

Schoolyard Blues

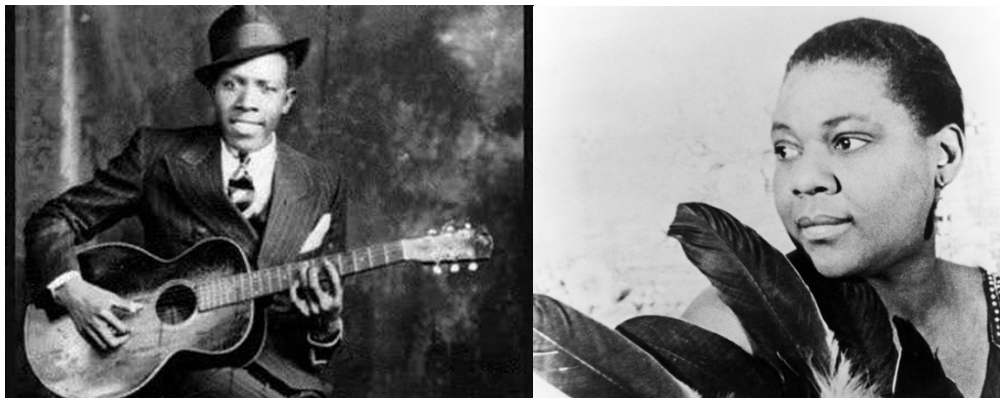
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Everybody gets the blues sometimes – especially students!

And there is no better way to confront the blues, than with a little blues music. In this interactive workshop, we will learn about 1) the history of the blues, 2) the blues structure 3) and how to create your own blues verse.

Brief History

The blues is both a feeling, style of music, and a social aesthetic. The blues originated in the Mississippi Delta by itinerant male musicians who created their own personal stories about life in the south. The songs were often about personal loss, suffering, and poverty, but also about hope. This music would later spread to urban cities throughout the US where larger bands performed to both black and white audiences. The blues would become an important part of rock and roll and even contemporary styles including R&B and Hip hop.



(Robert Johnson; Bessie Smith L-R)

Blues Structure

The blues verse usually follows an AAB verse structure:

A	I got these blues, Mama, I ain't satisfied
A	I got these blues, Mama, I ain't satisfied
B	Well that's the reason, I stole away and cried

* Notice that the first two A sections are exactly the same, while the B section is different. Think of it as a two questions and an answer with the last word of each section often rhyming. Listen to these examples to get a feel for the blues verse structure:

Robert Johnson, "Kind Hearted Woman Blues" (1936)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82yNxiF-T4A>

BB King, "The Thrill is Gone" (1971)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pC4DDkye8FU>

Create Your Own Blues

Now it's time for you to create your own personalized blues song. 1) Start with a theme from your own life. Don't be afraid to use the first person "I" in order to make it personal and unique 2) Follow the AAB verse structure 3) Now sing, shout, or speak out your blues verse by yourself or with the group. Don't forget to have fun!