

# What is the Blues?

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# Essential Question

What historical factors contributed to the development of blues music?



# Elements of Blues Music

- The blues is a folk vocal tradition
- Passed on via the **oral tradition** and ancestral learning
- Call and response



# the griots

The **griots** of West Africa are the historians, musicians, and storytellers of their communities. Their occupation is passed down from father to son over countless generations and is taught through the **oral tradition**.

A griot's job is to use song to preserve their community's history and traditions. They are essential in preserving traditional African identity as teachers, historians, advisors, and entertainers.



# Historical Factors: slavery

- Forced migration from Africa
- Chattel slavery (a person is born into the condition of slavery)





# Work Songs/ Folk Blues Videos

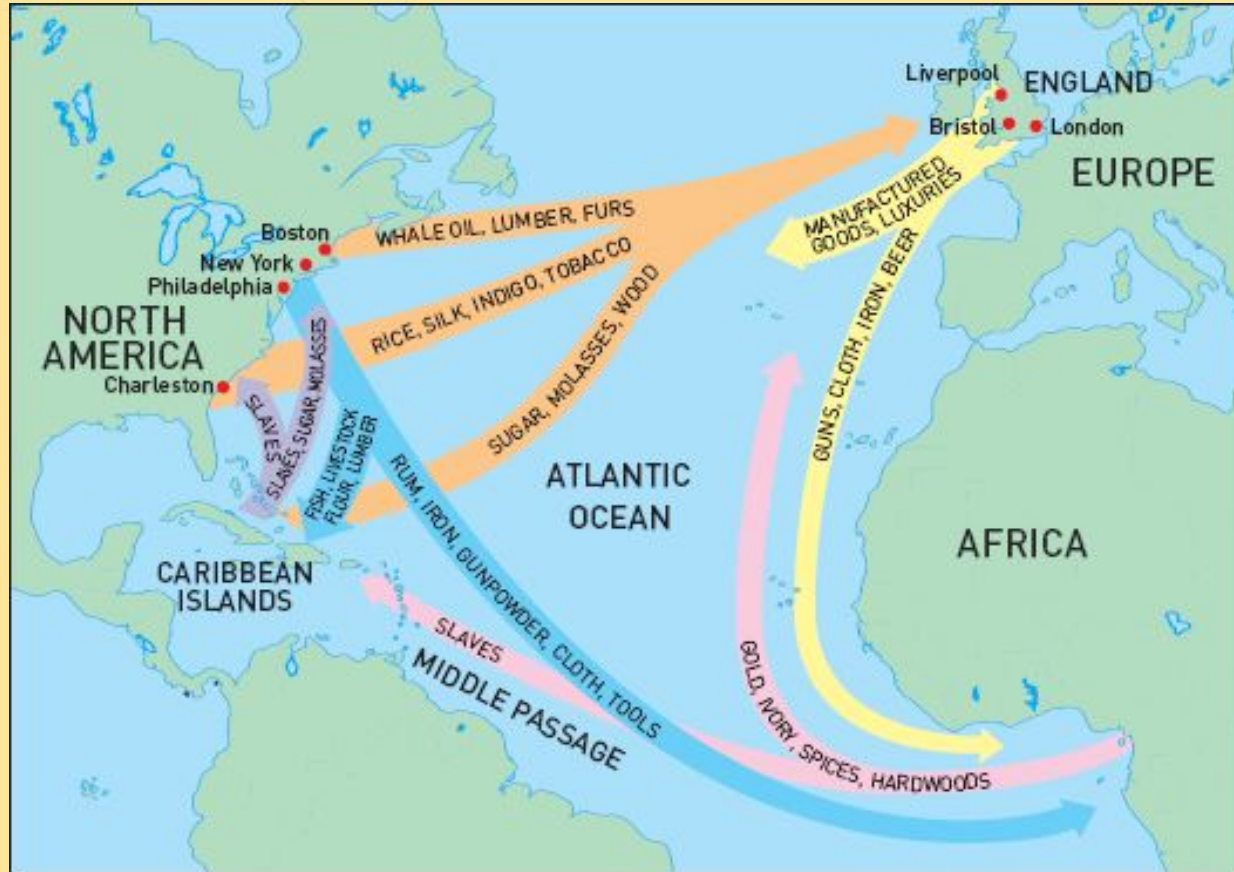
[Call & Response. Work song - Prison song \(1966\)](#)

[Wake Up Dead Man - Hammer Ring \(work song in a Texas prison,1965\)](#)

[Article: convict leasing and prison labor](#)



# triangular trade





# Historical Factors: migration




- Post Civil War emancipation, Reconstruction
- Northern industrialization, factories and railroads
- Jim Crow policies
- Boll weevil infestations, decline of agricultural economy



# The Great Blues Migration

In the two Great Migrations, millions of African Americans left the South for cities in the North and on the West Coast, spreading several styles of Blues music across the country.




## BLUES STYLES

-  East Texas
-  Mississippi Delta
-  Piedmont



Patterns indicate the general region of origin of these three Blues styles

Place names in blue are cities that emerged as centers of Blues music

## GREAT MIGRATION CORRIDORS

-  South West to Midwest & Far West
-  South Central to Midwest
-  Southeast to Northeast

## GREAT MIGRATION

-  Destination cities
-  States of origin



Source: In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience

Map by: Michael Siegel  
Rutgers Cartography 2005



# Elements of Blues Music

- This is social music, expressed by **Call and Response**
- Cooperative work
- Religious music
- Dances, parties, telling one's personal story



# Stormy Monday Blues

A: They call it stormy Monday, but Tuesday's just as bad.

A: They call it stormy Monday, but Tuesday's just as bad.

B: Wednesday's worse, and Thursday's oh so sad.



A: The eagle flies on Friday, Saturday I go out to play.

A: The eagle flies on Friday, Saturday I go out and play.

B: Sunday I go to **church**, and I kneel down and **pray**.



A: I said, **Lord** have mercy on me!

A: Lord have mercy, please have mercy on me

B: I'm crazy about my baby, send her back home to me!



# Stormy Monday Blues

Three-phrase lyric structure.

Imagine the freedom of singing loudly in front of that many people with the exciting horns, church organ, etc.

Notice the call and response, BB sings, Lucille sings. BB sings, the band responds, etc.



# Stormy Monday Blues



# Stormy Monday Blues

[You Upset Me Baby](#)

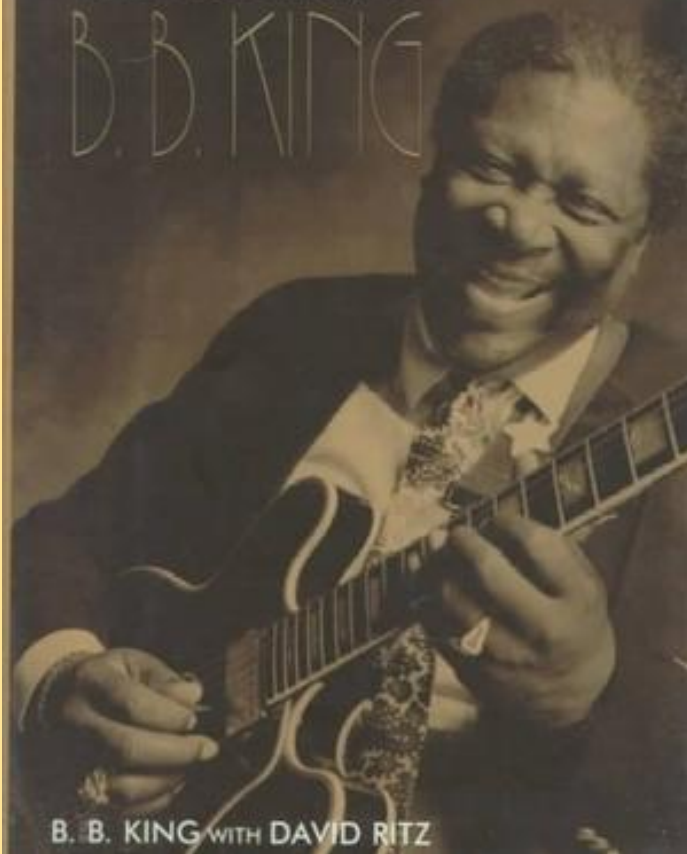




*Blues All Around Me*

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF

B. B. KING



B. B. KING WITH DAVID RITZ





# Elements of Blues Music

Blues music is the foundation of America's  
Classical Music and is a phenomenon which  
covers the globe.



# Elements of Blues Music

Demonstrate three train feels:

Bb 12/8

Funky Mama

Chuck Berry Bb Johnny B Goode



# History of the Blues Videos

[A Short History of the Blues: Emerging Music of the 20th Century](#) 7:20

[The History and Evolution of the Blues p.5 \[Proto-Blues\]](#) 7:19

[Is Blues the Mother of All Modern Music?](#) 11:42 (discusses structure)

[Blues Journey: Got Them Blues - A History](#) 6:24 (audio only)

