

Writing Blues Lyrics

A connection to literacy in the General Music Classroom

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With a little understanding of the 12-bar blues form, all students K-8 are capable of writing blues lyrics. Along the lines of poetry, blues lyrics are written with rhyming words and rhythm.

The process:

- 1) Give a background of the 12-bar blues form, indicating three lines of equal length.
- 2) Lyrics require three (3) lines only, that need to fill the space of the musical form.
The lyrics may be short, however there will be many 'rests' to fill the time.
- 3) Begin with two rhyming words i.e. "frog" and "log"
- 4) Write simple sentences. The first two lines may repeat.

I saw a frog.

I saw a frog.

It sat on a log.

- 5) Embellish the lyrics. Add descriptors to the lines for length in the musical phrase.
When? Where? How? What did it look like? Make sure the rhyming word still is at the end of the phrase.

I was walking on a trail and I saw a little green frog.

I said,

I was walking on a trail and I saw a cute, little green frog.

It was hard to find because it sat on a really big log.

- 6) Play with more sets of rhyming words.
- 7) Speak the words in time while playing the 12-bar blues form. Each lyrical line must begin with the matching musical line.
*Note how the longer the lyric is, the easier it is to place within the rhythm of the musical line.

Students may take turns speaking the rhythms over the form for assessment.

- 8) Create/improvise a melody to the lyric over the 12-bar blues form.
- 9) Perform the lyrics with 12-bar blues accompaniment.
- 10) Write additional verses to create a musical story and/or incorporate into other musical forms.

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