

Mapping the Beat: A Geography through Music Curriculum

ArtsBridge America
Center for Learning through the Arts and Technology, UC Irvine
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The extended unit below was created by Dr. Timothy Keirn and the ArtsBridge America program at the California State University, Long Beach (2009).

Other on-line resources, videos and lesson plans compiled by the UC Irvine Center for Learning through the Arts and Technology are available at: <http://www.clat.uci.edu/>.

LESSON:

COUNTRY: AMERICA'S MUSIC (EARLY INFLUENCES AND INSTRUMENTS)

Included in this document are:

Part I: Lesson

Part II: On-line resources for use with lesson

Part III: Supporting Materials

Part IV: Classroom Handouts, Worksheets and Visuals

PART I: LESSON

Mapping the Beat Fifth Grade Lesson:

Country: America's Music (Early Influences and Instruments)

CONCEPT

Early influences on modern American country music. How the migration of instruments of the Scots-Irish immigrants to Appalachia combined with those of the Atlantic slave trade influenced regional music.

OBJECTIVE

To visually recognize and describe instruments commonly associated with country music (namely the fiddle, guitar, and banjo), to recognize audio samples of music played by each instrument, and describe from where each instrument originated.

STANDARDS ADDRESSED

National Geography Standards

Standard 4: The physical and human characteristics of places.

How: Students identify and compare music and instruments of Scotland, Ireland, and Africa with that of American Appalachia during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Standard 9: The characteristics, distribution and migration of human populations on earth's surface.
How: Students describe how Scots-Irish immigrants and African slaves influenced the development of Appalachian folk music.

California Content Standards for Music-5th grade

Standard 3.4: Describe the influences of various cultures and historical events on musical forms and styles.

How: Students learn how the fiddle, guitar, and banjo influenced American musical styles as a direct result of Scots-Irish immigration to America and the Atlantic Slave Trade.

California Content Standards for History – 5th Grade

Standard 5.4 Students understand the political, religious, social, and economic institutions that evolved in the colonial era.

Standard 5.41 Students understand the influence of location and physical setting on the founding of the original colonies.

TEACHER PREP

- Familiarize oneself with discussion information
- Copy overheads to transparency film
- Prepare listening samples of fiddle, guitar, and banjo
- Plan to include vocabulary list in other daily lessons and activities
- Locate a VHS or DVD recording of musicians playing these three instruments, or arrange for a guest performer who plays any or all of the above.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Lined paper for writing assignment

Pencils

Visual Aids or Overhead Transparencies

Diagram of Fiddle

Diagram of Banjo

Diagram of Guitar

Map of American Appalachia (circa 1800)

Wall map of the World

Video or DVD sample (see *Suggested Listening*)

CD musical samples (see *Suggested Listening*)

TV/VCR/DVD player

CD player

MUSIC VOCABULARY

If you are teaching the whole *Mapping the Beat* unit, you may want to keep a chart of vocabulary up in the classroom or have students write the words and definitions in a portfolio.

Banjo – A five-stringed instrument with a drum-like head (or body), no sound hole, fretted.

Fiddle – The fiddle is a violin played as a folk instrument. It is a four-stringed instrument made from wood, without frets.

Guitar – A six-stringed instrument with a fretted neck and a hollow wooden body.

String is the vibrating element which is the source of vibration in string instruments, such as the guitar, harp, piano, and members of the violin family. They are lengths of a flexible material kept under tension so that they may freely vibrate.

Bow – Modern bows are used to play string instruments of the violin family (the violin, viola, cello and double bass) are usually made of wood from and are strung with horsehair.

Fret – A fret is a raised portion on the neck of a stringed instrument that extends generally across the full width of the neck.

Old-time music – A form of North American folk music, with roots in the folk music of many countries, most notably: England, Scotland, Ireland, and the African continent. This musical form developed along with various North American folk dances, such as square dance. The genre also encompasses ballads and other types of folk songs. It is played on acoustic instruments, generally centering on a combination of fiddle and banjo.

Bluegrass music – Considered a form of American roots music with its own roots in the English, Irish and Scottish traditional music. Like jazz, bluegrass is played with each melody instrument switching off, playing improvised solos in turn while the others revert to backing; this is in contrast to old-time music, in which all instruments play the melody together or one instrument carried the lead throughout while the others provide accompaniment.

Country music – Also known as country and western music or country-western, is a blend of popular musical forms originally found in the Southern United States. It has roots in traditional folk music, Celtic music, blues, gospel music, and old-time music and evolved rapidly in the 1920s.

LESSON PLAN SEQUENCE

LESSON ONE

Initial Vocabulary for Lesson 1:

Migration

Frontier

Diffusion

Convergence

Synthesis

Diaspora

Background information for instructor: *Though most people consider Appalachia to be of the southeastern region of the United States, this 1500 mile stretch of mountains encompasses as many as eighteen states! From as far north as Maine to as deep south as Georgia, the Appalachian Mountains span into the Green Mountains of New Hampshire, the Catskills of New York, the Berkshires of Connecticut, the Blue Ridge of Virginia, and the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee. While the fiddle, with its Irish and Scottish foundation, does play a prominent role in American country music both historically and presently, in truth, Appalachian music is a blend of a number of influences, including the African-Arabian born banjo and the European guitar.*

- **Begin lesson by having students listen to a brief audio example that combines the use of all the instruments to be discussed.**

E.g. Music by Paddy Glackin and Robbie Hannan (Traditional Irish), Hank Williams (Country), and Bluegrass (Johnson Mountain Boys)

- **Ask the students to describe what they hear:** Can you identify what music you were listening to? Is it Irish? Folk music? Country music? Is country music uniquely American or did it come to America from another country (like so many other forms of music we know and listen to today)? Who might have invented this music? Can you identify any of the instruments you heard? Have you ever seen any of these instruments before? *Lead answers into discussion as follows on the three specific instruments being explored in this lesson.*

BANJO

- **Display overhead diagram of the banjo and discuss its construction** *point out specifically that it has 5 strings stretched over a drum head with no sound hole, it's held on the player's lap, etc.*
- **Discussion** -- Banjos belong to a family of instruments that are very old. The banjo is widely known to have originated in Arabia and brought to western Africa with the spread of Islam, though drums with strings stretched over them can be traced throughout the Far East, the Middle East and Africa. Like the banjo, these instruments of influence could be played, bowed or plucked like a harp depending on their development. The banjo, as we recognize it, was made by African slaves using materials and based on instruments that were indigenous to their parts of Africa. These early banjos were spread to the colonies of those countries engaged in the 19th century Atlantic slave trade. *Extracted from: <http://bluegrassbanjo.org/banhist.html>*
- **Using World Map, point out the traveling route of the banjo from Arabia to West Africa and over to North America in the 18th century. Have students trace this on the map.**
- **Ask review questions aloud: how many strings does the banjo have? What is the banjo made of? How is it held when played? Where does it come from? What was it made of?**

GUITAR

- **Display overhead diagram of guitar and discuss its construction** *point out specifically that it has six strings, is held on the lap when played, plucked or strummed (not bowed), has a sound hole in the center of the body, is made of wood, etc.*
- **Discussion** -- The guitar has six strings. It also had its origins in the Arab and Islamic world and was brought to Spain. Although its roots lie in Spain, a smaller bodied version of the original instrument was suitable for accompaniment of Irish and then American country music. Though introduced in the 1800's, the guitar did not really gain popularity in the U.S. until around 1910 when players realized that adding a chord structure to the traditional songs evened out irregularities and encouraged a measured structure to the songs backed up by an even/steady beat pattern! This made it much easier for singers to sing their melodies and instrumentalists began developing an ear for improvisational vs. set song structure that would influence later American music like jazz.
- **Using World Map, point out the traveling route of the guitar from Spain to Ireland over to the U.S. Have students trace this on their maps.**

FIDDLE

- **Display overhead diagram of the fiddle and discuss its construction** *point out specifically that it has 4 strings, is made entirely of wood, with two sound posts on either side of the bridge and strings. It is held on the player's shoulder, there is no difference between a violin and a fiddle – it is just what the violin is called by popular/country musicians.*
- **Discussion --** The fiddle was an instrument played and used by the Scots and indeed brought over to the U.S. by the Scots-Irish immigrants as early as the 1700's. With its four strings, a fiddle is exactly the same instrument as a violin. However, for playing fiddle music, the instrument is generally set up and played differently. A fiddle player will often rest the strings on a slightly flattened bridge thus making it easier to “double-stop” (to chord or bow upon two strings at once) and to change strings quickly. For better balance, the bow is typically gripped higher up and firmer than the classical bow-holding position. This also makes it easier to play fast tunes with more control. Fiddle players generally do not use vibrato (a sustained undulating/wavy sound), except on an occasional very slow tune. Early vocal songs tended to be accompanied by just fiddle alone. Being a small instrument, it was quite mobile and therefore often used by early bards and wandering musicians throughout small towns in Scotland, Ireland, and ultimately in Appalachia.
- **Using World Map, point out the traveling route of the fiddle from Ireland and Scotland to Colonial America. Have students trace this on the map.**
- **Ask review questions aloud: how many strings does the fiddle have? What is the fiddle made of? How is it held when played? Where does it come from? Etc.**

THE SCOTS IRISH

- **Discussion –** The Scots-Irish were the descendants of Scottish Presbyterian migrants to Ulster in Ireland in the seventeenth century. Facing economic dislocation and political prejudice from the Anglican-controlled colonial government in Dublin, approximately 200,000 migrated to Colonial America over the course of the eighteenth century. With most of the best arable land along the coast cultivated, most of these migrants settled along the frontier in the ‘up country’ of the American South or in Western Pennsylvania.
- **Discussion questions:**
Looking at the 18th century image of a farmhouse, the topographical map of North America and the map of settlement patterns in Colonial America, discuss the following questions.
 - Identify the following features on your map of North America
 - The Appalachians
 - The Piedmont
 - The Atlantic Coastal Plain
 - Examining the painting -- what were the advantages and disadvantages of living in the ‘up country’?
 - What were the advantages and disadvantages of living on the coastal plain
 - What were the push factors that caused the Scots-Irish to leave Ireland?
 - What were the pull factors that drew the Scots-Irish to the frontiers of settlement
- **Display the Convergence Map. Discuss the following questions?**
 - How is country music a form of cultural synthesis?
 - Which cultures contributed to the formation of country music?
 - Why do you think this happened in Appalachia?

- **Play Contemporary ‘Irish’ Music (e.g., The Pogues “If I Should Fall from the Grace of God”)**
How through the diaspora has contemporary Irish music been influenced by the experience of the Irish in America?
-

LESSON TWO

50 min Project/Activity

- Play a 10-minute segment of video or introduce guest artist to play an example of each instrument

Discussion Questions:

Recalling the similarities/differences and histories of the three instruments in question:

- How do the banjo, fiddle, and guitar sound similar?
- In what ways do they sound different?
- Why was the fiddle such a popular instrument for traveling musicians?
- Why might the African slaves have chosen drums to build the banjos from instead of wood?

- Divide classroom of students into three small groups. Assign each group one of the three instruments and [using Activity Sheet] have them work on the project of creating a written list identifying the key characteristics of their instrument and describing its journey to the United States.
- Bring class back together and have each group share what they outlined from their discussions.

5-10 Minute Wrap Up

- Play three to five random audio samples and have students identify the instrument by ear
- Review key elements of each instrument:
 - location of origin
 - time period introduced to the U.S.
 - make up of instrument’s body
 - number of strings on each

ASSESSMENT

Students should be able to identify and describe three key instruments of significance to American country music: the fiddle, banjo, and guitar. Students should be able to discuss the origin of each instrument and timetable for introduction of that instrument into the U.S. and Appalachia.

SUGGESTED LISTENING

Listening Examples:

- **31 Banjo Favorites, Vol. 1**, Raymond Fairchild
July 3, 1997, Rural Rhythm ASIN: B000002NVA
- **American Fiddle Tunes**, Various Artists
January 1, 2000, Rounder Select ASIN: B00004TDOL
- **Appalachian Stomp: Bluegrass Classics**, Various Artists
February 28, 1995, Rhino / Wea ASIN: B0000033GO
- **Bluegrass Fiddle Album**, Aubrey Haynie
March 11, 2003, Sugarhill [Country] ASIN: B00008BRAT
- **Brave Boys: New England Traditions in Folk Music**
January 1, 1995, New World Records ASIN: B0000030FD
- **Celtic Dances: Jigs & Reels from Ireland**, Various Artists
August 10, 1998, Easydisc ASIN: B000003ODD
- **Classic Irish Dance Music**, Various Artists
February 1, 2000, Atlantic / Wea ASIN: B000046S04
- **Classic Old-Time Music**, Various Artists
April 22, 2003, Smithsonian Folkways ASIN: B00008OM0A
- **The Essential Willie Nelson – Willie Nelson**
April 1, 2003, Sony Records ASIN: B00008BXX3
- **Irish Traditional Fiddle Music (Reels, Jigs & Polkas)**, Various Artists
July 18, 1994, Legacy ASIN: B000002NQ8
- **Old-Time Mountain Guitar**
May 19, 1998, County Records ASIN: B00000609Y
- **Wide Open Spaces – Dixie Chicks**
January 27, 1998, Sony Records ASIN: B000002BZ0

Video Examples:

- **Legends of Old Time Music** [Vestapol ASIN: 6303476120]
- **Southern Old-Time Fiddle Tour** [Homespun Tapes ASIN: B0002KWSK8]
- **Old-Time Banjo Clawhammer Style** [Homespun ASIN: B000BJS4OE]

Further Exploration of topics presented above:

- **Out of Ireland - Irish Emigration to America** [Koch Vision Entertainment]
- **The Celts - Rich Traditions & Ancient Myths** [BBC Video ASIN: B0000WN10E]

WEB SOURCES/REFERENCES

- Banjo diagram: <http://howandtao.com/books/banjo-tao/i/image003.gif>
- Fiddle diagram: <http://www.johnson-inst.com/diagram2.gif>

- Guitar diagram: http://emedia.leeward.hawaii.edu/Frary/LCC%20Images/guitar_with_labels.gif
- Map of America: http://www.nypl.org/research/midatlantic/refs/434889s_ref.html
- Banjo Reference & Timeline: <http://bluegrassbanjo.org/banhist.html>

MP3/Video resources online for classroom use

- Video Demonstration of clawhammer style of banjo playing:
<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=6122473235572709761&q=banjo+john&pr=goog-sl/>
- Old Time banjo music examples:
<http://www.banjofrailer.com/>

PART II: ON-LINE RESOURCES FOR USE WITH LESSON

SUGGESTED LISTENING

For samples of traditional Celtic tunes visit:

http://worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/worldmusic/view/page.basic/genre/content.genre/celtic_703

For samples of modern African music visit:

http://worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/worldmusic/view/page.basic/genre/content.genre/african_pop

For samples of "old time" country music visit:

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/S?ammem/lomaxbib:@field\(DOCID\(@range\(11+14\)\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/S?ammem/lomaxbib:@field(DOCID(@range(11+14))))

Listening Examples:

- **31 Banjo Favorites, Vol. 1**, Raymond Fairchild
July 3, 1997, Rural Rhythm ASIN: B000002NVA
<http://itunes.apple.com/us/album/31-banjo-favorites/id280603375>
- **American Fiddle Tunes**, Various Artists
January 1, 2000, Rounder Select ASIN: B00004TDOL
<http://music.msn.com/music/album/various-artists/american-fiddle-tunes/>
- **Appalachian Stomp: Bluegrass Classics**, Various Artists
February 28, 1995, Rhino / Wea ASIN: B0000033GO
<http://www.amazon.com/Appalachian-Stomp-Bluegrass-Various-Artists/dp/B0000033GO>
- **Bluegrass Fiddle Album**, Aubrey Haynie
March 11, 2003, Sugarhill [Country] ASIN: B00008BRAT
<http://itunes.apple.com/us/album/the-bluegrass-fiddle-album/id289208805>
- **Brave Boys: New England Traditions in Folk Music**
January 1, 1995, New World Records ASIN: B0000030FD
<http://itunes.apple.com/us/album/brave-boys-new-england-traditions/id290461596>
- **Celtic Dances: Jigs & Reels from Ireland**, Various Artists
August 10, 1998, Easydisc ASIN: B000003ODD
<http://www.amazon.com/Celtic-Dances-Jigs-Reels-Ireland/dp/B000003ODD>
- **Classic Irish Dance Music**, Various Artists
February 1, 2000, Atlantic / Wea ASIN: B000046S04
<http://www.thesession.org/recordings/display/2067>
<http://www.amazon.com/Come-Dance-Me-Ireland-Classic/dp/B000046S04>
- **Classic Old-Time Music**, Various Artists
April 22, 2003, Smithsonian Folkways ASIN: B00008OM0A
<http://itunes.apple.com/us/album/classic-old-time-music/id261162323>
<http://www.amazon.com/Classic-Old-Time-Music-Various-Artists/dp/B00008OM0A>

- **The Essential Willie Nelson – Willie Nelson**
April 1, 2003, Sony Records ASIN: B00008BXX3
<http://itunes.apple.com/us/album/the-essential-willie-nelson/id193890268>
<http://www.amazon.com/Essential-Willie-Nelson/dp/B00008BXX3>
- **Irish Traditional Fiddle Music (Reels, Jigs & Polkas)**, Various Artists
July 18, 1994, Legacy ASIN: B000002NQ8
<http://www.me.psu.edu/lamancusa/tunes.htm>
<http://www.amazon.com/Irish-Traditional-Fiddle-Music-Demand/dp/B000002NQ8>
- **Old-Time Mountain Guitar**
May 19, 1998, County Records ASIN: B00000609Y
<http://www.emusic.com/album/Various-Artists-County-Records-Old-Time-Mountain-Guitar-MP3-Download/10988126.html>
<http://www.amazon.com/Old-Time-Mountain-Guitar-Various-Artists/dp/B00000609Y>
- **Wide Open Spaces – Dixie Chicks**
January 27, 1998, Sony Records ASIN: B000002BZO
<http://itunes.apple.com/us/album/wide-open-spaces/id155681921>

MP3/Video resources online for classroom use

- **Video Demonstration of clawhammer style of banjo playing:**
<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=6122473235572709761&q=banjo+john&pr=goog-sl/>
- **Old Time banjo music examples:**
<http://www.banjofrailer.com/>

Video Examples:

- **Legends of Old Time Music** [Vestapol ASIN: 6303476120]
<http://guitarvideos.com/dvd/13026dvd.htm>
- **Southern Old-Time Fiddle Tour** [Homespun Tapes ASIN: B0002KWSK8]
<http://www.homespuntales.com/shop/product.aspx?ID=1035>
- **Old-Time Banjo Clawhammer Style** [Homespun ASIN: B000BJS4OE]
<http://www.guitargallerymusic.com/HL00641914/dvd/frank-lee/old-time-banjo-clawhammer-style.html>

Further Exploration of topics presented above:

- **Out of Ireland - Irish Emigration to America** [Koch Vision Entertainment]
<http://www.ihffilm.com/dvd138.html>
- **The Celts - Rich Traditions & Ancient Myths** [BBC Video ASIN: B0000WN10E]
<http://www.shoppbs.org/product/index.jsp?productId=1450811>

PART III: SUPPORTING MATERIALS

ON-LINE RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

Additional *Mapping The Beat* Lessons, Activities and Resources

- Powerpoint Presentation for Educators
Country: America's Music (Early Influences and Instruments)
<http://www.clat.uci.edu/documents/CountryMusic.ppt>

Web Sources/References

- Banjo diagram: <http://howandtao.com/books/banjo-tao/i/image003.gif>
- Fiddle diagram: <http://www.johnson-inst.com/diagram2.gif>
- Guitar diagram: http://emedia.leeward.hawaii.edu/Frary/LCC%20Images/guitar_with_labels.gif
- Map of America: http://www.nypl.org/research/midatlantic/refs/434889s_ref.html
- Banjo Reference & Timeline: <http://bluegrassbanjo.org/banhist.html>

PART IV: CLASSROOM HANDOUTS, WORKSHEETS & VISUALS

Select resources are attached to this lesson plan. Please refer to the resources provided in Part II and III for additional materials.

All *Mapping the Beat* materials available on-line at www.clat.uci.edu.

- Diagram of the Banjo
- Diagram of the Fiddle
- Diagram of the Guitar
- Country: America's Music - Early Influences and Instruments
 - Activity Sheet
 - Answer Sheet

World Map (Blank)

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/resources/ngo/education/xpeditions/atlas/index.html?Parent=world&Mode=d&SubMode=>

World Map (Detailed)

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/resources/ngo/education/xpeditions/atlas/index.html?Parent=world&Mode=b&SubMode=w>

Map of United States of America (Detailed)

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/resources/ngo/education/xpeditions/atlas/index.html?Parent=usofam&Rootmap=&Mode=d&SubMode=w>

Map of United States of America (Blank)

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/resources/ngo/education/xpeditions/atlas/index.html?Parent=usofam&Rootmap=&Mode=b&SubMode=w>

Map of American Appalachia (circa 1800)

http://www.nypl.org/research/midatlantic/refs/434889s_ref.html

Diagram of the Banjo

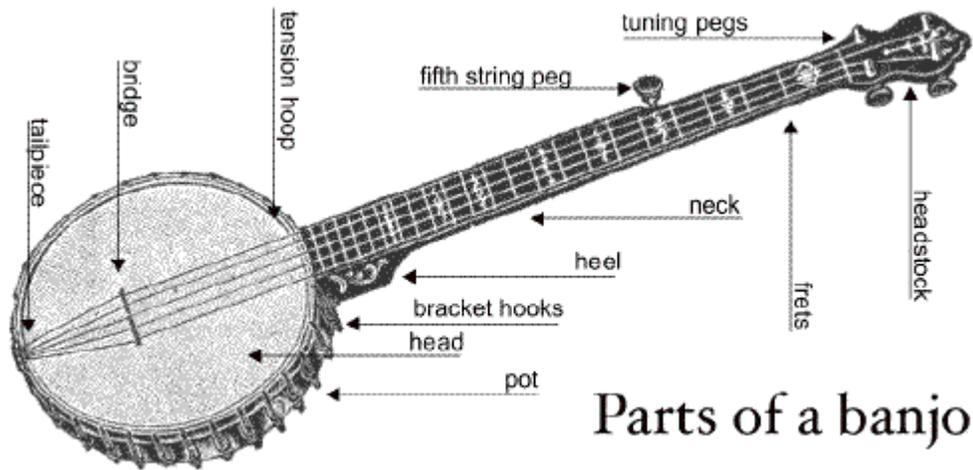


Diagram of the Fiddle

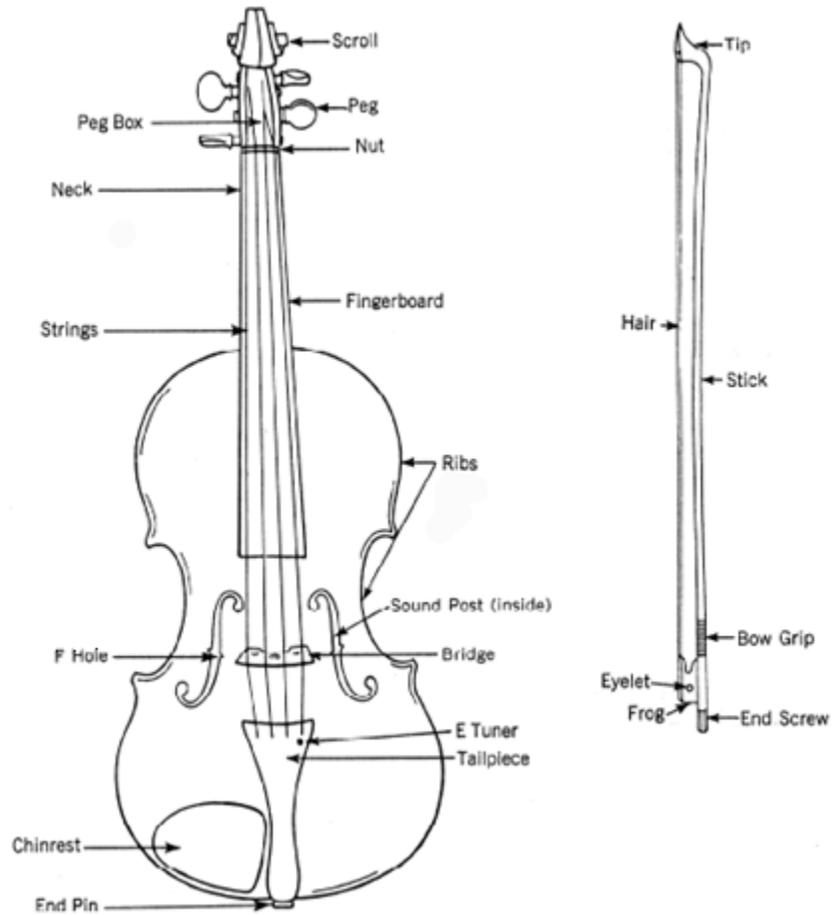
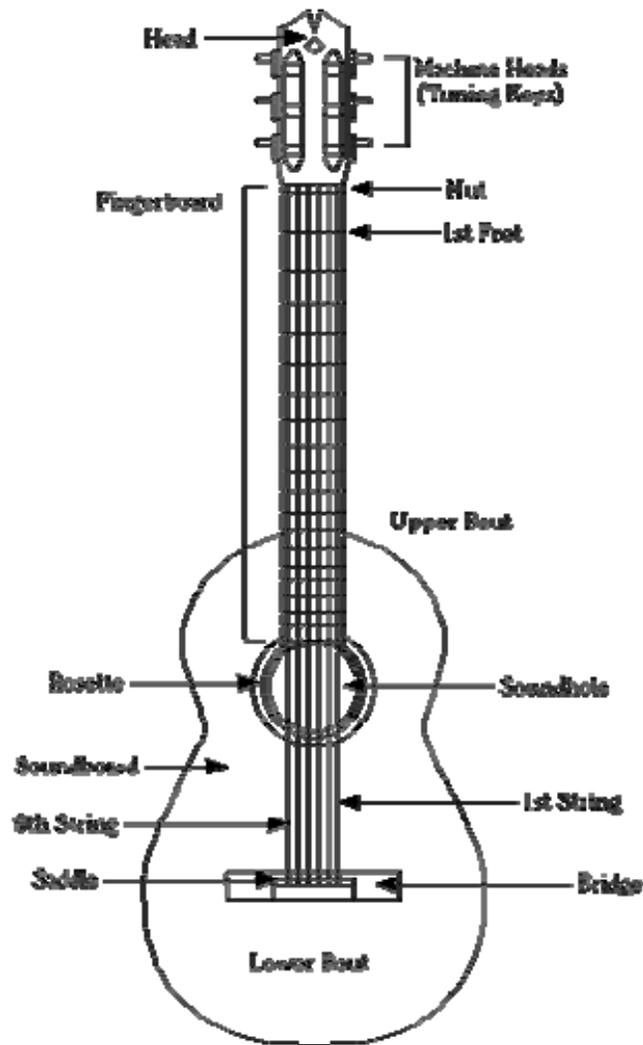


Diagram of the Guitar



Country: America's Music
Early Influences and Instruments
Activity Sheet

Your Names _____

Instrument: _____

List the important attributes of the instrument:

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

Draw the instrument and label the parts by using the numbers above.

Where did the instrument originate? What is the story behind its arrival in the U.S.? _____

Country: America's Music
Early Influences and Instruments
ANSWER SHEET

Instrument: Fiddle

List the important attributes of the instrument:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. wooden body | 6. two sound posts |
| 2. four strings | 7. bridge |
| 3. neck | 8. plucked or played with a bow |
| 4. no frets | 9. rested on shoulder when played |
| 5. chin rest | 10. peg, nut, fingerboard, etc. |

Instrument: Banjo

List the important attributes of the instrument:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. drum head | 6. bridge |
| 2. five strings | 7. plucked or strummed |
| 3. neck | 8. held sideways across the abdomen |
| 4. fretted | 9. rested on lap when played |
| 5. no sound hole | 10. tuning pegs, headstock, etc. |

Instrument: Guitar

List the important attributes of the instrument:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. wooden body | 6. fingerboard |
| 2. six strings | 7. plucked or strummed |
| 3. fretted | 8. held sideways across the abdomen |
| 4. sound hole | 9. rested on lap when played |
| 5. bridge | 10. tuning keys, head, nut, etc. |