

Black Roots of American Music

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITY

Chapter 24, Section 3

Directions: Read the information and then answer the questions.

The black roots of American music probably developed in Senegal and along the Ivory Coast. The unique sound survived in the dark holds of slave ships crossing to the New World and was preserved in the tobacco and cotton fields of the American South. Enriched by the evangelical spirit of African Methodism and the Missionary Baptist Church, it passed from slavery to freedom and was reshaped in the camp meetings of traveling preachers and in the acts of black minstrels.

As the twentieth century dawned, the sound emerged from the recesses of black culture. In 1899 Scott Joplin, a black songwriter, published "The Maple Leaf Rag." The beat featured a bouncing, uneven "ragtime" rhythm that revolutionized popular music.

Then black composer W. C. Handy published "St. Louis Blues" in 1914. The slightly off-key "weeping" of the "blues" singer joined the roll of the piano and the beat of the drum that characterized ragtime music.

In 1917 the Original Dixieland Jazz Band began performing in New Orleans. The syncopated rhythm of jazz was faster and "hotter" than that of ragtime, and it quickly captured the nation's fancy. King Oliver brought the sound to Lincoln Gardens in Chicago, and so started the Dixieland craze in the North.

Soon jazz spread to New York, San Francisco, and the rest of the country. When George Gershwin, a white composer, wrote *Rhapsody in Blue* for Paul Whiteman's orchestra—also white—and the piece was performed at Aeolian Hall in New York City in 1924, jazz became a favorite of both blacks and whites. Americans everywhere danced the Charleston, the black bottom, and the shimmy, all of which originated in black nightclubs and in black musicals of the 1920's.

By the late 1920's, the era of swing emerged, as the big bands of Count Basie, Duke Ellington, and Benny Goodman gained great popularity. In the 1940's and 1950's, bop, progressive jazz, and hard bop preceded the marriage of rock music and jazz in the 1960's. Today jazz—with its roots deep in black history—remains a favorite with Americans and the rest of the world.

Interpreting Information

1. List some sources of black American music.

2. Which popular dances of the 1920's originated in black nightclubs and musicals?

3. What stages of jazz preceded the bringing together of jazz and rock music in the 1960's?

Providing Examples

4. Explain the role each piece played in the evolution of American popular music:

"Maple Leaf Rag" _____

"St. Louis Blues" _____

Rhapsody in Blue _____

5. Match each of the following:

_____ Scott Joplin	a. led Dixieland invasion of the North
_____ W. C. Handy	b. composed "St. Louis Blues"
_____ King Oliver	c. conducted jazz performance at the Aeolian Hall
_____ George Gershwin	d. composed "Maple Leaf Rag"
_____ Paul Whiteman	e. composed <i>Rhapsody in Blue</i>

Comparing and Contrasting

6. Briefly explain the basic differences between ragtime, blues, and jazz.

Listing Consequences

7. Explain how music with roots in Africa became part of the mainstream of American culture.
