

LESSON PLAN: Composing a 12 Bar Blues Song

Objective:

Students will understand the phrase structure of a 12 bar blues lyric and the concept of AAB and Call and Response. They will demonstrate learning by composing an original blues lyric.

Resources:

Blues Lyric Worksheet, sample recording of "Hound Dog" by Big Mama Thornton and Elvis, whiteboard or projector to show lead sheet

Procedures:

- 1 Play both recordings of "Hound Dog" for your students and discuss differences.
- 2 Teach them how to sing the song and sing through it a few times. Stick with a couple of verses for ease and to save time. Accompany yourself and the class with a backing track or guitar or piano.
- 3 Explain the concept of "Call and Response" and AAB. The call of the first line is: "You ain't nothin' but a hound dog" and the response is "Been Snooping 'round my door." This whole line fits over the first 4 bars of the 12 bar form. It repeats for the second 4 bars. These are the two "A" lines. The call of the B line is "You can wag your tail" and the response is "But I ain't gonna feed you no more." This line fits over the last 4 bars of the 12 bar form.
- 4 You should write the lyrics under a lead sheet showing how they line up with the musical form.
- 5 Once you are sure students are familiar with the concepts, distribute the "Lyric Writing Worksheet."
- 6 Have students complete worksheet independently for Part A, and with a partner for Part B.
- 7 Have students perform their work either privately or for the class!

Extensions:

- 1 Record and submit to the Little Kids Rock Songwriting Exhibition!
- 2 Other good examples of 12 bar blues are "Crossroads" by Eric Clapton and "The Thrill is Gone" by B.B. King. There is an excellent version of Solange doing this as a duet with B.B. King on YouTube.

National Core Arts Standards (Music):

Anchor Standard #1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. Anchor Standard #2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work. Anchor Standard #3: Refine and complete artistic work. Anchor Standard #4: Analyze, interpret, and select artistic work for presentation. Anchor Standard #5: Develop and refine artistic works for presentation. Anchor Standard #8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. Anchor Standard #7: Perceive and analyze artistic work
Responding - Anchor Standard #10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

