic scale?

- a. African
- b. Irish
- c. Native American
- d. A and C

3. Can the minor pentatonic scale be played on the Quills and the Banjar?

- a. Yes
- b. No

4. What is the origin of the Banjar?

- a. Appalachian Mountains, using strings from barn wire
- b. Africa, originally from a drum
- c. From America, originally a Native American instrument

5. How did some early American music get its unique sound?

- a. People in this country played whatever instruments they had, to play the music they needed, sometimes creating a new sound
- b. People concentrated on playing square dance music, different from what they played before
- c. Musicians played mostly Native American music, a new sound to them

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 many notes compose the minor pentatonic scale?

2. What other cultures use the minor pentatonic scale?

3. Can the minor pentatonic scale be played on the Quills and the Banjar?

4. What is the origin of the Banjar?

5. How did some early American music get its unique sound?

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!

[MVBS.org/Teacher-Evaluation](https://mvbs.org/Teacher-Evaluation)

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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