Facilitation Guide

Blues Variations

Wit & Wisdom *The Phantom Tollbooth*

EXPERIENCE OVERVIEW

Students learn about the Blues form of music and engage with model blues examples to further their understanding of characters and character analysis in *The Phantom Tollbooth*. Immediately after listening to a song by a Blues artist, they will analyze the song structure, and then organize their ideas from the text in either the three line form or the 2x4 form.

Standards

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.2
Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.6
Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, using formal English when appropriate to task and situation. (See grade 5 Language standards 1 and 3 here for specific expectations.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.5 - With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 5 here.)

NATIONAL ARTS STANDARDS

MU:Cr1.1.5b - Generate musical ideas (such as rhythms, melodies, and accompaniment patterns) within specific related tonalities, meters, and simple chord changes.

Getting Ready

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Using the song writing structures unique to Blues, students will analyze the characters from *The Phantom Tollbooth* within the Blues form.

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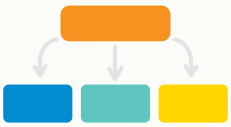
ARTS INTEGRATION MATERIALS



CONCEPT MAP

VIDEO PLAYLIST

REFLECTION

MATERIALS
GOOGLE FOLDER

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TEACH

The Basic Blues Form

The Basic Blues Form: When we're talking about the Blues we're talking about an African-American musical form that originated in the American South over one hundred years ago in the mid to late 1800s.

There are many different Blues style songs. One of the most common is a **three-line form**. The first line is sung twice and the third line rhymes with it. This is also often called 12 or 16-bar blues. Blues have usually been associated with a wide range of emotions but that isn't always the case and for our purposes, it's not necessary.

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Model Examples

Big Mama Thornton – **Hound Dog**

Muddy Waters – **Country Boy**

Neal Roberson – **Don't Let the Devil Ride**

Little Richard – **Lucille**

Note: In this song you can hear the basic form, but part way through instead of the first line he adds two lines that rhyme "I woke up this morning, Lucille was not in sight / I asked my friends about her but all their lips were tight" before going into the second half of the verse. It's a good example of how much flexibility there is in this form).

Text Applications

Here is more character analysis from *The Phantom Tollbooth* using the basic Blues form. This could also be used to write about the overarching themes in the text.

I'm the Everpresent Wordsnatcher, I'll take the words out of your mouth

I'm the Everpresent Wordsnatcher, I'll take the words out of your mouth

I'm from a place called Context, somewhere in the distant south

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2x4 Verse & Chorus

In construction, the 2X4 is a board that is 2 inches wide and 4 inches deep, usually sold in eight-foot lengths. It's one of the most common sizes of lumber. Similarly, this 2X4 verse-chorus structure is one of the most common forms in songwriting and we can use it to build many different kinds of songs.

The verse is four lines, usually the first and third and second and fourth rhymes. In other words, it would have an A-B-A-B rhyme scheme.

The chorus has two lines and they generally rhyme with each other although not always. Sometimes the chorus is one line that repeats twice.

A 4x4 form is similar but the chorus has four lines instead of two.

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Model Examples

Here's an example of a song that has a rap followed by a two-line chorus:

- Monie Love - **It's a Shame**

Here's an example of a song that has verses of four lines and a chorus of two lines:

- The Specials - **Message to you Rudy**

Sometimes a verse may have 4 lines and a chorus has three lines (depending on how you count it!

- Example: Little Anthony and the Imperials - **Tears on My Pillow**

Note: The main thing to consider is that this is all very open-ended. Ultimately anything you call a song is a song, but if you want other people to have a great experience, it helps to organize the structure so the feeling can really come out...

Text Applications

Here's an example using some bits and pieces from the book.

Verse:
A boy met a dog in a faraway land
In the early part of the season
There was so much there they did not understand
They searched for rhyme and reason

Chorus:
When he got home it was true
Everything, yes everything, looked new