



## ACTIVITY 3: GENERATIONAL MUSIC COMMUNITIES

Adapted with permission from [www.louisianavoices.org](http://www.louisianavoices.org), Unit VI, Lesson 3 and "Bullfrog Jumped," Lesson 3, "Songs and Games Across Generations," based on traditional children's game songs from Alabama, collected in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from folksong collector Byron Arnold.  
[http://alabamafolklife.org/bullfrog/bullfrogjumped\\_studyguide\\_lesson3.html](http://alabamafolklife.org/bullfrog/bullfrogjumped_studyguide_lesson3.html)

*I grew up in a little community in Western NC called Sodom. In this little community there was a tradition of singing love songs [or ballads]. But the way that I learned them, Granny would go yonder there in the kitchen and get one of them old chairs and drag it in here, and say "I'll learn you one of them old love songs." And then she would sing a verse, and I would sing it back to her, and then she would sing the second verse, and I would sing the first and second verse back to her. And by the end, Granny would be singing one verse and I would be having to start all the way back at the beginning and sing every single verse to the end, so she sure knew how to eat up those long snowy afternoons when there weren't no school there in Madison County.*

--Sheila Kay Adams, ballad singer, Sodom, North Carolina

**Grade Level:** 4-8

**Curriculum Areas:** English, Language Arts, Music, Social Studies, Theatre Arts

**Purpose of Lesson:** This lesson focuses on age-related generations for students to consider how traditional music is transmitted from one generation to another, and how music functions for people within a generation, including their own. It relates to various panels in the "Rhythm & Roots" exhibit, especially the "Next Generation" section. The "Sacred Tradition Bearers" panel also includes two examples of passing on traditions from older to younger family members, using North Carolina ballad singing and Mississippi fife and drums as musical examples.

### Lesson Objectives

1. Students explore music in their own generational music communities and other generational communities, then compare and contrast their own with others' communities.

2. Students connect with older and younger generations of people as they conduct fieldwork to research generational music communities at school, at home and in the broader community.
3. Students demonstrate a song or tune that they have learned or taught traditionally by word of mouth and observation.

**Time Required:** Three to five 45-minute class periods

**Materials:** If your students will be doing fieldwork, you may need digital or 35mm cameras, video recorders, tape recorders or notepads and pencils as well as appropriate fieldwork forms. Print and duplicate any worksheets or rubrics that you will be using. Try to accumulate recordings of various generational music communities to share with your students. Check with the school librarian media specialist and music specialist for resources.

## National Standards

### NATIONAL STANDARDS: MUSIC

- [NA.5-8.1 Singing, Alone and With Others, a Varied Repertoire Of Music](#)
- [NA.5-8.6 Listening To, Analyzing, and Describing Music](#)
- [NA.5-8.7 Evaluating Music and Music Performances](#)
- [NA.5-8.8 Understanding Relationships Between Music, The Other Arts, and Disciplines Outside the Arts](#)
- [NA.5-8.9 Understanding Music in Relation to History and Culture](#)

### NATIONAL STANDARDS: LANGUAGE ARTS

- [NL-ENG.K-12.1 Reading for Perspective](#)
- [NL-ENG.K-12.2 Reading for Understanding](#)
- [NL-ENG.K-12.3 Evaluation Strategies](#)
- [NL-ENG.K-12.4 Communication Skills](#)
- [NL-ENG.K-12.5 Communication Strategies](#)
- [NL-ENG.K-12.6 Applying Knowledge](#)
- [NL-ENG.K-12.7 Evaluating Data](#)
- [NL-ENG.K-12.8 Developing Research Skills](#)

### NATIONAL STANDARDS: HISTORY

- [Historical Thinking Standard 1: Chronological Thinking](#)

### NATIONAL STANDARDS: HISTORY K-4

- **Standard 3 : The People, Events, Problems, and Ideas that Created the History of Their State**
- **Standard 6: Regional Folklore and Cultural Contributions That Helped to Form Our National Heritage**

All National Arts Standards [link: <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/teach/standards.cfm>]

**Background Information for the Teacher:** This lesson ties to the “Next Generation” panel of the “Rhythm & Roots” exhibit. The exhibit focuses on the process of passing music traditions from generation to generation informally through imitation and example, often with an elder musician in the family or community, and more formally through institutions and organized programs such as the Alabama Blues Project and Junior Appalachian Musicians, among many others. This lesson focuses on **generational music communities** of adults, teenagers and children. Students identify their own generational community, as well as older and younger ones. Music is transmitted within and between these different age-related communities, or folk groups. Folklorists use the term **folk group** (see **Unit I**) to describe a specific collection of people who share a worldview based on cultural commonalities. The term **generational community** refers to a folk group who shares an interest in similar types of music and who are also bound together by age-related traditions and worldviews. The boundary markers of generational music communities constantly shift, depending on the population in question. We may be talking about people who share ethnicity, family or region; or about a group of individuals born and living at the same time; about a group of individuals sharing status (as that of students in a school), which may be temporary.

In generational traditional music communities, adults are typically tradition bearers and teachers; teenagers can be characterized by innovation in that they use and reinterpret what they've been taught; and children often use hand games and rhymes. Often a **master** musician will work with an **apprentice** to teach the tradition to younger people in the community, either formally or informally. Some states have traditional arts apprenticeship programs which pair a master musician with a willing and appropriate apprentice.

Members of these generational music communities will gather at different places to hear, perform or dance to traditional secular and sacred music. Babies will be at home, hearing lullabies and birthday and party songs; older children might be on the playground, at home, with friends at school, or at religious organizations; adolescents are often alone with a radio or IPOD®, plugged into earphones or watching music videos with friends; adults may be at a religious service, festival or concert. There are places where all generations come together: powwows, religious occasions, rites of passage such as weddings and funerals, festivals, community dances and parades.

When we talk about generational music communities, we are discussing the transmission of culture. Key questions to consider are:

- What are characteristics of different generational music communities?
- What music do members of generational communities learn and teach each other?
- How do they learn traditional music within and between generations?

The answers will be as varied as the people who ask the questions. To offer brief examples, we can say that parents might teach children to sing "Happy Birthday," and children often learn from other children humorous variations of the song (example: "Happy Birthday to you /You live in a zoo"). The Baby Boomer Generation might sing "Blowin' in the Wind" with shared memories of the 1960s—the Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam and the peace movement. Some Baby Boomer parents or grandparents might teach their children to sing "Blowin' in the Wind" and tell personal experience narratives of that era to drive home the song's importance to their generation. Others may teach grandchildren hand rhymes set to music, such as "The Itsie Bitsie Spider" because their grandparents taught the song to them. Sunday school teachers may teach the hand motions of "The Wise Man Built His House Upon the Rock" or "Deep and Wide" to young children to teach religious values. Children also learn parody songs such as "On Top of Spaghetti" at camp or on the playground. Teaching and learning is often done through observation and imitation—in traditional fashion. Relationships can be formal, informal, secondhand or seemingly accidental within and between generations.

**To Prepare:** Read **Background Information for the Teacher** (above) and think about how best to initiate this lesson with your students. Older students will be able to conduct more sophisticated fieldwork and analysis. Consider how your own generational music communities have changed from early childhood to today. What do you remember about your parents' or grandparents' music communities? What do you overhear of children's music communities? If you want to do an interviewing or song collection project with your students, refer to [Unit II](#) to review fieldwork procedures. Try to identify traditional or other musicians in the community for students to interview. Students themselves or school personnel may be good sources for leads.

## Student Worksheets

### [Discovering Generational Music Communities](#)

### [Generational Music Communities Survey](#)

### [Bullfrog Jumped Song Catching Worksheet](#)

## Assessment Tools

### [Things I Know About Generational Music Communities](#)

### [Things I Learned About Generational Music Communities](#)

## Evaluation Tools/Opportunities

### Process

1. [Things I Know About Generational Music Communities](#)

### Summative

1. [Things I Learned About Generational Music Communities](#)

### Products

1. Biographical sketches, bio poems, essays, oral presentations
2. Adult Interviews about traditional music
3. Fieldwork Projects, "Music from Two Generations"

## 4th and 8th Grade Activities

1. Have students read the "Fiddler Bud Zorn's First Tune and First Instrument Worksheet." Lead a discussion about Zorn's first tune and first instrument. How did he learn? Who taught him? Have students brainstorm about their first instruments and/or first songs learned. The quote at the beginning of the lesson gives another example of generational learning, but it is possible students may have learned their first song from a peer. You may want to discuss some of the settings where music is learned outside the formal classroom: refer to "Background" above for ideas/prompts. Tell students they will be "song catchers." They can begin by collecting childhood songs from school personnel and students using the [Bullfrog Jumped Song Catching Worksheet](#). Then they can collect songs from family members and neighbors. They may use audio recorders, write the lyrics or learn the songs themselves to share in class. Working in teams students can organize a song catchers' presentation to the class.

2. Ask students to list some folk groups that they belong to and identify traditional music associated with that group. Share some of your own. Groups might be friends, a class, Scouts, religious organizations, 4-H or clubs. Ask them to pair with someone who doesn't know one of their songs and teach it to their partners.

3. Students can also pair off to interview each other about music that they've learned from someone of an older generation. They should complete the [Generational Music Communities Survey](#) and share results as a class or in groups.

4. Help students produce a generational music presentation of traditional music recordings of different eras. Ask the school media specialist for recordings and encourage students to bring in recordings. With older students, discuss what lyrics are appropriate for the classroom and ask their assistance in researching sources for traditional music and dance of different generations. A group of students should present each generation's music, relaying what they have learned about the music and those who played, danced and listened to it. This is also an opportunity for students to sing or play something they've learned from another generation, younger or older. Students may also demonstrate or describe dances they know and have learned about through their research. (See "Louisiana Voices" [Unit VI Lesson 4](#) for activities on researching folk dance and movement.)

5. Assess student growth in awareness from the beginning of the lesson with the [Things I Learned About Generational Music Communities](#) assessment form. Ask students to complete the forms; then assign themselves a grade. On the last line, teacher's can assign a grade.

### Explorations and Extensions

1. Share a traditional song that you have learned from someone or taught someone from another generational music community with the class or in groups.

2. Interview one or two adults about traditional music in their past. Have them recount what they learned, how they learned, what memories the music brings to mind and what the music means to them. Learn the song or find a recording of the songs they describe, sing or play it for the class, and tell their stories. Look for recordings of traditional music in your school library and on the Internet. See [Unit II Lesson 3](#) of "Louisiana Voices" for guidance on inviting a community member into the classroom and ways to maximize this learning opportunity.

3. Research with the class places in your community, county and state where students could go to learn Southern traditional music. The exhibit mentions programs like North Carolina's Junior Appalachian Musicians program or the Alabama Blues Project.

4. Are there singing schools and community singing conventions held in your area? Check the Web site [www.fasola.org](http://www.fasola.org) and look for singings: this is a good list for places and times of Sacred Harp singings across the country.

5. Design a fieldwork project to collect songs or stories about music from two different age groups in your school, family, or community. Refer to [Unit II](#) of "Louisiana Voices"

to review proper procedures such as filing out release forms and thanking your interviewees. Use the [Generational Music Communities Survey](#) as well as release forms.

## Resources

[Bullfrog Jumped, Traditional Children's Songs in the Byron Arnold Collection \(Alabama\) Learning Guide](#)

[Louisiana Voices: An Educator's Guide to Exploring our Communities and Traditions](#)