



NASHVILLE SYMPHONY

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONCERTS

HOW AMERICA FOUND ITS
SOUND
COUNTRY

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COUNTRY

Grades 5 - 8

STANDARDS

5.GM.P1.A, 5.GM.P1.B, 5.GM.P1.C, 6.GM.P1.C, 6.GM.R1.B, 6.GM.R1.C, 7.GM.P1.A, 7.GM.P1.C, 7.GM.P2.A, 8.GM.P1.A, 8.GM.P1.D, 8.GM.R1.B

OBJECTIVES

Students will identify characteristics of traditional and contemporary country music.

Students will compare country music through its different stages.

Students will analyze how musical elements such as instrumentation, lyrics, and style have changed while preserving the traditions of country music.

TIME NEEDED

30 - 40 minutes

MATERIALS

- Video: [Life is a Highway - Rascal Flatts](#)
- Video: [I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry - Hank Williams](#)
- Video: [American Honey - Lady Antebellum](#)
- Video: [Country Music Instruments with Steven](#)

GENRE OVERVIEW

Country music grew from the musical traditions of the Appalachian region, blending folk, bluegrass, gospel, blues, and the songs of immigrant communities. Known for its storytelling, heartfelt lyrics, and instruments like the guitar, fiddle, banjo, and mandolin, country music reflects everyday life, family, faith, and community. Today, country music continues to evolve by blending with genres such as pop, rock, hip-hop, and R&B, creating new sounds while honoring its roots. Country music has also influenced American orchestral music, with composers and arrangers incorporating its melodies, rhythms, and folk-inspired harmonies into concert works. These connections show how country music continues to shape America's rich and diverse musical landscape.

Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, *History of Country Music*.

<https://www.countrymusichalloffame.org/education/>

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PROCEDURES:

1. Say: As you listen to this opening song, what clues tell you this is country music?

- Video: [American Honey - Lady Antebellum](#)

2. Say: Country music grew from the musical traditions of the Appalachian region, blending folk, bluegrass, gospel, blues, and the songs of immigrant communities. In the 1920's, the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville started a widely popular radio station that brought country music to the spotlight. The genre slowly evolved from traditional fiddle music to the popular hits we know today.

3. Say: Let's listen to an example of instruments that commonly show up in country music.

- Video: [Country Music Instruments with Steven](#)

4. Activity: Listen to an 'older' country song, then a 'new' country song.

- Video: [I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry - Hank Williams](#)
- Video: [Life is a Highway - Rascal Flatts](#)

Compare and contrast the different musical elements of each song using a Venn Diagram.

- Use Think → Pair → Share with students' Venn Diagrams.

5. Discuss: Discuss if you heard how the country music genre evolved from these two song examples.

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