



Year 8 Music: Blues

Key Information

Although the blues evolved in the southern states of the USA from the late 19th century, it has lots of musical influences from Africa.

African enslaved people brought their musical traditions with them when they were transported to work in the North American colonies. Early types of African American music included spirituals (religious songs using vocal harmony) and work songs.

They used call and response in which phrases from a lead singer were followed by the other singers.

The 12-Bar Blues in C Major

C / / / C+E+G	C / / / C+E+G	C / / / C+E+G	C / / / C+E+G
F / / / F+A+C	F / / / F+A+C	C / / / C+E+G	C / / / C+E+G
G / / / G+B+D	F / / / F+A+C	C / / / C+E+G	C / / / C+E+G



Keyword	Meaning
Chords I IV V	The three chords in the 12-bar Blues structure
Walking Bass	A bass line that "walks" up the notes of the chord
12-bar Blues	The structure of Blues music - chords I, IV, V
Improvisation	Making up a melody, using the blues scale.
Swing Rhythm	The first bit of the beat is longer than the second.
Syncopation	When music is played with emphasis on the off beat
Instruments	Saxophones, Double Bass, Piano, Harmonica

Stretch and Challenge

If you have a keyboard at home, try learning the chords in the 12-bar Blues structure. You could also learn the Blues scale – flatten the 3rd, 5th and 7th like this: C Eb F Gb A Bb C. Use this scale to improvise.

M	A	D	T	S	H	I	R	T
Melody	Articulation	Dynamics	Tempo	Structure	Harmony	Instruments	Rhythm	Texture
The main tune	How the music is played	The volume of the music	The speed of the music	The sections of the music and their order	The chords used	What instruments and the type of sound produced	The patterns of sounds with the beat	Layers of music – how many and what each does

Task

Listen to Blues:

Etta James - I'd Rather Go
Blind ([youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...))

B.B. King - The Thrill Is
Gone [Crossroads 2010]
([Official Live Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...))
([youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...))