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We've Got the Blues

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"If you don't know the blues... there's no point in picking up the guitar and playing rock and roll or any other form of popular music."

--Keith Richards, one of the original members of The Rolling Stones

Project: We've Got the Blues

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Overview:

At the Byrnes Freshman Academy, English 2 Honors students are the top students. They attend English class for one semester, 90 minutes a day, and enjoy in-depth understanding of different cultures. They have the ability to analyze and evaluate new material and use it to further expand their knowledge and create original and unique projects.

“We’ve Got the Blues” provides a unit of study for English 2 Honors that encourages students to develop an understanding of the blues and how it applies to literature. The unit enables students to gain an appreciation of the blues while understanding its historical significance. We study *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, and poems and essays by other authors influenced by the blues. Additionally, we introduce students to famous twentieth century artists and musicians known for their blues pieces as well as contemporary musicians and artists. **Teachers should feel free to pick and choose from the lessons and activities in this unit.**

Goals:

- Students will gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the blues and its influence on literature, art, contemporary music, and contemporary art. In addition to reading the novel and play mentioned above, students will study poems by Langston Hughes, Etheridge Knight, and Terrance Hayes, and works of art by artists such as Picasso, Aaron Douglas, and Augusta Savage. They’ll also listen to musical selections such as William Grant Still’s “Suite for Violin and Piano,” inspired by Savage’s bust “Gamin,” as well as selections by artists such as Billie Holiday, B.B. King, Chuck Berry, Muddy Waters, Bessie Smith, Madeleine Peyroux, Seth Walker, Gary Clark Jr., Ray Lamontagne, Bob Dylan, Janis Joplin, Adele, Little Richard, and James Brown.
- Students will complete several activities to demonstrate an understanding of the blues and its influence, including finding blues music, identifying the blues in poetry, identifying the blues in art, and creating their own blues art.
- Students will also learn more about literature (such as the use of repetition, rhyme, and rhythm in poetry) through their studies of the blues.
- Students will read and analyze both *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *A Raisin in the Sun*.
- Students will learn a definition of the blues and will be able to find elements of the blues in this novel and play.
- They will also learn a definition of blues poetry and apply it to several poems.
- Additionally, students will learn to look beyond cultural stereotypes when identifying the blues in music, literature, and art.

Common Core Standards:

The following Common Core Standards are integrated into these lessons:

- Reading Standards for Literature 1, 2 (Key Ideas and Details)
- Reading Standards for Literature 4 (Craft and Structure)
- Reading Standards for Literature 10 (Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity)
- Writing Standards 3 (Text Types and Purposes)
- Writing Standards 4, 5 (Production and Distribution of Writing)
- Writing Standards 7, 8 (Research to Build and Present Knowledge)
- Speaking and Listening Standards 1, 2 (Comprehension and Collaboration)
- Speaking and Listening Standards 4, 5, 6 (Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas)
- Language Standards 5, 6 (Vocabulary Acquisition and Use)

Assessment:

Assessment of student learning will be through writings and other activities.

Before initiating the project, students will write down everything they know about the blues as a means of establishing a baseline. Students will complete at least three activities throughout the project, including:

- Researching the Harlem Renaissance and the lives of writers from the time period
- Finding modern music with characteristics of the blues
- Creating their own artistic piece (art, music, dance, drama) with characteristics of the Blues
- Creating their own blues poems or music
- Creating a Blues soundtrack for *A Raisin in the Sun*
- Writing assignment

Unit and timeline:

Give pre-test.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Test: The Blues

1. The blues and characteristics of the blues are sometimes used in literature. List what you know about the characteristics of the blues used in literature.
2. The blues and characteristics of the blues are sometimes used in art and music. List what you know about the characteristics of the blues used in art, older music, and contemporary music.
3. List what you know about the Harlem Renaissance.
4. The producers and writers of movies have a reason for the soundtracks they select. If you were creating a blues soundtrack for *A Raisin in the Sun* what songs would you include?

Lessons for *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

Students read *To Kill A Mockingbird* as a lead-in to the unit on the blues. The following lesson is taken directly from The Blues Classroom:

<www-tc.pbs.org/theblues/classroom/downloads/teacher_guide.pdf>

Identity, Oppression, and Protest: To Kill a Mockingbird and the Blues

OVERVIEW

African American history during the Jim Crow era includes encounters with poverty, racism, disrespect, and protest. Harper Lee develops all four of these themes in her famous 1960 novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. To help students understand these ideas, this lesson incorporates the blues and other literature of the time. Ultimately, students will be asked to consider both African American oppression and activism through a variety of lenses.

STANDARDS

Addresses the following National Curriculum Standards for the English Language Arts Primary: 1, 2
Secondary: 6, 9

INTERPRETIVE LESSONS:

What Are the Meanings of the Blues?

Blues in Society

RESOURCES NEEDED

Music

The Blues Teacher's Guide CD

Readings

Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Richard Wright, "The Man Who Was Almost a Man"

Web Sites

http://www.bluesrock.webz.cz/l_m/MWaters/jmeno36.html

http://www.bluesrock.webz.cz/l_m/Broonzy/jmeno06.html

<http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/Delta/2541/bljlenoi.htm>

<http://www.nobelprizes.com/nobel/peace/MLK-jail.html>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By completing this lesson, the student will be able to:

Explore life for African Americans during the Jim Crow era.

Consider terms of respect and disrespect.

Analyze the effectiveness of different forms of cultural protest.

The Blues Teacher's Guide

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VIEWING GUIDE

Visit

www.pbs.org/theblues for index of film segment start times and lengths.

INTRODUCTORY EXERCISE

Considering the notion of manhood provides one way to compare the blues to literature about the African American experience. This exercise explores the notion of manhood and what it takes to become a man, using Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Richard Wright's story "The Man Who Was Almost a Man," and two blues songs—Big Bill Broonzy's "When Will I Get to Be Called a Man" and Muddy Waters' "Mannish Boy"—as examples.

Divide the class into six groups, with each group being responsible for one person's definition of manhood. The six people to consider are:

Atticus Finch, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Jem Finch, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Tom Robinson, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Dave, "The Man Who Was Almost a Man"

Big Bill Broonzy, "When Will I Get to Be Called a Man"

Muddy Waters, "Mannish Boy"

[For detailed talking points related to each individual, read the online version of this lesson at <http://www.pbs.org/theblues>]

Once student groups have identified their character's or individual's definition of man and found quotations to support their assertions, the class should have a discussion of manhood. Students speak in the voices of the characters they have studied. Ask the following questions and remind students to remain in character as they answer:

How do you define manhood?

What does it take to become a man?

How does your society define manhood? Does the definition vary by the color of a man's skin? Explain.

Does society have its definitions right? Why or why not?

What would you like to see changed in the way society regards manhood?

How are women involved in or impacted by your definition of what it takes to be a real man?

This exercise can be concluded by asking students to speak to these questions as themselves, broadening the term "manhood" to "adulthood." As part of this discussion, consider how society's definitions may have changed and whether or not race still plays a factor.

[Prior to starting this exercise, make sure students are familiar with all materials to be studied. Wright's story is in the *Norton Anthology of American Literature*. The two blues songs are on the accompanying CD. Lyrics to Waters' song can be found at http://www.bluesrock.webz.cz/l_m/MWaters/jmeno36.html while Broonzy's are available at http://www.bluesrock.webz.cz/l_m/Broonzy/jmeno06.html.]

INTERPRETIVE LESSONS:

What Are the Meanings of the Blues?

Blues in Society

FILM TIE-INS

Blues Music as Protest

The Soul of a Man

(second segment on J.B. Lenoir)

The Blues Teacher's Guide Identity, Oppression, and Protest

Visit

www.pbs.org/theblues for index of film segment start times and lengths.

FOCUS EXERCISE

Despite the racist society in which they lived, many African Americans in the first half of the 20th century fought against the established norms, asserting themselves even as white society failed to give them respect. This exercise explores examples of such self-assertion. Start by reading the quotation from Chapter 24 of *To Kill a Mockingbird* in which Atticus states, "I guess Tom was tired of white men's chances and preferred to take his own." Discuss the meaning of this quotation with students. What does "white men's chances" refer to? Why might Tom have given up on such chances? What do you think about Tom trying to escape? When a society is unjust, is it okay for a person to break the law and take justice into his or her own hands? [If students have not previously studied African American history, it would be worth reviewing what life was like for many blacks during the Jim Crow era (late 1800s–mid-1900s) at this point in the lesson.] Suggest that many blacks, like Tom, chose to assert themselves rather than to endure racism, oppression, and poverty quietly. Start by asking students to identify other examples of such assertion in the novel. Then, suggest that the blues provided a way for African American musicians to speak out against the conditions in which they lived. To introduce this idea, show the second J.B. Lenoir segment from the film "The Soul of a Man."

Subsequently, ask students to consider why music provided a good outlet for African Americans to express their frustrations. As a class, listen to three blues songs from different time periods to illustrate this point: "John Henry" (early 1900s), "Hard Time Killin' Floor Blues" (1930), and "Shot on James Meredith" (1966). Ask students how each song illustrates African American unwillingness to accept the conditions in which they found themselves. Finally, consider African American activists who took a stand against oppression. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter From Birmingham Jail" would be a good document to consider. Compare the letter, blues songs, and fictional literature as means of protest. Which form do students think would have most inspired African Americans? Which would have had the biggest impact on whites and on the country's leaders in particular? Which appeals to them most today as a forum for expressing discontent?

King's letter can be found at

http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/resources/article/annotated_letter_from_birmingham/

Lessons for *A Raisin in the Sun*.

Following the example of the lessons on *To Kill A Mockingbird*, students will continue to examine and discuss the lives of African Americans, although the setting has changed from a small town in the South in the thirties to Chicago in the fifties. Students will look for elements of the blues in the play, and they'll consider again some of the themes discussed earlier, such as racism, oppression, and poverty.

Students will complete the following project:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Project: Injustices Within Communities

Directions:

1. Select a partner to help you complete this project.
2. You and your partner will have (a total of) 2 or 3 days in the computer lab to research the topic, organize your ideas, and complete the PowerPoint presentation.
3. You and your partner are the experts on this topic and, therefore, will educate your classmates.
4. After gathering and analyzing your research, complete a PowerPoint presentation that contains the following slides:
 - Title slide: must contain title of subject, date, and names of researchers
 - Body slides: 5 – 10 slides with important information (at least 8 -10 facts total)
 - Final slide: Works Cited (documentation) – of all information and pictures using MLA format (use easybib.com); remember, this page should be double-spaced and alphabetized
5. With the exception of occasional words (or small groups of words), the slides should be written in your own words. Be sure to properly document any paraphrases or summaries.
6. Appropriate pictures should accompany each slide. Pictures should help to convey information or add to the information being presented.

Topics:

NAACP (history behind the organization, pivotal events, leaders, etc.)

Separate but equal schools (the reality vs. the myth, Brown vs. the Board of Education)

Malcolm X (who he is, his beliefs, how he gained followers, pivotal events in his life, how he changed, etc.)

Robert Kennedy (who he is, his beliefs, pivotal events in his life, his participation in the Civil Rights Movement)

Scottsboro Boys (who they are, what they are accused of, the outcomes of the trials)

Freedom Riders (who they are, their importance to the Civil Rights Movement, dangers faced)

Censorship of *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Adventures of Huck Finn* (definition, examples of novels that have been removed from libraries and schools, arguments used by individuals for and against censorship)

Women's rights in the 1930's (what rights did women have in the 1930's, authors who discussed women's rights in their writings and what those writings were about, important leaders in the movement for equal rights for women and what they did)

Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner (who they are, what they were doing, where they were, what happened to them)

Representative John Lewis (his speech on the 50th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington, his involvement in the March on Washington, pivotal events in his life)

Rubric:

- ___ 10 points – appropriate use of time
- ___ 10 points – following directions
- ___ 10 points - title slide – contains catchy and appropriate title, name, and date
- ___ 50 points – body (informational slides) – research and analysis are detailed and informative
- ___ 10 points – Works Cited (documentation) slide – information and pictures are documented using correct MLA format (determined by easybib.com)
- ___ 10 points - class presentation – students play the role of expert and present the material in a professional manner

TOTAL SCORE:

LESSONS ON THE BLUES

After these projects have been finished and presented, we'll begin to focus more sharply on the blues.

Students will read a selection of an essay from "Blues Poems" by Kevin Young (in the textbook *Literature*, published by McDougal Littell, 2009, also in the book *Blues Poems*, edited by Kevin Young), "Ballad" by Gabriela Mistral, and watch "Midwinter Blues" by Langston Hughes.

(Copies of all the poems mentioned can be found at the end of this document.)

(See "Ballad" and YouTube link for "Midwinter Blues" below.)

Show PowerPoint "We've Got the Blues."

Also show the Prezi that contains a brief history of the blues, a link to Langston Hughes reading his "Weary Blues," and an explanation of the three different types of blues.

http://prezi.com/oqerd8gn0gid/the-blues/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy

Show Langston Hughes reading "The Weary Blues" (YouTube) and discuss it.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uM7HSOwJw20>

Questions to ask after reading:

What are the blues?

What did you think about the poem and his reading of it accompanied by the blues?

What emotions did it bring out in you?

What specific words emphasize the blues?

What are the blues all about?

Discuss the three types of blues:

City Blues

Country Blues

Urban Blues

While listening to the blues music, students write down words and phrases that contribute to a blues feeling. What emotions and feelings do the songs bring out? What differences do the students notice between the three types of blues?

Students suggest contemporary musicians whose songs demonstrate characteristics of the blues.

(See PowerPoint.)

Students have 10 minutes to write a "Classroom Blues" or "Teacher Blues"

and/or

students create a blues poem from the viewpoint of a character from *A Raisin in the Sun*.

ORIGINAL BLUES POEM

Name: _____

Date: _____

Original Blues Poem

Directions:

1. Select a character from *A Raisin in the Sun* or “Everyday Use” or “Everything That Rises Must Converge.”
2. Using class discussions about the characteristics of the blues as a starting point, write a blues poem of 20 or more lines.
3. Remember that you are expressing the despair of the character.
4. Remember that the piece itself is a means to overcome the despair.
5. This is a QUIZ GRADE and will be presented ORALLY.
6. The blues poem may be spoken or sung or accompanied by music.

Rubric:

- 10 points - piece is appropriately written (accurately expresses the thoughts of the character)
- 10 points - poem contains at least 20 lines
- 15 points - expresses depths of despair
- 15 points - conveys the triumph of despair (through words, music, lyrical quality, or tone)
- 10 points - personal catastrophe is expressed lyrically
- 10 points - subject (topic) is heartbreak and suffering
- 10 points - speaker uses strong (emotional) language
- 10 points - speaker uses appropriate voice and tone – sounds impassioned
- 10 points - presentation is done without giggling or silliness

Alternate project: students create a soundtrack for *A Raisin in the Sun*.

BLUES SOUNDTRACK

While watching *A Raisin in the Sun*, create a blues soundtrack.

Select ten key passages in the play. Think about the emotions expressed by the characters in those scenes.

The soundtrack should contain at least ten songs with blues characteristics spread throughout the entire play. This must be done in PowerPoint format. Each slide should have an appropriate picture, at least three lines of appropriate lyrics from the song, and either 20 seconds from the song or a link to the song. This will be presented to the class; you must explain where the songs would be used in the movie, how the songs display characteristics of the blues, and why the songs are significant for those particular scenes.

Soundtrack Rubric:

- 10 points - PowerPoint contains ten appropriate songs that demonstrate characteristics of the blues
- 10 points - the songs are spread throughout the entire play
- 10 points - each slide contains an appropriate picture
- 10 points - each slide contains a minimum of three lines of lyrics
- 10 points - each slide contains 20 seconds of song or working links to the songs
- 20 points - explanation clearly states where the song will be used in the movie . . . and why
- 20 points - explanation clearly explains the characteristics of the blues presented in each song
- 10 points - presentation is done without giggling or silliness

FINAL PROJECT: THE BLUES

Name: _____
Blues Project

Due date: _____

This is a **creative** project. You are being given a week to complete this project, and it counts as a **test grade**. Therefore, the final project should reflect that you have spent an appropriate amount of time creating it.

This is a **TEST GRADE**. Select **one** of the following projects:

Write a meant-to-be-sung blues **song** from the point of view of one of the characters from *A Raisin in the Sun*. Using the blues chart completed during class and our discussion about the blues as a guide, write a blues song of 30 or more lines. Remember that you are expressing the despair of the character. Remember that the piece itself is a means to overcome the despair. This will be presented **ORALLY**. (You must complete the project – both lyrics and tune – by yourself, but you may have classmates help you present the song.)

Write a blues **instrumental** from the point of view of one of the characters from *A Raisin in the Sun*. Using the blues chart completed during class and our discussion about the blues as a guide, write a blues instrumental of two or more minutes. Remember that you are expressing the despair of the character. Remember that the piece itself is a means to overcome the despair. This will be presented. (You must complete the project by yourself, but you may have classmates help you present the instrumental.)

Create a complex **drawing , painting, or sculpture** that displays elements of the blues. This must be done from the viewpoint of one of the characters from *A Raisin in the Sun*. This will be presented to the class; you must explain both how the piece displays characteristics of the blues and why it would have been designed by that particular character.

Stage a **dance** from the point of view of one of the characters from *A Raisin in the Sun*. Using the blues chart completed during class and our discussion about the blues as a guide, create a dance of two or more minutes. Remember that you are expressing the despair of the character. Remember that the piece itself is a means to overcome the despair. This will be presented. (You must complete the project by yourself, but you may have classmates help you perform the dance.)

Song Rubric:

- 10 points - piece is appropriately written (accurately expresses the thoughts of the character)
- 10 points - poem /song contains at least 30 lines
- 15 points - expresses depths of despair
- 15 points - conveys the triumph of despair (through words, music, lyrical quality, or tone)
- 10 points - personal catastrophe is expressed lyrically

- 10 points - subject (topic) is heartbreak and suffering
- 10 points - speaker uses strong (emotional) language
- 10 points - speaker uses appropriate voice and tone – sounds impassioned
- 10 points - presentation is done without giggling or silliness

Instrumental Rubric:

- 10 points - piece is appropriately written (accurately expresses the mood of the character)
- 10 points - instrumental is two minutes or longer
- 15 points - expresses depths of despair
- 15 points - conveys the triumph of despair (through music, lyrical quality, or tone)
- 10 points - personal catastrophe is expressed through the melody
- 10 points - reminds listener of mood during heartbreak and suffering
- 10 points - composer obviously took his/her time and worked hard on composing the piece
- 10 points - instrumental sounds impassioned
- 10 points - presentation is done without giggling or silliness

Art Rubric:

- 10 points - piece expresses the feelings and emotions of the character
- 10 points - piece displays characteristics of the blues
- 15 points - expresses depths of despair
- 15 points - conveys the triumph of despair (through color, a design feature, etc.)
- 10 points - subject (topic) is heartbreak and suffering
- 10 points - explanation of the piece is appropriate and clear to the class
- 10 points - piece is done neatly and with effort
- 10 points - piece is visually appealing
- 10 points - presentation is done without giggling or silliness

Dance Rubric:

- 10 points - dance is appropriately staged (accurately expresses the mood of the character)
- 10 points - dance is two minutes or longer
- 15 points - expresses depths of despair
- 15 points - conveys the triumph of despair (through movement)
- 10 points - personal catastrophe is expressed through the movement
- 10 points - reminds listener of mood during heartbreak and suffering
- 10 points - choreographer obviously took his/her time and worked hard on creating the dance
- 10 points - dance shows character's passion
- 10 points - presentation is done without giggling or silliness

Post test

Name: _____

Date: _____

Post-Test: The Blues

1. The blues and characteristics of the blues are sometimes used in literature. List what you know about the characteristics of the blues used in literature.
2. The blues and characteristics of the blues are sometimes used in art and music. List what you know about the characteristics of the blues used in art, older music, and contemporary music.
3. List what you know about the Harlem Renaissance.
4. The producers and writers of movies have a reason for the soundtracks they select. If you were creating a blues soundtrack for *A Raisin in the Sun* what songs would you include?

Useful Materials/Budget:

\$86.49 (Amazon) - 7-DVD set of Martin Scorsese Presents the Blues

\$2.99 + 2.98 shipping (Amazon) - Billie Holiday Quote Music Poster

\$14.95 + 7 shipping (Amazon) - (Langston Hughes) Reach Up Your Hand Poster

\$14.95 + 7 shipping (Amazon) - The Harlem Renaissance Poster

\$11.95 (Amazon) - *To Kill a Mockingbird* DVD

\$9.99 (Amazon) - *A Raisin in the Sun* DVD

\$13.04 (Amazon) - *Blues Poems*, edited by Kevin Young

Resources:

One of the best resources for a teacher (grades 9-12) of the blues is the PBS website:

www.pbs.org/theblues/classroom.html

It includes a teacher's guide and downloadable lesson plans.

For use in conjunction with The Blues Classroom there is a seven-part exploration of the blues produced for PBS by Martin Scorsese and six other directors who present the blues from their own perspectives (available on DVD). The series includes rich historical background, archival footage of past and present blues musicians, and a wide range of blues information. The seven films are:

Feel Like Going Home by Martin Scorsese

The Soul of a Man by Wim Wenders

The Road to Memphis by Richard Pearce

Warming by the Devil's Fire by Charles Burnett

Godfathers and Sons by Marc Levin

Red, White & Blues by Mike Figgis

Piano Blues by Clint Eastwood

Another helpful site for the study of jazz:

<http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/article.php?id=18724&pg=1#.UmwGRChi5C4>

The following Prezi contains a brief history of the blues, a link to Langston Hughes reading his "Weary Blues," and an explanation of the three different types of blues.

http://prezi.com/oqerd8gn0gid/the-blues/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy

"Midwinter Blues" performed by an English teacher:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhG1h6XG1pg>

An excellent source for blues poems:

Blues Poems, edited by Kevin Young (available on amazon.com)

Mother to Son

BY LANGSTON HUGHES

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare.
But all the time
I've been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now—
For I've still goin', honey,
I've still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

Ballad of a Landlord

By Langston Hughes

Landlord, landlord,
My roof has sprung a leak.
Don't you 'member I told you about it
Way last week?

Landlord, landlord,
These steps is broken down.
When you come up yourself
It's a wonder you don't fall down.

Ten Bucks you say I owe you?
Ten Bucks you say is due?
Well, that's Ten Bucks more'n I'll pay you
Till you fix this house up new.

What? You gonna get eviction orders?
You gonna cut off my heat?
You gonna take my furniture and
Throw it in the street?

Um-huh! You talking high and mighty.
Talk on-till you get through.
You ain't gonna be able to say a word
If I land my fist on you.

Police! Police!
Come and get this man!
He's trying to ruin the government
And overturn the land!

Copper's whistle!
Patrol bell!
Arrest.
Precinct Station.
Iron cell.
Headlines in press:
MAN THREATENS LANDLORD
TENANT HELD NO BAIL
JUDGE GIVES NEGRO 90 DAYS IN COUNTY JAIL!

Harlem

BY LANGSTON HUGHES

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Dreams

by Langston Hughes

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

Ballad

By Gabriela Mistral

He passed by with another;
I saw him pass by.
The wind ever sweet
and the path full of peace.
And these eyes of mine, wretched,
saw him pass by!

He goes loving another
over the earth in bloom.
The hawthorn is flowering
and a song wafts by.
He goes loving another
over the earth in bloom!

He kissed the other
by the shores of the sea.
The orange-blossom moon
skimmed over the waves.
And my heart's blood did not taint
the expanse of the sea!

He will go with another
through eternity.
Sweet skies will shine.
(God wills to keep silent).
And he will go with another
through eternity!

The Weary Blues

BY LANGSTON HUGHES

**Droning a drowsy syncopated tune,
Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon,
I heard a Negro play.**

**Down on Lenox Avenue the other night
By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light
He did a lazy sway. . . .
He did a lazy sway. . . .**

**To the tune o' those Weary Blues.
With his ebony hands on each ivory key
He made that poor piano moan with melody.
O Blues!**

**Swaying to and fro on his rickety stool
He played that sad raggy tune like a musical fool.
Sweet Blues!**

**Coming from a black man's soul.
O Blues!**

**In a deep song voice with a melancholy tone
I heard that Negro sing, that old piano moan—
“Ain't got nobody in all this world,
Ain't got nobody but ma self.
I's gwine to quit ma frownin'
And put ma troubles on the shelf.”**

**Thump, thump, thump, went his foot on the floor.
He played a few chords then he sang some more—
“I got the Weary Blues
And I can't be satisfied.
Got the Weary Blues
And can't be satisfied—
I ain't happy no mo'
And I wish that I had died.”**

**And far into the night he crooned that tune.
The stars went out and so did the moon.
The singer stopped playing and went to bed
While the Weary Blues echoed through his head.
He slept like a rock or a man that's dead.**

The Blue Terrance

By Terrance Hayes (a contemporary African American poet born in Columbia, SC)

If you subtract the minor losses,
you can return to your childhood too:
the blackboard chalked with crosses,

the math teacher's toe ring. You
can be the black boy not even the buck-
toothed girls took a liking to:

this match box, these bones in their funk
machine, this thumb worn smooth
as the belly of a shovel. Thump. Thump.

Thump. Everything I hold takes root.
I remember what the world was like before
I heard the tide humping the shore smooth,

and the lyrics asking: How long has your door
been closed? I remember a garter belt wrung
like a snake around a thigh in the shadows

of a wedding gown before it was flung
out into the bluest part of the night.

Suppose you were nothing but a song

in a busted speaker? Suppose you had to wipe
sweat from the brow of a righteous woman,
but all you owned was a dirty rag? That's why

the blues will never go out of fashion:
their half rotten aroma, their bloodshot octaves of
consequence; that's why when they call, Boy, you're in

trouble. Especially if you love as I love
falling to the earth. Especially if you're a little bit
high strung and a little bit gutted balloon. I love

watching the sky regret nothing but its
self, though only my lover knows it to be so,
and only after watching me sit

and stare off past Heaven. I love the word No
for its prudence, but I love the romantic
who submits finally to sex in a burning row-

house more. That's why nothing's more romantic
than working your teeth through
the muscle. Nothing's more romantic

than the way good love can take leave of you.

That's why I'm so doggone lonesome, Baby,
yes, I'm lonesome and I'm blue.

GOOD WRAP-UP PIECES

- Selections from Martin Scorsese's *The Blues: A Musical Journey*"
- The importance of music:
<http://www.wimp.com/reactionmusic>
- <http://www.ivillage.com/soulful-7-year-old-sings-billie-holiday-everyone-weeps/1-a-563961>