Feelin’ blue — analysing

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| Year 9 | The Arts — Music |
| Students analyse the essential musical elements of a blues song and use this information to make informed opinions about a blues performance. |
| **Time allocation** | Approximately 2 hours  |
| Context for assessmentBlues is a vocal and instrumental form of music that is based on the 12-bar blues chord progression and the blues scale. It emerged in African-American communities of the United States from spirituals, work songs, field hollers, shouts and chants and rhymed simple narrative ballads. The use of blues notes and prominence of call and response patterns in the music and lyrics are indicative of African influence. The blues influenced later American and Western popular music, as it became the roots of jazz, bluegrass, rhythm and blues, rock and roll, heavy metal, hip hop and other popular music forms. |

******This assessment gathers evidence of learning for the following **Essential Learnings**:

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| The Arts Essential Learnings by the end of Year 9 |
| Ways of workingStudents are able to:* make decisions about arts elements, languages and cultural protocols in relation to specific style, function, audience and purpose of arts works
* respond by deconstructing arts works in relation to social, cultural, historical, spiritual, political, technological and economic contexts, using arts elements and languages
* reflect on learning, apply new understandings and justify future applications.
 | Knowledge and understanding***Music*****Music involves singing, playing instruments, listening, moving, improvising and composing by manipulating the music elements to express ideas, considering specific audiences and specific purposes, through sound.*** Duration, beat, time values and metre are used to create and vary rhythm.
* Pitch, tonalities, scales and intervals are used to create and vary the horizontal arrangement of sound.
* Tonalities and harmonies are used to organise music in different vertical arrangements.
* Contemporary, traditional and genre-specific musical forms are used to structure music.
* Interaction between the linear and the vertical arrangement of music is used to create the texture or density of sound.
* Relative softness and loudness of sounds, and digital and electronic devices, are used to change dynamic levels and expression of music.
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| Assessable elements* Knowledge and understanding
* Responding
* Reflecting
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| Source: Queensland Studies Authority 2007, The Arts Essential Learnings by the end of Year 9, QSA, Brisbane. |

Listed here are suggested **learning experiences** for students before attempting this assessment.

* Explore and listen to a variety of blues songs.
* Place blues songs in a social and historical context.
* Further develop a working knowledge of major scales and keys.
* Continue to develop a thorough knowledge and understanding of the primary chords of I, IV and V and practise writing and identifying them both aurally and visually.
* Learn about and practise using chords in “piano style”.
* Practise playing and performing blues compositions.
* Learn about the blues genre.
* Analyse the elements that combine to create a blues song (e.g. syncopation, blues scale, blues progression, phrasing and form).
* Learn to aurally and visually recognise the elements that combine to create a blues song (e.g. syncopation, blues scale, blues progression, phrasing and form).
* Practise analysing blues songs.
* Develop aural awareness of hearing and understanding the 12-bar blues progression.
* Practise vocal and instrumental improvisation using the blues scale.
* Practise using written music notation.
* Learn about traditional score layout and practise using it.
* Learn about and practise text setting.
* Learn about and practise writing and performing syncopated rhythms.
* Learn about and practise using genre specific language.

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| Icon_Resource | Teacher resources |

Background information about Bessie Smith and many recordings of Bessie’s songs which typify the blues genre can be found at: <www.redhotjazz.com/bessie.html>.

Background information about the blues genre and useful worksheets can be found at: <www.musicatschool.co.uk/year\_9/blues\_worksheets.htm>.

An excellent resource of the blues genre, including a “Blues classroom” with resources for teachers: <www.pbs.org/theblues/classroom.html>.

*Jazz*, a film by Ken Burns could be useful in showing students a blues performance. Available on DVD from the ABC shop at: <www.abcshop.com.au>.

## Preparing

Consider these points before implementing the assessment.

* Alternate blues songs could easily be substituted for Backwater Blues as nearly all blues songs use the same key musical elements. The song you use will be depend upon your resources.
* Feelin’ blue — composing and Feelin’ blue — performing are useful extensions of this assessment and can be located on the Assessment Bank website.

## Sample implementation plan

This table shows one way that this assessment can be implemented. It is a guide only — you may choose to use all, part, or none of the table. You may customise the table to suit your students and their school environment.

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| **Suggested time** | **Student activity** | **Teacher role** |
| **Section 1. What makes a blues song “blue”?** |
| 1 hour | Students listen to the chosen blues song and answer the guided analysis questions in the *Student booklet.* | Play the blues recording and guide students through the analysis questions. The song will need to be played at least five times. |
| **Section 2. Your opinion** |
| 30 minutes | Students consider the key musical elements of a blues song and write a response that reflects on the success of the blues performance. | Play the blues recording again and encourage students to justify their opinions using their knowledge and understanding of the blues genre.Remind student to use musical terminology. See appendix A for a Glossary of music terms. |
| 15–30 minutes | Students discuss their individual findings as a class.  | Facilitate discussion and encourage students to verbalise and justify their opinions about the music they have analysed. |

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| Icon_Resource | Resources for the assessment |

Appendix A: Glossary of music terms

A recording of Backwater Blues can be found at: <www.redhotjazz.com/bessie.html>.

During the learning process, you and your students should have developed a shared understanding of the curriculum expectations identified as part of the planning process.

After students have completed the assessment, identify, gather and interpret the information provided in student responses. Use only the evidence in student responses to make your judgment about the quality of the student learning. Refer to the following documents to assist you in making standards-referenced judgments:

* *Guide to making judgments*
* *Indicative A response*
* *Sample responses* (where available).

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| Icon_ForFurtherHelp | For further information, refer to the resource *Using a Guide to making judgments*, available in the Resources section of the Assessment Bank website. |

Evaluate the information gathered from the assessment to inform teaching and learning strategies.

Involve students in the feedback process. Give students opportunities to ask follow-up questions and share their learning observations or experiences.

Focus feedback on the student’s personal progress. Emphasise continuous progress relative to their previous achievement and to the learning expectations — avoid comparing a student with their classmates.

### Giving feedback about this assessment

In relationship to this assessment consider the following feedback options:

* students discuss their responses and give each other feedback
* individual written feedback from the teacher.

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| Icon_ForFurtherHelp | For further information, refer to the resource *Using feedback*, available in the Resources section of the Assessment Bank website. |

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| Glossary of music termsMusic, like any subject, has its own terminology. The following are key terms that need to be understood to complete this assessment.

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| **Accompaniment** | Vocal or instrumental parts that accompany a melody. |  |
| **Articulation** | The manner in which notes are performed, such as staccato (short) or legato (smoothly).  |
| **Beat** | Unit of measure of rhythmic time. A steady pulse. |
| **Blues scale** | The arrangement of notes in the following order — 1; b3; 4; b5; 5; b7; 1 — in reference to equivalent major scale. |
| **Balance** | When playing in an ensemble, instruments listen to each other to ensure that there is a good balance. That is, all parts can be heard and the melody is clear. |
| **Chord** | Three or more tones sounded simultaneously.  |
| **Clef (bass or treble)** | A symbol written at the beginning of a musical staff indicating which notes are represented by which lines and spaces.  |
| **Composition** | Creation of original music by organising sound. Usually written for others to perform.  |
| **Diatonic scale** | The notes found within a major or minor scale. |
| **Dynamics** | Varying degrees of volume in the performance of music.  |

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|  | **Dynamic markings** | The symbols indicating the varying degrees of volume — *pp* pianissimo, very soft; *p* piano, soft; *mp* mezzo piano, medium soft; *mf* mezzo forte, medium loud; *f* forte, loud; and *ff* fortissimo, very loud.  |
| **Elements of music** | Melody, harmony, rhythm and form, and the expressive elements of dynamics, tempo, and timbre (tone colour).  |
| **Embellishments** | Notes added to ornament a melody or rhythmic pattern. |
| **Form** | The organisation and structure of a composition and the interrelationships of musical events within the overall structure. |
| **Genre** | Type or kind of musical work (e.g. opera, jazz, mariachi). |
| **Harmonic progression** | A succession of individual chords or harmonies that form larger units of phrases, sections or compositions.  |
| **Harmony** | The simultaneous sounding of two or more tones.  |
| **Instrumental filler** | An improvised melodic and rhythmic pattern. In blues music, an instrumental filler follows as a response to each phrase that the singer sings. |
| **Improvisation** | Spontaneous creation of music.  |

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|  | **Interval** | The distance in pitch between two tones.  |
| **Lyrics** | The words of a song. |
| **Major key** | Tonally, a key based on a major scale; a scale that contains the following step pattern: whole, whole, half, whole, whole, whole, half; or uses the solfa tones of *do*, *re*, *mi*, *fa*, *so*, *la*, *ti*, *do*.  |
| **Melody** | An organised sequence of single notes.  |
| **Metre** | The grouping of beats by which a piece of music is measured. |
| **Notation** | Written music indicating pitch and rhythm for performance.  |
| **Ostinato** | A rhythmic or melodic accompaniment figure repeated continuously. |
| **Phrase** | A musical idea comparable to a sentence or a clause in language.  |
| **Pitch** | The location of a note related to its highness or lowness. |
| **Rhythm** | The combinations of long and short, even or uneven sounds that convey a sense of movement in time.  |
| **Scale** | The arrangement of notes in a specific order of whole and half steps.  |

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| **Score** | The organised notation of all of the instrumental and/or vocal parts of a composition.  |  |
| **Sliding** | A technique used in the blues genre that involves sliding between two notes. |
| **Staff (staves)** | The horizontal lines on and between which notes are written.  |
| **Syncopation** | The placement of rhythmic accents on weak beats or weak portions of beats.  |
| **Tempo** | The pace at which music moves according to the speed of the underlying beat.  |
| **Texture** | The character of the different layers of horizontal and vertical sounds.  |
| **Timbre** | Tone colour or quality of sound heard.  |
| **Tonality (key)** | The tonal centre of a composition.  |
| **Triad** | A three-note chord consisting of root, third and fifth.  |
| **12-bar blues** | A chord pattern often used in blues music based on the I, IV and V chords and the blues scale in specific order within 12 bars.  |

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 Adapted from glossary available at <www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/muglossary.asp>.