

# B-A-N-J-O: A Bluegrass Version of Bingo

## Summary

In this activity, students will participate in a bluegrass version of bingo to review the knowledge they have gained about bluegrass instruments.

## Objectives

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- explain the history and relevance of the following instruments in bluegrass music: fiddle, guitar, dobro, banjo, mandolin and stand-up bass
- define the following words as they relate to bluegrass music: syncopated, acoustic, slide and fret
- identify the defining characteristics of each bluegrass instrument

## Time

1-2 periods

## Background

The essays for this week provide information about the main instruments used in classic bluegrass music: the fiddle, the banjo, the mandolin, the guitar, the stand-up bass and, more recently, the dobro. All of these instruments are acoustic and stringed instruments. The essays provide information about the characteristics of and history surrounding each instrument, helping students to understand how each instrument has contributed to the unique sound of bluegrass music.

## Teacher's Notes

In order for this activity to be successful, it is important that students first thoroughly read the content material provided in the essays. One way to accomplish this is to have students work together at computers to read the material, asking each other questions and quizzing each other to ensure comprehension. Additionally, you can review the content material as a class using some of the group discussion questions below:

1. How is each instrument used in a unique way in bluegrass, as compared to the way it is played in other kinds of music?
2. Which instrument do you feel has the hardest sound to get used to? Why?
3. Which instrument would you most like to play if you were going to be in a bluegrass band? Explain.
4. If you were to add a new instrument to bluegrass, which instrument would it be? Why? (Students can invent their own instruments here, as well.)

## Vocabulary

Acoustic, banjo, dobro, fiddle, fret, guitar, mandolin, slide, stand-up bass, syncopated

## Materials

Copies of *B-A-N-J-O Gameboard* (1 per student) (provided), *B-A-N-J-O Clues* (provided), place markers to cover blanks on gameboards, crayons or pens

### **Procedure**

1. Motivate students to carefully read and gather information from the Week 3 online essays by telling them that their knowledge of bluegrass instruments will be tested in the form of a bluegrass bingo game at the end of the lesson.
2. After students read the essays, pass out blank *B-A-N-J-O Gameboards* to each student.
3. Instruct students to follow the directions at the top of their gameboard, using the provided word list to randomly fill in the blanks on their gameboards.
4. When done, have students place one “free” marker on the graphic at the center of the board. Next, begin reading the clues (but not the answers!) aloud to the class. In the beginning, have students raise their hands if they know the answer to the clue and confirm the answer for the whole class. Students should then cover the correct answer space on their gameboards.
5. To make the game more challenging, you can choose not to review the answers out loud and have students try to answer the questions independently.
6. The game is won when one student covers five answers in a row.

### **Extend the Experience**

- To extend the game and the learning experience, you can play a “blackout” game where students need to cover the whole board to win.
- Challenge students to add words and clues to the B-A-N-J-O game by using content from previous weeks. You can repeat this activity later in the unit using some of the student-made additions.

# B-A-N-J-O Clues

**Teachers:** Read the clues on the left to your students, then instruct them to place a marker over the appropriate answers on their *B-A-N-J-O Gameboards*. Be sure not to read the answers in bold on the right. The first student to get 5 answers covered in a row wins!

<b>B-A-N-J-O CLUE</b>	<b>ANSWER</b>
This area of the United States is considered by many to be the birthplace of the bluegrass sound.	<b>Appalachia</b>
All traditional bluegrass instruments have these.	<b>Strings</b>
This kind of instrument does not produce or enhance sound electronically.	<b>Acoustic</b>
This musical effect is made by passing quickly from one note to another. It is also the name of the metal bar used to create the “singing” tone on the dobro.	<b>Slide</b>
This instrument first arrived in America in the hands of Africans.	<b>Banjo</b>
This is used to play the fiddle and was originally made from a horse’s tail.	<b>Bow</b>
The mandolin has this many pairs of strings.	<b>Four</b>
These metal bands stretch across an instrument’s fingerboard, giving players a guide of where to press the strings to create specific notes.	<b>Frets</b>
This man is credited with creating the banjo sound most closely associated with early bluegrass.	<b>Earl Scruggs</b>
This instrument was brought to the Southern Appalachians by early Irish and Scottish settlers.	<b>Fiddle</b>
This word means “off the beat.”	<b>Syncopated</b>
The head of a banjo is shaped like this.	<b>Round</b>
The guitar originally came from this country.	<b>Spain</b>
This instrument makes a very deep sound and is a very big cousin of the fiddle.	<b>Bass</b>
Banjos used in bluegrass music usually have this number of strings, but one is shorter and higher sounding than the others.	<b>Five</b>
The mandolin originally came from this country.	<b>Italy</b>
This man has played every musical style imaginable on the dobro.	<b>Jerry Douglass</b>
This type of guitar is favored by bluegrass musicians because it is built with a bigger, deeper body that projects more bass sound.	<b>Dreadnought</b>
This instrument was originally built with a round-back shape but was changed to have a flat back to increase the instrument’s volume.	<b>Mandolin</b>
This blind guitar player influenced many young bluegrass musicians with his beautiful, clear, flat-picking of melodies at lightning speed.	<b>“Doc” Watson</b>
Since bass players often pluck the strings with their fingers rather than using a bow, they often develop these on their fingers.	<b>Calluses</b>
This instrument was invented by three Eastern European brothers and also is a Slavic word meaning “good.”	<b>Dobro</b>
Traditional bluegrass musicians use this number of fingers to play the banjo.	<b>Three</b>
Some say that this instrument was brought to the mountains of Southern Appalachia by black laborers who were laying tracks for the railroads.	<b>Guitar</b>
This man is often called the founder of bluegrass music.	<b>Bill Monroe</b>

# B-A-N-J-O Gameboard

**Students:** Write the following words in any order in the blank boxes of your *B-A-N-J-O Gameboard*: Strings, Slide, Syncopated, Dreadnought, Jerry Douglass, Acoustic, Banjo, Five, Four, Three, Fiddle, Earl Scruggs, Italy, Bass, Appalachia, Bow, Round, Mandolin, Calluses, Guitar, Frets, “Doc” Watson, Spain, Dobro and Bill Monroe.

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