

# The Roots of Bluegrass

## Summary

In this activity, students will read about various musical styles that influenced the sound of bluegrass music, then complete a diagram to show how each style of music affected the sound of bluegrass music today.

## Objectives

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

- identify several musical styles that influenced the sound of bluegrass music
- explain how other countries and cultures contributed to the development of some of the sounds heard in bluegrass music
- explain how bluegrass music gained popularity in the southern United States

## Time

1 period

## Background

Many different musical styles influenced the sound of bluegrass music. This week's content discusses the variety of unique instruments and playing styles that were brought to the southern United States from other areas, then gained popularity in the southern mountain communities of Appalachia. Southern musicians like Bill Monroe listened to this variety of sounds, styles and instruments, then incorporated them all into the composition and performance of a new style of music, which soon became known as bluegrass.

## Teacher's Notes

The provided *The Roots of Bluegrass Answer Key* highlights some important details from the essays. If you want to read through the website material as a whole class, you can make an overhead of the worksheet and complete it together. Since the activity requires students to read and comprehend text-based material, you may want to allow students to work collaboratively to complete the worksheet.

## Vocabulary

Gospel, lick, minor, rag, reed instrument, vaudeville

## Materials

*The Roots of Bluegrass Worksheet* (provided), *The Roots of Bluegrass Answer Key* (provided), access to the sitesALIVE! website; **Optional:** overhead projector, transparency of worksheet

### **Procedure**

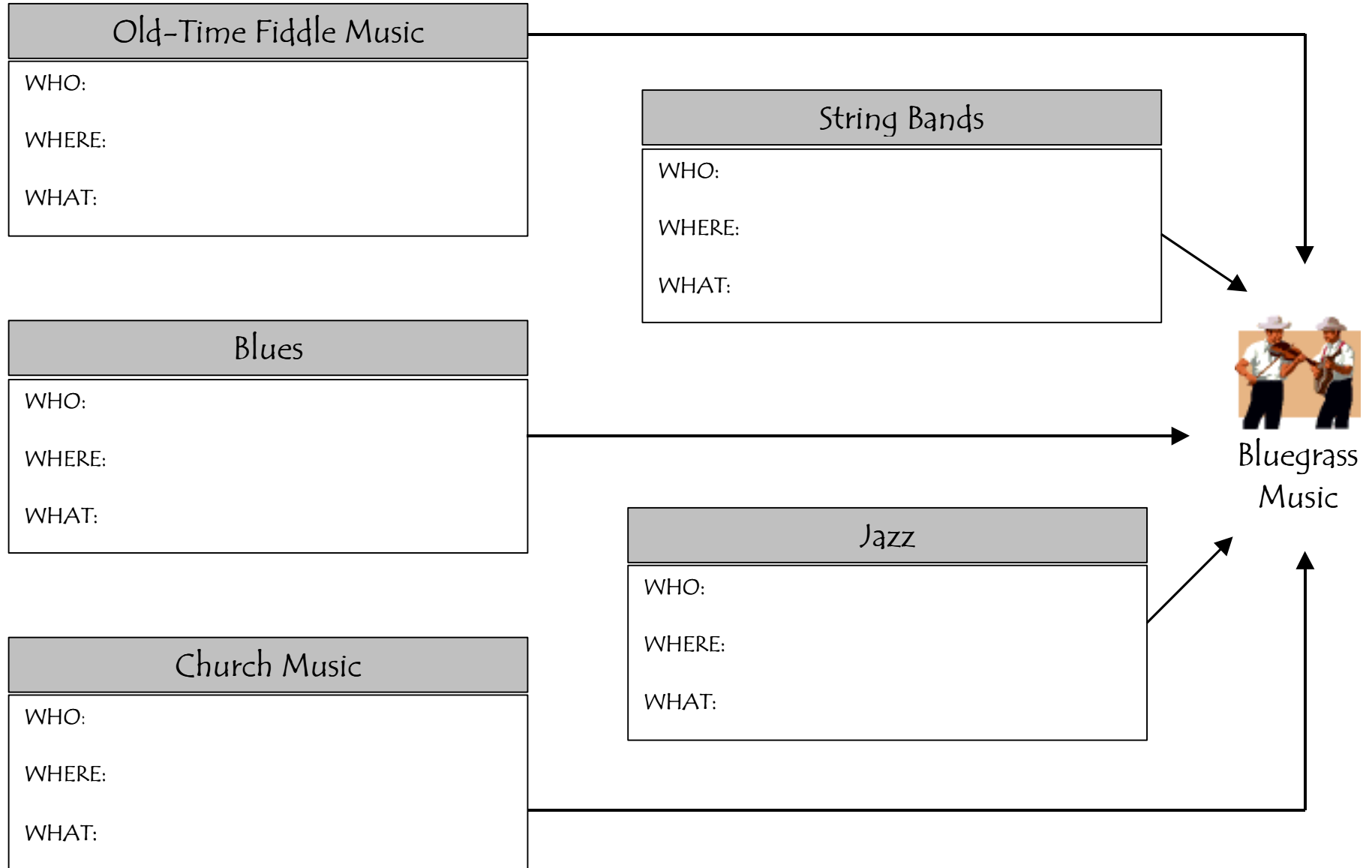
1. Begin by passing out copies of *The Roots of Bluegrass Worksheet* to each student. (Alternatively, you can make a transparency of the worksheet and show it to the whole class on an overhead projector.) Go over the directions as a class.
2. Next, instruct students to read the essays online about the roots of bluegrass music.
3. As students read, have them complete the worksheet with the WHO, WHERE, and WHAT details for each musical style.
4. When students are finished, review the worksheet answers together as a class.

### **Extend the Experience**

- Bring in CDs or download music from the Internet to demonstrate the sounds of old-time fiddle music, blues, gospel and jazz music. After allowing students to listen to the music samples, ask them to write an essay explaining which style of music they most prefer and why.
- Have students make a mobile using images, objects and phrases which represent the various styles (or ingredients) of music that flavor the “bluegrass stew.”

# The Roots of Bluegrass Worksheet

**Directions:** Bluegrass music has been influenced by many other musical styles from around the world. Read about the musical roots of bluegrass on the sitesALIVE! website, then show what you learned by adding details to the diagram below. For each musical style, try to pull out details about **WHO** popularized the style, **WHERE** it was first played, and **WHAT** it contributed to bluegrass music.



# The Roots of Bluegrass Answer Key

**Directions:** Bluegrass music has been influenced by many other musical styles from around the world. Read about the musical roots of bluegrass on the sitesALIVE! website, then show what you learned by adding details to the diagram below. For each musical style, try to pull out details about **WHO** popularized the style, **WHERE** it was first played, and **WHAT** it contributed to bluegrass music.

