



ACTIVITY 5: AFRICAN ROOTS IN GULLAH CULTURE

<http://www.knowitall.org/gullahnet/>

Grade Levels: 4-8

Curriculum Areas: English Language Arts, Music, Social Studies

Purpose of Lesson: Students are introduced to Gullah music and language, and to the African roots of this and other southern music traditions. This activity includes informational and interactive Web sites, to be used individually by students or as a group.

Lesson Objectives:

1. Students learn about the African roots of Gullah culture.
2. Students learn about the blues and write their own blues song.
3. Students learn about various African American musical forms performed in Gullah communities.

Time Required: Three to five 45-minute class periods

ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS

NATIONAL STANDARDS: MUSIC

- NA.5-8.6 [Listening To, Analyzing, and Describing Music](#)
- 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-12.6 [Applying Knowledge](#)**
- **NL-ENG.K-12.9 [Multicultural Understanding](#)**

NATIONAL STANDARDS: HISTORY, K-12

- **[Historical Thinking Standard 1: Chronological Thinking](#)**
- **[Historical Thinking Standard 2: Historical Comprehension](#)**
- **[Historical Thinking Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation](#)**

NATIONAL STANDARDS: HISTORY, K-4

- **[Standard 5](#)**: The Causes and Nature of Various Movements of Large Groups of People into and within the United States, Now and Long Ago
- **[Standard 6](#)**: Regional Folklore and Cultural Contributions That Helped to Form Our National Heritage

NATIONAL STANDARDS: HISTORY, GRADES 5-12

- **[Era 2](#)** Colonization and Settlement (1585-1763)
- **[Standard 1](#)**: Why the Americas attracted Europeans, why they brought enslaved Africans to their colonies, and how Europeans struggled for control of North America and the Caribbean
- **[Standard 3](#)**: How the values and institutions of European economic life took root in the colonies, and how slavery reshaped European and African life in the America
- **[Era 6](#)** The Development of the Industrial United States (1870-1900)
- **[Era 10](#)** Contemporary United States (1968 to the present)
- **[Standard 2](#)**: Economic, social and cultural developments in contemporary United States

[All National Arts Standards](#)

Brief Description: This Web site from Gullah.net, produced by the South Carolina ETV Commission, contains activities that can be used as a pre- or post exhibit activities. The Gullah-Geechee communities of the Georgia and South Carolina Sea Islands and coastal regions are included in the “Ethnic Enclaves” panel of “Rhythm & Roots.” This panel deals with cultural communities that continue musical traditions in languages other than English and that have deep roots in the southeastern U.S. The featured Gullah-Geechee musicians in the exhibit are the McIntosh County Shouters from Eulonia, Georgia.

The link <http://www.knowitall.org/gullahnet/> contains background information on Gullah culture and Gullah language. Students can hear the same folktale in English

and Gullah (the unique Creole language of this region), and the African roots of various musical traditions.

The link <http://knowitall.org/gullahmusic/content/activities.html> includes the interactive music activities: Praise House (a demonstration of a the musical form “ring shout”), “Shake ‘em,” (a Gullah play song), Secret Code (the spiritual “Steal Away”) and “Got the Blues.”

The Classroom connections link, Activity 2, Catch the Gullah Beat, Rhythm and Percussion, includes an activity for Grades 1-5 to create Gullah musical instruments from everyday objects.

Extensions:

- Explore the other forms of African-American music discussed on the site.
- Research the African connections to the following instruments found in the “Rhythm & Roots” exhibit: frottoir (Zydeco rubboard from Louisiana); fretless mountain banjo from Appalachia; Bahamian goombay drum, Cuban *shekeré* and Haitian *rada* drum. Students can map or research where in the South there are communities in which these instruments might be played.

Resources

Digital Traditions (South Carolina) **Search “Gullah”

<http://www.digitaltraditions.net>

Provides access to the Folklife Resource Center at the McKissick Museum, including folk music, with streamed audio, video, bios, and photos.

Epstein, Dena J. “Sinful Tunes and Spirituals, Black Folk Music to the Civil War,” University of Illinois Press, 1977.

McIntosh County Shouters radio program

http://www.valdosta.edu/library/find/arch/folklife/radio/2g_shouters.html

Migration Radio series, includes Lawrence McIver’s Migration story for the ring shout “Kneebone Bend”

http://www.valdosta.edu/library/find/arch/folklife/radio/2d_migration.html

New Georgia Encyclopedia (Georgia Humanities Council, 2004-2007)

<http://www.newgeorgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Home.jsp>

See the links for Gullah, McIntosh County Shouters, Georgia Sea Island Singers

Rosenbaum, Art. "Shout Because You're Free, The African American Ring Shout Tradition in Coastal Georgia," University of Georgia Press, 1998.

Siler, Charles E. "A Commentary: African Cultural Retentions in Louisiana," http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/afri_cult_retent.html