



# NASHVILLE SYMPHONY

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONCERTS

HOW AMERICA FOUND ITS  
SOUND  
BLUEGRASS

# HOW AMERICA FOUND ITS SOUND

## BLUEGRASS

Grades 5 - 8

### STANDARDS

5.GM.P2.A, 5.GM.Cr2.A, 5.GM.R1.B, 6.GM.R1.A, 6.GM.R1.C, 6.GM.Cn1.A, 7.GM.Cn1.A, 7.GM.Cn2.A, 7.GM.R2.A, 8.GM.P2.A, 8.GM.R3.A, 8.GM.Cn1.A

### OBJECTIVES

**Students will identify** the instruments commonly used in bluegrass music.

**Students will compare** the sounds and performance styles of the violin and the fiddle.

**Students will make connections** between the traditions of bluegrass music and the ways music brings together their own families, communities, and cultures.

### TIME NEEDED

30 – 40 minutes

### MATERIALS

- Video: [The Burnett Sisters Band – Black Mountain Rag](#)
- Video: [Earl Scruggs And Friends – Foggy Mountain Breakdown \(2001\)](#)
- Video: [What does a viola sound like? \(Ode to Joy\)](#)
- Post-it Notes (Class-set)
- Pencils

### GENRE OVERVIEW

**Bluegrass** music began in the 1940s, it is known as a tradition-based string band. It was influenced by the musical traditions of Scottish, Irish, and English settlers, along with African American blues and gospel. Bluegrass is known for storytelling through its fast tempos, close vocal harmonies, and acoustic instruments like the banjo, fiddle, mandolin, guitar, and upright bass. Today, bluegrass continues to influence country, folk, and even modern pop and orchestral music. Its energetic sound and rich storytelling help to celebrate family, community, and the traditions that helped shape America's musical identity.

Library of Congress, *Bluegrass Music*.

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/dolly-parton-and-the-roots-of-country-music/articles-and-essays/bluegrass-music/>

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### PROCEDURES:

- 1. Say:** “Can you identify the names of the instruments used in the video example?”
  - Video: [The Burnett Sisters Band - Black Mountain Rag](#)
- 2. Discuss:** Think → Pair → Share with a partner the instruments you observed.
- 3. Say:** “Did anyone notice a violin? Did anyone notice a fiddle? What’s the difference?”
  - Allow time for students to ponder and share among each other.
- 4. Say:** Students make a mental note of what you notice or wonder.
  - Violin Example: [What does a violin sound like? \(Ode to Joy\)](#)
  - Fiddle Example: [Earl Scruggs And Friends - Foggy Mountain Breakdown \(2001\)](#)
- 5. Say:** The **violin** and **fiddle** are the **same instrument**. The difference is **how they are played**. A **fiddle** is commonly heard in bluegrass music and is often learned by listening and playing by ear. A **violin** is commonly used in orchestral music and is typically learned by reading written music (musical notation). Both instruments have the same strings, shape, and sound-producing method; the style of music determines whether it is called a violin or a fiddle.
  - Read the general overview of Bluegrass from the description above.
- 6. Say:** Think about where your family and community gather. What song or type of music would you hear there?
- 7. Activity:** Have students write their response on a Post-it Note and place it on the board or door as they leave.

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