

Blues: A National Treasure

- Timeline
- History Article
- Feature Article

What's the Connection?

In “The Treasure of Lemon Brown,” you met a blues musician, but do you know what blues music is? Where it came from? The other kinds of music it inspired? The selections that follow will tell you about all that and more.

Standards Focus: Identify Scope

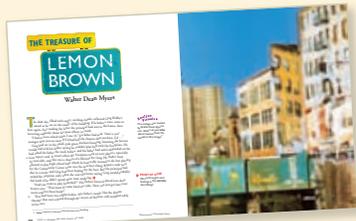
Scope refers to a work’s range, or breadth, of coverage. In general, the fewer people, places, events, and ideas a work covers, the narrower its scope. For example, the “The Treasure of Lemon Brown” has a narrow scope because it covers just a few key interactions between a couple of characters on a single rainy evening. A story or article with a broad scope might introduce many people or events or cover a long period of time.

To identify how wide or narrow the scope of a selection is, consider how the writer covers the following:

- **People**—How many people are introduced? How well do you get to know them?
- **Places**—How many places, or settings, are described? How much do you get to know about them?
- **Events**—How many events are covered? How much time do these events span? How much do you learn about them?
- **Topic**—What is the topic? How many aspects of it are discussed?

As you read the selections that follow, keep track of your answers to these questions. Then, use your answers to estimate each selection’s scope.

	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>History Article</i>	<i>Feature Article</i>
<i>How many people does it introduce? How well do you get to know them?</i>			
<i>How many places does it describe?</i>			
<i>How many events does it cover? How much time do they span?</i>			
<i>What is the topic? How many aspects of it are discussed?</i>			



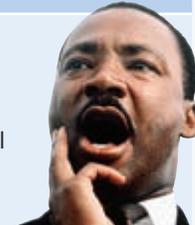
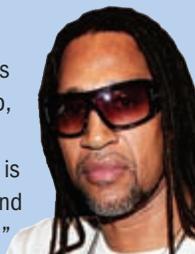
Use with “The Treasure of Lemon Brown,” page 178.

COMMON CORE

RI 1 Cite textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says. **RI 9** Analyze two or more texts on the same topic.

Timeline: Evolution of the Blues A

The blues emerged as a new form of music in the 20th century, but its roots date back to the music created by enslaved African Americans.

	THE BLUES	AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY
1910s	1912 W. C. Handy writes the first blues song. He later becomes known as “the father of the blues.”	The Great Migration Many African Americans leave the South in search of greater opportunity in Northern cities.
1920s	1923 Ma Rainey, “the mother of the blues,” releases her first album.	The Harlem Renaissance African-American music, art, and writing thrive in Harlem, New York.
1930s	 1933 Billie Holiday is discovered; she becomes one of the most famous jazz singers of all time. Her style is characteristic of the blues.	The Great Depression African Americans, along with the population as a whole, experience massive unemployment. 
1940s	1943 Blues musician Muddy Waters moves to Chicago, which becomes the center of a new style of blues.	World War II More than one million African Americans serve in the military despite widespread segregation and discrimination.
1950s	1954 Elvis Presley records his first song. Influenced by blues and country music, he becomes known as “the king of rock and roll.”	A Landmark Court Case In 1954, racial segregation in schools is declared unconstitutional in <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> .
1960s	1962 The Rolling Stones form. Influenced by the blues, the band creates a new hard-rock style that inspires countless bands to follow.	The Civil Rights Movement Congress passes the Civil Rights Act, which makes racial discrimination illegal in public places. 
1970s to present	1973 Kool Herc begins to DJ in the Bronx. He is seen as the father of hip-hop, a musical style that has blues roots and is known for rapping and instrumental “beats.” 	Struggles and Accomplishments Though racial tensions still exist, African Americans gain broader economic opportunity than they had in previous decades.

FOCUS ON FORM

A **timeline** is a graphic aid that identifies key events during a certain time period. Labels usually tell the specific time in which notable events occurred.

A TIMELINE

Preview the timeline’s title and headings. Based on these, what kinds of events will the timeline include?

B IDENTIFY SCOPE

What period of time does the entire timeline cover?

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MUDDY WATERS MA RAINEY W. C. HANDY BESSIE SMITH

Basic Blues: An American Art Form

W.C. Handy knew about music. The composer, cornet player, and orchestra leader had traveled a lot, and he had encountered many different types of music along the way. But while waiting for a train late one night, Handy discovered a style of music unlike anything he had ever heard or played: the blues.

The legend goes like this: One night in 1903, Handy arrived at a train station in Tutwiler, Mississippi, to find that his train was about nine hours behind schedule. His companion on the platform was a raggedly dressed fellow with a guitar. The man had an odd style of playing. He slid the back of a knife blade up and down the guitar's strings, creating a warbling sound. As he sang, he repeated an odd refrain—"goin' where the Southern cross the Dog"—which meant nothing to Handy. It turned out that the guitar-playing fellow was a traveling musician headed to a town called Moorhead, which was located at the intersection of two railroads, the Southern and the Yellow Dog. Handy was so intrigued by the musician's unique style and lyrics that he decided to put something similar down on paper. In the years to come, Handy would be known as the "Father of the Blues."

The American blues that Handy heard that night had its roots in the soulful songs of enslaved African Americans, which in turn were influenced by the call-and-response style of singing found in Africa. Field hollers, work songs, and

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spirituals were all sung by enslaved people as a way of expressing both their suffering and their dreams. After the Civil War, some solo musicians in the South adapted these sounds into songs they sang while accompanying themselves on guitar. The term “the blues” goes back to the 18th century, when being sad or depressed meant that you were experiencing the “blue devils.” Since many of the songs were about emotional pain and loss, the name fit.

In 1912, Handy became one of the first composers to release sheet music for a blues song, “Memphis Blues.” In 1920, Mamie Smith, a vaudeville performer, became the first African American to record a blues record. “Crazy Blues” sold 30 75,000 copies in its first month. Such “race records,” as they were called, were originally marketed to African-American consumers, but by the end of the 1920s, both African-American and white listeners were snapping up copies of blues recordings from such artists as Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith. Blues artists went from doing informal performances in taverns to large-scale stage performances in theaters and nightclubs, and blues musicians were no longer a phenomenon of the South alone. **C**

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, many African Americans began relocating to the North, looking for a better life with more opportunity. When they moved to cities like Chicago and Detroit, they brought blues music with 40 them. Blues musicians at the time invented new ways to play the blues as a means of reflecting the changes they had experienced. One artist, Muddy Waters, traded in his acoustic guitar for an electric one and added new instruments such as an upright bass, drums, and a harmonica. The new blues was livelier, gave folks something to dance to, and paved the way for rhythm and blues and rock and roll.

Waters’s style of “electrified blues” was popular until the early 1950s. But then rock and roll took over the American airwaves. This could have been the end of the blues, but starting in the 1960s, a new wave of white musicians from England and the United States revived interest with their own versions 50 of classic blues tunes. Groups like the Rolling Stones, Cream, and Led Zeppelin brought the blues back to the forefront of the American music scene. However, some blues musicians resented the success of these white musicians, who were gaining fortune and fame using the sounds of lesser-known African-American musicians. **D**

In recent years, new artists such as Jonny Lang, Shemekia Copeland, and Susan Tedeschi have contributed their own styles to the evolution of blues music. These new artists have managed to keep the genre fresh, while at the same time paying tribute to generations of past musicians who taught the United States—and the world—how to sing the blues.

C IDENTIFY SCOPE

How many people has the writer mentioned so far? Note how much you learn about each one of them.

D IDENTIFY SCOPE

Over what period of time do the events in this paragraph take place?

Musicians Know the Blues Firsthand

Andrew Jacobs

No one ever said the blues was any way to make a living. . . . Broke even in good times, Little Freddie King survived by playing juke joints in New Orleans until old age left his body broken. Deprived of a steady income, he went without dentures or glasses, and one night, a heavy rain brought down the ceiling of his bedroom.

Without an audience for his quirky style of music, Haskel “Whistling Britches” Thompson ended up in a Winston-Salem homeless shelter. . . .

“These people are our culture, our folk musicians, and no one is looking after them,” said the bluesman Taj Mahal. “We’re always putting our hands over our heart and saying the Pledge of Allegiance and honoring Davy Crockett, yet we’re allowing these people and their music to fall through the cracks.”

In the 1980s, Tim Duffy came to a similar realization. As a student studying folklore at the University of North Carolina, he grew obsessed with preserving the sounds of these unheralded musicians. But as he traveled the rural South with recording equipment, he grew even more troubled by the poverty that left many artists without instruments and too strapped for heating oil or medicine.

“Their music ended up in archives but the problem is no one gets to hear it,” said Mr. Duffy, who lives in Hillsborough, N.C. “And the recordings don’t put food on their table, it doesn’t get them a gig.”

Over the last two decades, Mr. Duffy, 41, has turned his passion into a nonprofit organization, the Music Maker Foundation, which is part recording company, part artist management service, and part social welfare agency. For those able to perform, the foundation promotes roots music and offers artists a touring career; for those too old or sickly, he sends monthly checks that average \$100.

When unexpected hardships strike, as in the case of Little Freddie King’s collapsing ceiling, Mr. Duffy provides emergency cash. . . .

The foundation also puts CDs into the hands of men like Cootie Stark, a blind guitarist from Greenville, S.C., who had never had his music recorded until he met Mr. Duffy at age 68. Mr. Stark, now 77, has since taken to the stages of Lincoln Center, the Rockport Rhythm and Blues Festival at Newport, and other concert venues. He earns about \$8,000 a year selling his CDs.

“It should have happened 45 years ago, but I finally got a break,” he said. **E**

E IDENTIFY SCOPE

What is this article about? What time period does it focus on? Jot this information in your chart.

Comprehension

- 1. Recall** Who became known as “the father of the blues” and why?
- 2. Summarize** In a few sentences, summarize what gave rise to electrified blues.
- 3. Clarify** Reread lines 15–23 in “Musicians Know the Blues Firsthand.” What is Taj Mahal pointing out here?

Text Analysis

- 4. Compare Scope** Which of the three selections has the narrowest scope? How do the scopes of the other two selections compare? Use the chart you made as you read to give reasons for your answers.
- 5. Draw Conclusions About a Timeline** Why do you suppose a timeline called “Evolution of the Blues” includes key events in African-American history?

COMMON CORE

RI 1 Cite textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says. **RI 9** Analyze two or more texts on the same topic. **W 9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Read for Information: Evaluate Sources for Usefulness

WRITING PROMPT

Imagine you have chosen one of the following topics for a report:

- the birth of blues music and how blues has changed over the years
- important events in African-American history
- the life of blues musicians

Explain which selection you would use as a source of information for this topic and why. If more than one selection would be useful to you, be sure to explain what each would provide.

To answer this prompt, first identify the topic you would want to focus on. Then follow these steps:

- Using the chart you filled in, consider the focus of each selection you just read. What kinds of information does each selection provide?

<i>Topic of Report:</i> _____	
<i>Selection I Would Use</i>	<i>Why I Would Use It</i>

- In a chart like the one shown, identify the topic you picked, the selection(s) you would use for a report on that topic, and a brief explanation as to why the selection(s) would be useful to you.