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# BITS ACTIVITY BOOK

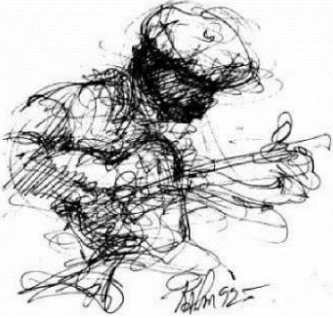
**TRY, TRUST and TRIUMPH"**

**All Grade Levels**



# Introduction

"I love the blues she heard me cry," -Fruteland Jackson



Our BITS program founder, Willie Dixon, defined the *blues* as being the "Facts of Life" expressed musically. From its early folk roots to its most dominating contemporary styles. Blues music floats the lyrics that tell the story of the ex-slaves and sharecroppers. Stories that gave birth to the field holler and work songs describing the social and personal concerns that arose in daily life. Furthermore, blues is passion-drenched music of the people that gives voice to their joys, fears, sorrows, and aspirations. The early bluesmen of the deep south were the storytellers of the downtrodden and those who had been rebuked and scorned and lost relationships along the way. This way of life of African-Americans is the inspiration for the birth of blues music.

This Activity book showcases information about blues music to the reader. The activities in this book take students on an exciting adventure to learn this uniquely American genre and the musical legacy that it continues to build across the globe. Students will travel a rich roadmap that begins in the southern states. The use of language arts, poetry, word games, maps, a glossary, and other activities as you travel to the Mississippi Delta, the East Texas Coast, and the Piedmont region before arriving in Chicago, Illinois. A city where the sound of urban style first began to emerge. - Fruteland Jackson



## About the Artist

Electro-Fi recording artist Fruteland Jackson is a HistoryMaker ([www.thehistorymakers.com](http://www.thehistorymakers.com)). He is an author, storyteller, and oral historian and a five-time Blues Music Award Nominee, and a recipient of the Blues Foundation's "Keeping the Blues Alive" award.



Fruteland performs traditional acoustic blues and has presented his award-winning \*All About the Blues Series- Blues in the School Programs, for the past 30 years. His program motto is "Try, Trust, and Triumph." Fruteland

Fruteland plays acoustic guitar, focusing on pre-war and post-war blues styles ranging from Robert Johnson, Big Bill Broonzy to Memphis Minnie and Elizabeth Cotton, ragtime, and other blues styles. Fruteland latest CD, "**Good as Your Last Dollar**," was nominated for BMA in 2020 for Best Acoustic Album and Best Acoustic Artist on [Electro-Fi Records](http://Electro-Fi Records).

Fruteland debuted his new Storyteller CD release "*Singing the Blues with Stories Vol. I*" in 2011. This CD Includes Stewball, The Blind Racehorse, and *The Life and Legend of Robert Johnson*. Available for download at CD Baby.com – IT Records

"Fruteland Jackson is foremost an entertainer, a man who knows how to tell a compelling story, how to mesmerize an audience with his tangy tales, to make them laugh." "He knows who he is. He toured with Honeyboy Edwards, Robert Lockwood Jr., and Homesick James. He is an artist." – Living Blues Magazine –

Ask Alexa to Play Fruteland Jackson's new CD, "Good as Your Last Dollar."

## Activities to Extend the Learning

### Word Scramble

Unscramble the following vocabulary words and match them with the appropriate clues below.

WSOGRNKOS      PTINEODM      CELLAADRSK      TNDFURELA  
THYRMH      HAARCMION      SPOGLE      SRHEAPRPEOCR  
MSSIILSSPIPLDEAT

A city where the Delta Blues Museum is located \_\_\_\_\_  
A region located in Northwest Mississippi \_\_\_\_\_  
A metal reed instrument used to play blues music \_\_\_\_\_  
A movement or action characterized by a series of notes \_\_\_\_\_  
A region in the Southeastern US \_\_\_\_\_  
A musical style born of African-American spirituals \_\_\_\_\_  
A musician, author, storyteller, and oral historian \_\_\_\_\_  
A tenant farmer who works to earn half of his crop \_\_\_\_\_  
Songs performed by a group of laborers \_\_\_\_\_.

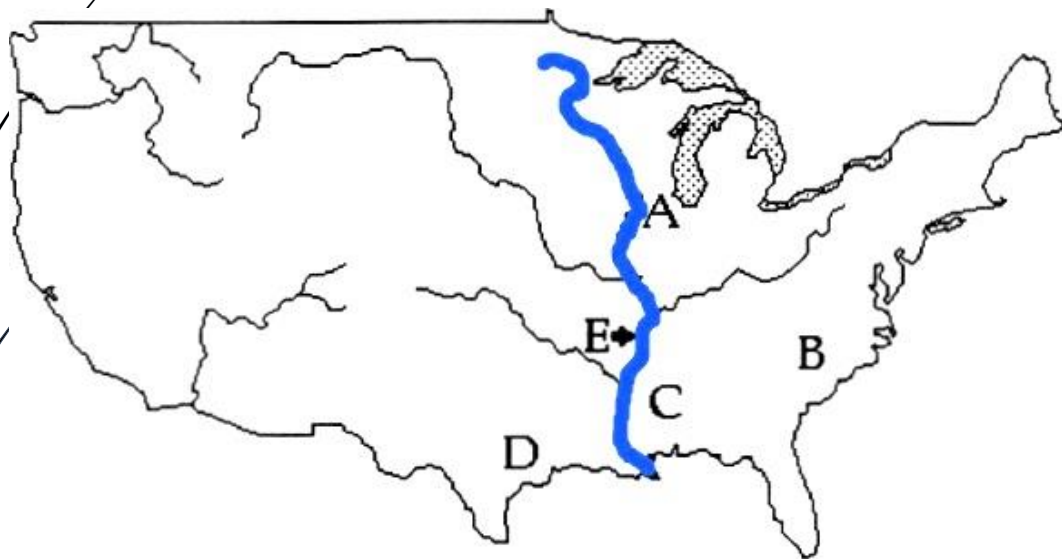


## Geographical Blues

The Blues in the United States may have been born in the Mississippi Delta, but it is a musical form that, over time, blossomed in many regions of the country. Sharecroppers of southern plantations or small self-sufficient farmers in the Appalachian foothills drew from their experiences and sang about them in their music. Blues musicians working as laborers in the factories of northern cities caused the music to take on a feel all its own.

Making use of the map provided below, *write* the letter next to the name of the region that identifies it, discovering in the process the great geographical diversity of the blues!

- Chicago
- Southeast Texas
- Piedmont Region
- Mississippi Delta
- Mississippi River



## Poetry Blues in Verse

The worlds of poetry and music come together magically in blues music. The language of the blues provides space for poets and songwriters to create their own forms of expression.

*Show me a man  
What will love me  
Till I die.  
Now show me a man  
What will love me  
Till I die.  
Can't find no such a  
man  
No matter how hard  
You try.*

*I got up this mornin,  
Feelin round for my shoes,  
Know by that I got the  
Walkin blues.  
Say, I got up this mornin,  
I was feelin round for my shoes.  
I say, you know by that now  
I Got the Walkin blues.*

-Son House

The line between the poetry of writer Gwendolyn Brooks and the traditional blues lyrics of Son House is almost the same. In addition to Ms. Brooks, other authors such as Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and James Baldwin have used the rhythms of blues verse to create both beautiful verse and prose. Using the above blues lyrics and the same form, rhythm, and rhyme as traditional blues lyrics, write a story or poem of your own below.



## Blues in Verse Continued

When the blues overtake me, gonna grab that train and ride

When a woman blue, she hang her little head and cry,  
When a man gets blue, he grab that train and ride.

Yonder comes that train, red-blue lights behind,  
Red for trouble, blues for a worried mind.

If you've ever been down, you know just how I feel,  
I feel like an engine ain't got no drivin wheel. -Anonymous

I play it cool,  
And dig all jive.  
That's the reason  
I stay alive.  
My motto  
As I live and learn  
Is dig and be dug  
In return.

-Langston Hughes

Roustabout, you got no home,  
You makes yo living  
On the shoulder bone.  
Lord, we work hard, babe,  
And they know we work hard,  
And they know they work hard, babe,  
And you know you work hard.

-John Williams







The Blues jumped a rabbit, run him a  
solid mile,  
The old blues jumped a rabbit, run  
him a solid mile.  
When the blues overtook him, he cried like  
a baby child.

-Fred McDowell

Mamie was singing  
At the Midnight Club.  
And the place was red  
With blues.  
She could shake her body  
Across the floor.  
For what did she have  
To lose?

Queen of the blues!  
Queen of the blues!  
Strictly, strictly,  
The queen of the blues!

-Gwendolyn Brooks





# Has Anyone Seen My Grandpa?

By Fruteland Jackson 8/4/2010

Has anyone seen my Grandpa?  
He did not show up to watch cartoons  
He is never late for our luncheon date  
We share on Saturday afternoons.

Has anyone seen my Grandpa?  
For sure, Grandma would know.  
What time and when Grandpa left home  
She says, "like a turtle, he walks slow."

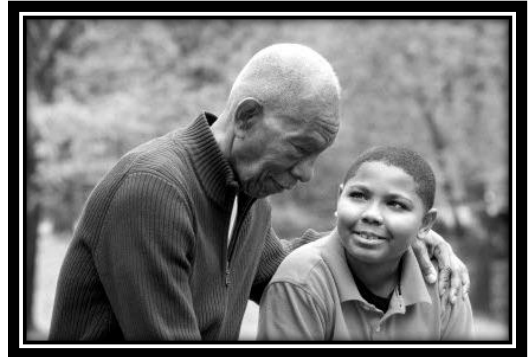
Has anyone seen my Grandpa?  
Mom and Dad will not be home until one;  
Mom prepared our favorite lunch  
We always have lots of fun.

When Grandpa came by last weekend  
He talked about the Golden Rule;  
He said, "Always be a good boy  
And always work hard in school".

Grandpa talked about life and such;  
That I would better understand as a man;  
That there is a time to live and a time to die,  
And that *big boys* aren't supposed to cry.

I was shaken by a loud clap of thunder.  
I ran to the window and then wondered,  
Why Grandpa was asleep at the bottom of the stairs,  
In the pouring rain, lightning, and thunder.

Has anyone seen my Grandpa?  
Maybe I will better understand as a man,  
That there is a time to live and a time to die,  
And that big boys aren't supposed to cry.



## Famous Bluesmen

Many great blues musicians, both past and present, bear colorful nicknames that bear witness to their musical ability. Past greats such as Memphis Slim and Tampa Red have inspired such present-day legends such as Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, Sugar Blue, and Johnny "Clyde" Copeland to carry on a tradition that speaks to the importance of a name.

In the puzzle below, pick out famous musicians horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.

Sunnyland Slim    Fruteland Jackson  
Pinetop Perkins    Blind Lemon Jefferson    Leadbelly  
Muddy Waters    Sonny Boy Williamson

B D N A L Y N N U S  
D L W E M K W E W M  
N E I W J C Y A Y U  
A A V N R D U D O T  
L D W J D W Y E B E  
E B A U Z L M O Y L  
T E M Z C B E N N A  
U L K M O I W Z N I  
R L L P I N E T O P  
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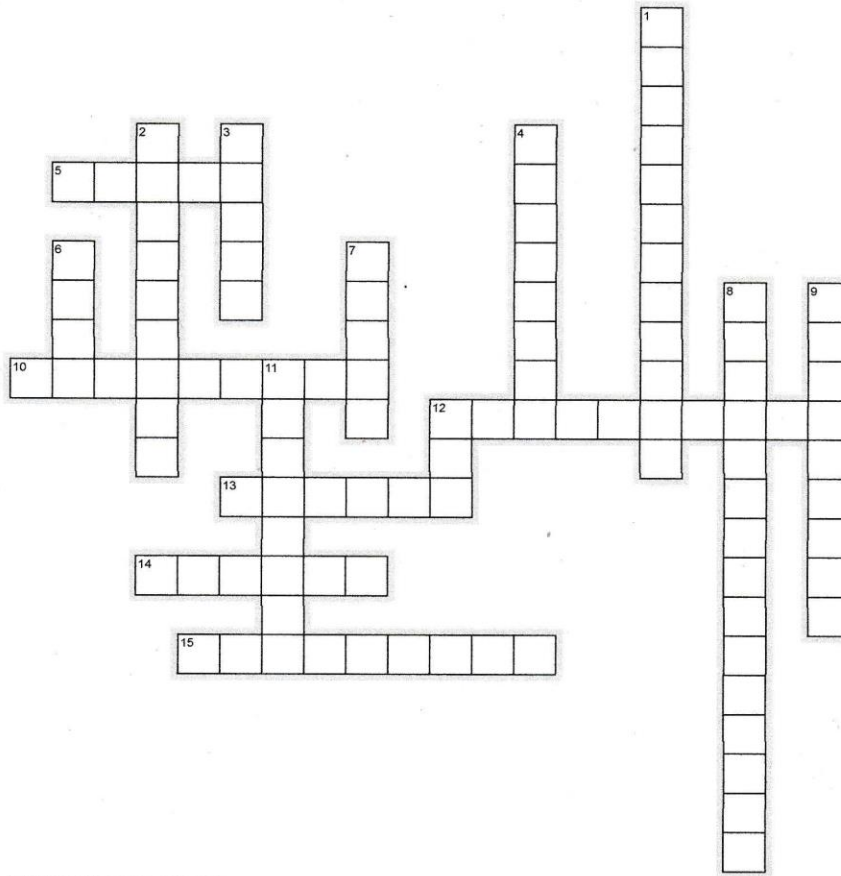
## Get a Blues Name

Take the name next to the letter using the initials of your actual first, middle, and last name.

First Name	Middle Name	Last Name
A = Fat	A = Bones	A = Jackson
B = Muddy	B = Money	B = McGee
C = Crippled	C = Harp	C = Hopkins
D = Old	D = Legs	D = Dupree
E = Texas	E = Eyes	E = Green
F = Hollerin'	F = Lemon	F = Brown
G = Ugly	G = Killer	G = Jones
H = Brown	H = Hips	H = Rivers
I = Happy	I = Lips	I = Malone
J = Boney	J = Fingers	J = Washington
K = Curly	K = Boy	K = Smith
L = Pretty	L = Liver	L = Parker
M = Jailhouse	M = Gumbo	M = Lee
N = Peg Leg	N = Foot	N = Tompkins
O = Red	O = Mama	O = King
P = Sleepy	P = Back	P = Bradley
Q = Bald	Q = Duke	Q = Hawkins
R = Skinny	R = Dog	R = Jefferson
S = Blind	S = Bad Boy	S = Davis
T = Big	T = Baby	T = Franklin
U = Yeller	U = Chicken	U = White
V = Toothless	V = Pickles	V = Jenkins
W = Screamin'	W = Sugar	W = Bailey
X = Fat Boy	X = Cracker	X = Johnson
Y = Washboard	Y = Toot	Y = Blue
Z = Steel-Eye	Z = Smoke	Z = Allison

# Blues in the School Crossword Puzzle

Fruteland Jackson



EclipseCrossword.com

## Across

- 5. a region located in Northwest Mississippi
- 10. A musician, author, storyteller, and oral historian.
- 12. A blues style requiring a metal or glass tubing worn on the finger
- 13. A flat-bodied stringed instrument with a long-fretted neck
- 14. A movement by a series of notes or beats.
- 15. Home of Willie Dixon

## Down

- 1. A tenant farmer who works to earn half of his crop
- 2. The flatted thirds and fifths in a blues scale.
- 3. Mother of the Blues.

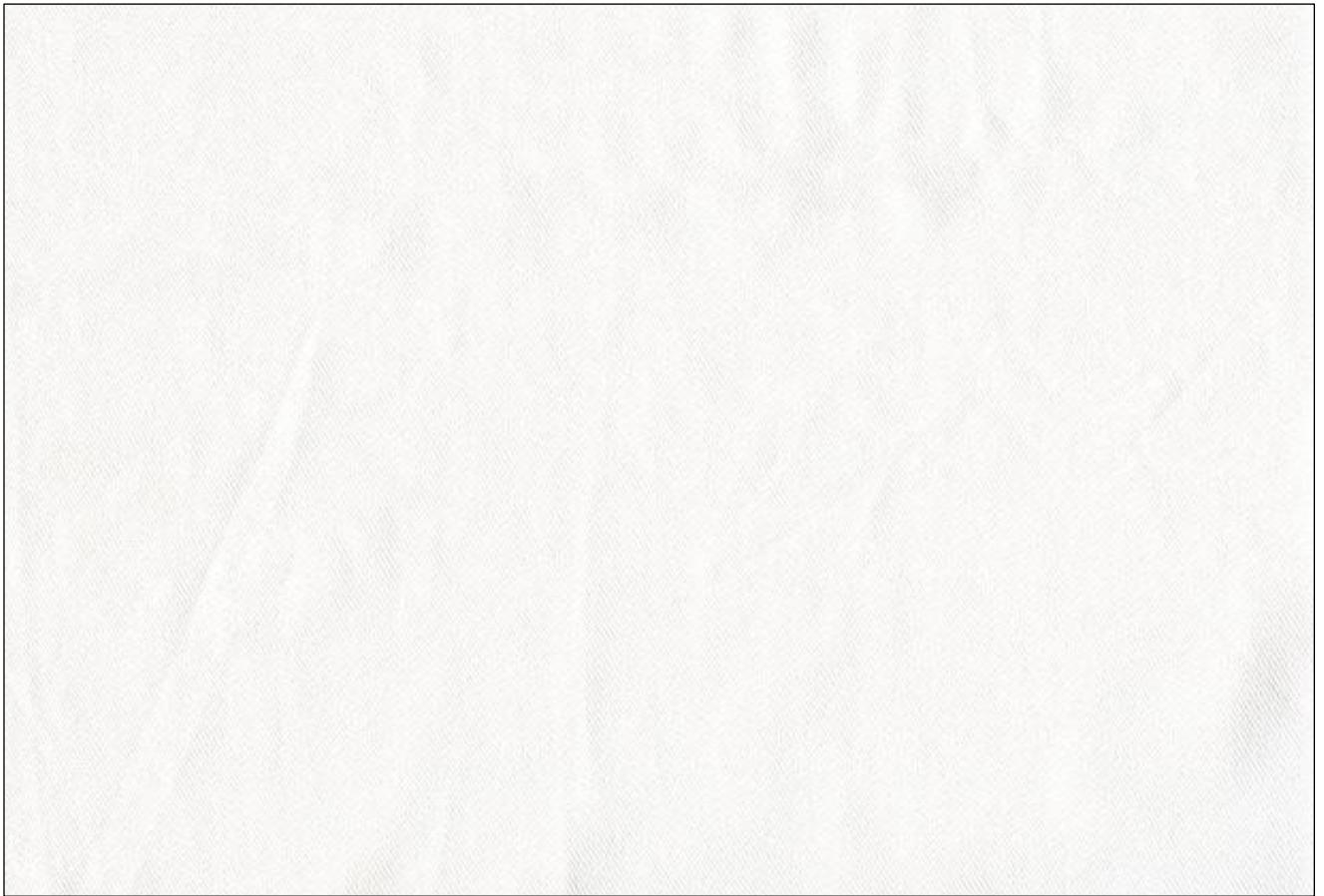
- 4. A beat heard on the 2nd and 4th Count.
- 6. Having less money or materials than others
- 7. Father of the Blues
- 8. Preserves blues heritage
- 9. Songs performed by a group of laborers
- 11. A non-electric wooden guitar.
- 12. A musical phrase

Answers: See Glossary

## Portrait of the Blues

*"The" Delta countryside was drenched in moonlight, edged in black by woods. From where we turned off on the rutted road, we could see the little shack far off, its windows shining orange from kerosene lamps, and from it came a deep, powerful rhythm, as if someone were beating a huge drum in the moonlit cotton patch. There was this heavy beat growing stronger and stronger as we passed through barbed-wire gates, my tires spinning in the sandy loam. Finally, we drove into the yard and could hear the bluesman's voice and the crying of guitar strings over the continuing beat".* -Alan Lomax

**Sketch a scene of the Blues here.**



## **Swingin' Through Blues History Exercise**

Jelly Roll Morton, Ike and Tina Turner, James Brown, The Rolling Stones, Ice Cube, and 50 Cents. What does each of these performers have in common? As different as each of these performers are, both individually and musically, they all share one important bond: The Blues. Much of the music that has grown to play a significant role in the ongoing evolution of popular culture both here in the United States and abroad developed from, or was heavily influenced by, traditional blues music and the musicians who played it.

This workshop is for a classroom. Divide the classroom into groups of five and assign each group of students to one of the following categories: jazz, funk, rhythm and blues, rock, and roll, and hip-hop. Ask each group to examine the following areas.

- What is the history of that genre of music? When did that musical styles emerge?
- How does that genre relate to other genres, jazz vs. hip-hop?
- Who are some of the most notable performers from the genre?

Students could then give individual presentations of their assigned genres in a classroom discussion that explores the musical legacy of the blues.

# BITS Songs Index

Classroom students wrote the following songs in Blues in the School workshop setting

## **The Blues in the Schools Boogie Woogie**

Fruteland Jackson

I GOT THOSE MORNING BLUES,  
I GOT THOSE EVENING BLUES,  
I GOT THE BLUES 'TILL THE SUN GOES DOWN  
I GOT THOSE HAPPY BLUES,  
IT MAKES ME GLAD BLUES,  
THE BLUES HAS GOT MY HEAD SPINNING AROUND



CHORUS  
I GOT THOSE BLUES-IN-SCHOOL BLUES, THE KIND OF BLUES,  
THAT YOU CAN USE.

TILE BLUES AIN'T NOTHIA" BUT,  
THE FACTS OF LIFE PUT TO MUSIC.  
IT'S THE ROOTS, THE HISTORY, AND CULTURE OF AMERICAN MUSIC  
CHORUS

IT'S A BOOGIE, IT'S A SHUFFLE,  
ITS' ROCK AND ROLL TOO.  
I'M GOING UP, I'M GOING ANYWAY YOU WANT ME TO DO!  
CHORUS

## **D. C. Bound**

Gibraltar School 8th Graders, Fish Creek WI w/Fruteland Jackson

We're DC Bound. We're DC Bound  
Gonna catch a Greyhound and leave this town.  
We're leavin' Fish Creek; we'll be gone for a week. We're DC Bound.

We're all packed up and ready to roll. So excited and out of control.  
Headin' out on hwy 57 on the way to DC Heaven  
We're DC Bound

It sure is nice to ramble. It sure is nice to roam chillin' with our friends while our  
parents are way back home. We're DC Bound. We're DC Bound. Seeing other  
places and brand-new faces. We're DC Bound.

We'll see Washington, Jefferson, and other monuments, and if we're  
lucky, we'll shake hands with the President. Seeing other places and brand-  
new faces. We're DC Bound.



**Blues to Rap**

Ottawa Public School, Canada W/Fruteland Jackson

I got the blues, and I gotta rap about the subject  
Something has not been done before. I don't know what to suspect  
Mixing two types of music, I've been put to the ultimate test  
You won't hear of such things even in the reader's digest.  
People think the blues is nothing but living in a mess  
But they don't know it's a lot more than that.  
You can rap about your life, the weather, even a cat  
Rap to Blues, Blues to Rap [I got the blues] [I got the blues]  
Writing this flow each one getting me closer to fame  
Throwing outflows that cause me shame  
Rapping about the blues in front of the School  
So why be down the Ottawa Senators rule  
First time in front of a big crowd  
I didn't think the crowd would be so loud.  
The sound makes the beat, and the beat makes sound  
Still waiting for my voice to be found

**Flu Bug Blues**

Stone Academy Chicago, IL 4th Graders  
w/Fruteland Jackson

My friends, we play tag in the mornin'  
Late at night, it was not boring.  
And then one day, I caught the flu  
Now I'm stuck in bed feeling sad and blue  
I got the flu. I got the flu.  
I got the stay in the bed flu bug blues.

I woke up this morning and jumped out of bed  
I said to myself, "thank God I'm not dead.  
In comes the sunshine  
Out goes the gloom  
Out goes the flu bug  
And the flu bug blues  
I lost the flu. I lost the flu.  
The stay in the bed flu bug blues



# Sam

Fruteland Jackson 7/1/10

Verses on the one G/Chorus C7 D7

I woke up this mornin'  
(When) I heard the front door slam;  
On the door, I found a note  
It was from my old dog Sam.  
Sam said that he was leavin'  
With not much left to lose;  
But a real bad case of the  
Cold-dry-dog-food-blues.

Chorus: (I cried) Sam, Sam, please come home  
Come home for goodness sake.  
No more cold-dry-dog-food  
How about a T-bone steak?



Sam had been my best friend  
And this I can't deny;  
Sam left some poop in the corner  
About three inches high.  
Just like his daily meals  
It was cold and dry;  
Perhaps it was a keepsake  
For me to remember him by.  
Chorus:

I searched all over the neighborhood  
But my hound could not be found;  
Then I received a telephone call,  
It was from Sam. He was at the pound.  
Sam agreed to come home  
If certain promises were made;  
Now Sam is home having meat and potatoes  
And a tall glass of lemonade.



Chorus:

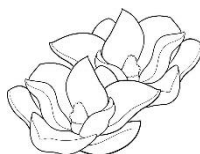
## I Cried Boo Hoo

By Tasha and Courtney Marietta Middle School Marietta  
Ohio/w/Fruteland Jackson

Good Morning Blues,  
Good Morning Blues,  
(Blues) How do you do?  
Late in the night and you were out of sight  
I just sat and cried Boo Hoo



When I woke up this morning  
You were still on my mind  
(I said) I woke up this morning  
You were still on my mind  
So I sat down and cried  
Boo Hoo Boo Hoo Boo Hoo



## Glossary

**12 Bar Blues** is a group of chords played in series based on the I, IV, and V chords of a key timed with four beats to the measure that equal 12 bars or musical phrases.

**The 1920s** - is called the Era of the Classic Female Blues singer.

**Acoustic guitar** - is a non-electric wooden guitar.

**Aspirations** - a strong desire to achieve something high or great.

**Backbeat** - is a beat created in 4/4 time and heard on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Count.

**Ballad** - is a song that tells a story using simple stanzas and having a recurrent refrain. Many traditional blues are sung as ballads.

**Bar** - is a musical phrase.

**Blue Notes** - Five notes contained in a blues scale. A minor interval. The flatted thirds and fifths in a blues scale.

**Blues music** -. It is a form of American Music born of West African traditions and inspired by the African-American experience in the US South in the 19th and early 20th century.

**Blues Foundation** - stated mission is to preserve blues heritage, celebrate and honor blues recording and performance.

**Blues Heaven Foundation** - is a foundation set up by legendary bluesman Willie Dixon to help blues artist and their heirs collect royalties.

**Boogie Woogie** - Up-tempo style blues played on piano mostly with the left hand, also called jump blues.

**Bottleneck style** - is a blues style requiring a metal or glass tubing worn over a finger.

**Charley Patton** - is called the Father of Delta Blues.

**Clarksdale** - is a city in Mississippi where the Delta Blues Museum is located and where many bluesmen were born.

**Contemporary** - Modern. Present-day

**Delta** - is a region located in Northwest Mississippi where a style of playing blues music originated.

**Dobro** - is the brand name of a resonator guitar invented in 1928. Dobro is the short form of the name *Dopyera Brothers*, who are the inventor

**Downtrodden** -To be oppressed or mistreated by people in power.

**Folktales** -traditional stories or legends passed down from one generation to the next.

**Fruteland Jackson** is a HistoryMaker

([www.thehistorymakers.com](http://www.thehistorymakers.com)). He is a musician, author, storyteller, and oral historian.

**Gospel** Music is a genre of Christian music rooted in the African-American spiritual. A term first used in print in the 1920s.

**Guitar** is a flat-bodied stringed instrument with a long-fretted neck, and usually, six strings are played with a pick or with the fingers. It is the instrument that replaced the banjo for blues musicians

**Harmonica** is a metal reed instrument used to play blues music by blowing and drawing, and bending air through instrument holes.

**Highway 61** is a famous state highway located in the Mississippi Delta.

**Jazz Music** is American music developed from ragtime and blues using syncopation, a rhythmic center, and solo and ensemble improvisation.

**Jump Blues** is an up-tempo blues that grew from the Boogie Woogie craze of the 1940s.

**Living Blues** is an American blues magazine.

**Ma Rainy** is able female blues singer called the Empress or the Mother of the Blues.

**Mamie Smith** is the first black female to record a blues song in 1920 called "Crazy Blues."

**Mississippi** is a U.S. Southern state where blues music was born.

**Piano** is a large musical instrument that you play by pressing black and white keys on a keyboard, called Is the "first" instrument of 'Boogie Woogie.

**Piedmont** is a region in the Southeastern US that includes Virginia and the Carolinas. This region is known for its lively fingerpicking style on the guitar.

**Poor** – a poverty-stricken individual; to have less money and materials than everyone.

**Rhythm** is a movement, action, or condition characterized by a series of notes or beats of different lengths and stresses.

**Sharecropper** is a tenant farmer who works to earn half of his crop and labor with the landowner.

**Slide** is a pipe tubing, pocketknife, bar, or neck from a bottle used to distort an instrument's sound by rubbing against the strings.

**Slow Blues** is blues played at the same tempo as a ballad

**Syncopation** – is a style that grew out of the blues tradition to shorten beats and rhythms within songs.

**Vicksburg** is a city located in the Mississippi Delta and Willie Dixon's birthplace.

**W.C. Handy** – William Christopher Handy, born November 16, 1873, is called The Father of the Blues.

**Willie Dixon** is the founder of the Blues Heaven Foundation and played the upright bass.

**Work songs** are songs performed by a group of laborers.



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## Discography

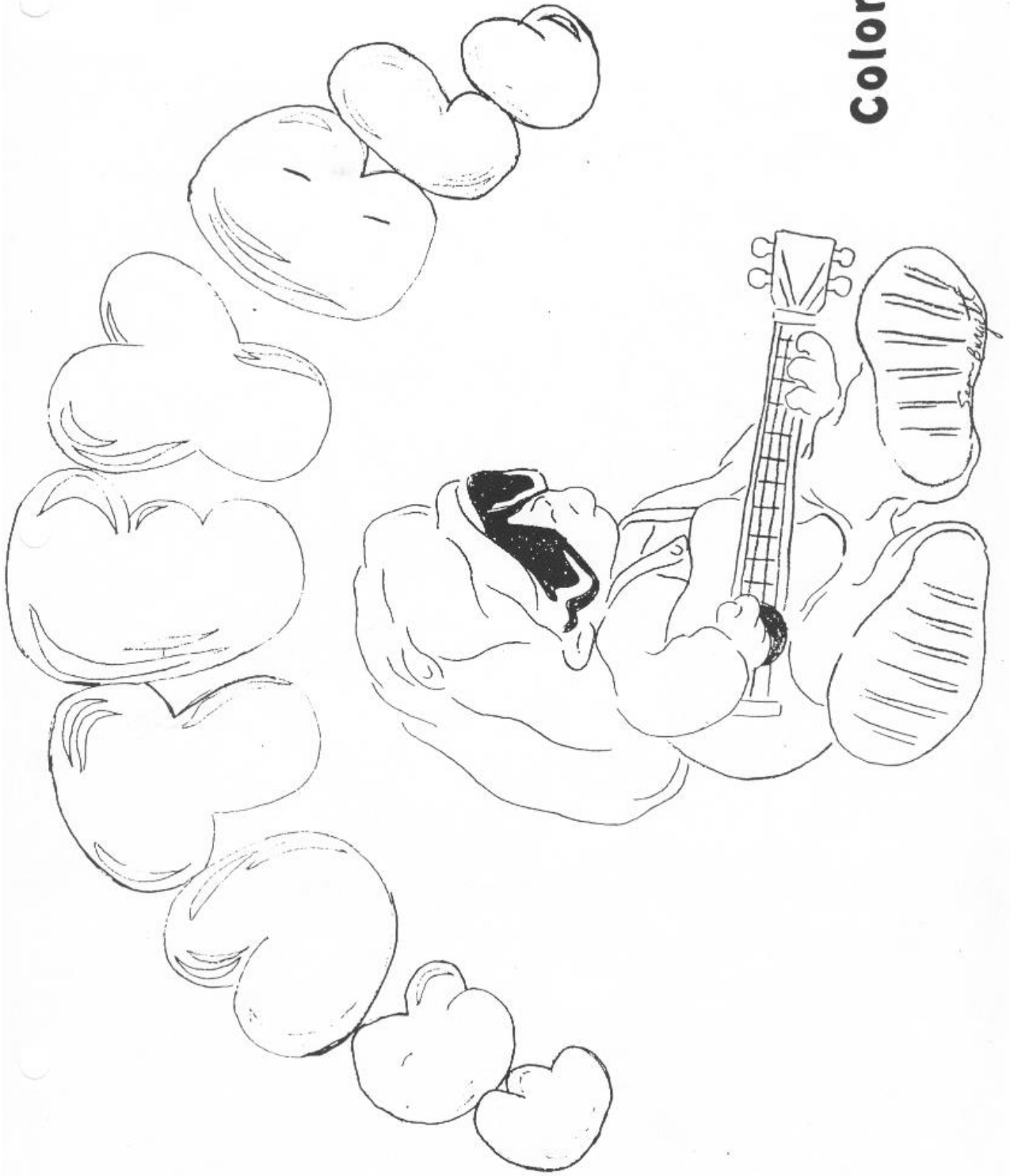
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2. *Angola's Prisoners Blues*. Arolia, 2011, a Folk Lyric Recording
3. *Big Bill Broonzey: Good Time Tonight*. Columbia, CK 462192).
4. *Blues 2.0*, Fruteland Jackson, Electro-Fi Records – #3380, 2004
5. *Blues Classics by Sonny Boy Williamson*. Blues Classics 3.
6. *Blues in the Mississippi Night*. Features Memphis Slim, Big Bill Broonzey, and Sonny Boy Williamson, as told and recorded by Alan Lomax. Notes by Alan Lomax. Salem, Mass.: Rykodisc, 1990 (RCD 90155).
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9. *I Claim Nothing but The Blues*, Fruteland Jackson, Electro-Fi Records – #3364, 1999
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11. *Living Chicago Blues, Volumes 1-4*. Alligator Records, ALCD 7701-7704.
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## Filmography

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2. *Bessie Smith*. Produced by Charles Levine, distributed by Filmmakers' Cooperative, Canyon Cinema Co-op, 1968 (13.5 min., 16 mm, B & W).
3. *The Blues According' to Lightnin' Hopkins*. Produced by Les Blank, distributed by Flower Films, 1969 (31 min., 16mm, color). Available on 1/2" video from CSSC.
4. *Chicago Blues: Muddy Waters*. Produced by Harley Cokliss, distributed by CSSC (50 min., 1/2" video, color).
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**Color Me**