

The 1927 Bristol Sessions Story

LESSON PLAN GRADES 4,5



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TITLE OF LESSON: The 1927 Bristol Sessions Story

GRADE LEVEL(S): 4, 5

STANDARDS:

TN: SSP.01, .02, .05, .06; 5.14; 5.51

VA: VS.1; VS.9, .10

FOCUS: Primarily Social Studies; connection to Local History

BRIEF SUMMARY:

This lesson provides students with an overview of the events surrounding the 1927 Bristol Sessions recordings, including the artists and personalities involved, the technology that influenced their success, and the impact of this music beyond those recordings. At the time, traditional music (what we now call old-time music) was recognized as viable content on recorded media, and artists traveled to record label studios in cities like New York to record music. Some record labels also engaged in “location recording sessions,” where they went to places where the music was being made in order to record it. In 1927 Victor Talking Machine Company producer Ralph Peer came to Bristol to discover and record new artists. Along with the previously recorded Ernest Stoneman and his extended family, newly discovered artists The Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers were recorded at these sessions, amongst others. The 1927 Bristol Sessions are now referred to as “the big bang of country music,” and Bristol is internationally recognized as “the Birthplace of Country Music” due to this history.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

Why is Bristol called “the Birthplace of Country Music”?

OUTLINE & EXPLANATION OF LESSON:

The lesson will combine audio-visual and text resource materials to build student comprehension of the importance of the 1927 Bristol Sessions within regional and American history.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED (IF APPLICABLE):

N/A

PROJECTED LENGTH OF LESSON:

1–2 class periods, depending on desired length of student work

GOALS & OBJECTIVES:

Students will:

- Recognize the historic events that occurred in Bristol related to the development of traditional music into commercial country music
- Familiarize themselves with the major people/artists who came to Bristol in 1927 for the recording sessions and the technology that made the recordings possible
- Understand the impacts of the 1920s economy and culture of the Tennessee/Virginia region and the United States through the context of music
- Share information from group discussions on four (4) different topics related to the 1927 Bristol Sessions and its era
- Use their collected information to create written, oral, or other types of reports, which can be delivered by various available media and formats of the teacher’s choice

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LESSON STRUCTURE:

1. Introduction of the lesson on the 1927 Bristol Sessions

Students will brainstorm on what they know about Bristol in 1927, related to jobs/economy (farming, manufacturing, service), transportation (by foot, horse/cart, car, roads, trains), music (at home, in community, on recordings).

2. Introduction of information on the 1927 Bristol Sessions

- * Teacher shares 10-minute prepared video on the 1927 Bristol Sessions and pulls out some specific information from the teacher resource document to share verbally with students.
- * Teacher shares pictures and histories of the main four people and acts: Ralph Peer, Ernest Stoneman, Jimmie Rodgers, and The Carter Family.

3. Teacher will break students into four (4) groups, and each group will discuss one of the following topics:

- Background of vocations and jobs in the 1920s
- Lifestyle during the 1920s
- Music recorded at the 1927 Bristol Sessions (artists) or purpose of these recordings (Peer)
- Influence of the 1927 Bristol Sessions on the development of country music

4. Groups create a reporting method to share their discussion with the class

- * Students should organize information in a structured manner.
- * Students present findings to the class through an oral or audio-visual report.
- * Teacher records questions generated by students.

5. Compilation of information to create a report on the 1927 Bristol Sessions as an expression of the times (1920s) and influence on later times

- * Students will compile information from the four group presentations to produce written, oral, or other types of reports developed from their research.
- * Teacher facilitates answering questions raised by student groups.

EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT:

Students will produce an appropriate report, by teacher-determined method, that reflects an awareness and understanding of the topic. Learning and reporting on the basic facts of who, when, and what happened in relation to the 1927 Bristol Sessions recordings is required.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES AVAILABLE:

- Birthplace of Country Music website – www.birthplaceofcountrymusic.org
- Access the following documents [HERE](#):
 - * The 1927 Bristol Sessions Story Resource Document – Teachers
 - * The 1927 Bristol Sessions Story Resource Document – Students
 - * The 1927 Bristol Sessions Story Resource Document – Images
 - * Brief summary of regional history, economics, and social context, To come
 - * The Science of Sound & Technology of the 1927 Bristol Sessions Resource Document – Students, To come
 - * The Artists & Personalities of the 1927 Bristol Sessions Resource Document – Students, To come
 - * Primary and Secondary Sources, To come
 - * 1927 Bristol Sessions Recordings & Artists
 - * Lesson Plan Video Resources

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CONNECTIONS TO TENNESSEE AND VIRGINIA STATE STANDARDS

Standards for both Tennessee and Virginia delineate the skills the students will develop through this lesson, including investigating knowledge and analysis and critical thinking related to history, geography and economics. This involves using evidence gained through primary and secondary sources to compare and contrast perspectives to develop conceptual understanding. In addition, the Tennessee standards specifically address the development of country music, The Carter Family, and the importance of African-American artists within musical heritage.

This lesson plan on the 1927 Bristol Sessions Story incorporates the use of primary and secondary sources, including written biographies and historical publications related to 20th-century America in Appalachia. This history includes changes in economy, communication, and technology. The people involved in the 1927 Bristol Sessions are examples of those who were both affected by these changes and contributed to some of these changes.

Students will engage in historical research and thinking, analyzing the influence of changing economics and the effect of geography on developments in the United States in the 1920s. The variety of impacts on rural populations and economies, the place and opportunities for African Americans in society, and the influence of a growing mass “popular” culture can be examined through the lens of the 1927 Bristol Sessions.

TENNESSEE STANDARDS:

Standard Number(s)	Standard Name	Short Description
SSP.01, .02, .05,.06	Social Studies Practices	Gather information from primary and secondary sources; critically examine sources; develop historical awareness; develop geographic awareness
5.14	Social Studies: World War I and Between the Wars (1920s–1940s)	Examine the growth of popular culture during the “Roaring Twenties”
5.51	Social Studies: Tennessee in the 20th Century (1900–Present)	Discuss the development of the music industry in Tennessee

VIRGINIA STANDARDS:

Standard Number(s)	Standard Name	Short Description
VS.1	Virginia Studies: Skills	Demonstrate skills for historical thinking, geographical analysis, economic decision making, and responsible citizenship
VS.9, .10	Virginia Studies: 1900 to the Present	Demonstrate an understanding of Virginia during the 20th century; demonstrate an understanding of Virginia government, geography, and economics

For more extensive details on the specifics of these state standards, please see the appendix below.



APPENDIX: TENNESSEE AND VIRGINIA STATE STANDARDS

TENNESSEE STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

SSP [SOCIAL STUDIES PRACTICE] – SSP .01, .02, .05, .06

Students will progress through the inquiry cycle by analyzing primary and secondary sources to construct and communicate their conceptual understanding of the content standards (SSP.1–SSP.4) and to develop historical and geographic awareness (SSP.5–SSP.6).

[*Tennessee Social Studies Standards*](#), p. 11

Content Strands will include: History (H), Culture (C), Economics (E), Geography (G), Tennessee (T), and Tennessee Code Annotated (TCA) – these strands are legally required to be taught.

Practice Number	K-2	3-5	6-8	9-12
SSP.01	Gather information from a variety of sources, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Printed materials Graphic representations Artifacts Media and technology sources 	Gather information from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Printed materials Graphic representations Artifacts Media and technology sources 	Collect data and information from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Printed materials Graphic representations Artifacts Media and technology sources 	Collect data and information from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Printed materials Graphic representations Field observations/ Landscape analysis Artifacts Media and technology sources
SSP.02	Critically examine a primary or secondary source in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarize significant ideas and relevant information Distinguish between fact and opinion Draw conclusions Recognize author's purpose and point of view 	Critically examine a primary or secondary source in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarize significant ideas and relevant information Distinguish between fact and opinion Draw inferences and conclusions Recognize author's purpose, point of view, and reliability 	Critically examine a primary or secondary source in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extract and paraphrase significant ideas and relevant information Distinguish the difference between fact and opinion Draw inferences and conclusions Recognize author's purpose, point of view, and bias Assess the strengths and limitations of arguments 	Critically examine a primary or secondary source in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extract and paraphrase significant ideas Discern differences between evidence and assertion Draw inferences and conclusions Recognize author's purpose, point of view, and potential bias Assess the strengths and limitations of arguments

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Practice Number	K-2	3-5	6-8	9-12
SSP.05	<p>Develop historical awareness by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sequencing past, present, and future in chronological order Understanding that things change over time 	<p>Develop historical awareness by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizing how and why historical accounts change over time Recognizing how past events and issues might have been experienced by the people of that time, with historical context and empathy rather than present-mindedness Identifying patterns of continuity and change over time, making connections to the present 	<p>Develop historical awareness by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizing how and why historical accounts change over time Perceiving and presenting past events and issues as they might have been experienced by the people of the time, with historical empathy rather than present-mindedness Evaluating how unique circumstances of time and place create context and contribute to action and reaction Identifying patterns of continuity and change over time, making connections to the present 	<p>Develop historical awareness by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizing how and why historical accounts change over time Perceiving and presenting past events and issues as they might have been experienced by the people of the time, with historical empathy rather than present-mindedness Evaluating how unique circumstances of time and place create context and contribute to action and reaction Identifying patterns of continuity and change over time, making connections to the present
SSP.06	<p>Develop geographic awareness by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying geographic symbols on maps and globes Understanding relationships between people, places, and resources 	<p>Develop geographic awareness by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determining relationships among people, resources, and ideas based on geographic location Determining the use of diverse types of maps based on the purpose Analyzing the spatial relationships between people, circumstances, and resources Analyzing interaction between humans and the physical environment Examining how geographic regions and perceptions of the regions change over time 	<p>Develop a geographic awareness by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using the geographic perspective to determine relationships, patterns, and diffusion across space at multiple scales Determining the use of diverse types of maps based on their origin, structure, context, and validity Analyzing locations, conditions, and connections of places and use maps to investigate spatial relationships Analyzing interaction between humans and the physical environment Examining how geographic regions and perceptions of regions are fluid across time and space 	<p>Develop geographic awareness by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyzing and determining the use of diverse types of maps based on the origin, authority, structure, context, and validity Using the geographic perspective to analyze relationships, patterns, and diffusion across space at multiple scales Analyzing locations, conditions, and connections of places and using maps to investigate spatial associations among phenomena Examining how geographers use regions and how perceptions of regions are fluid across time and space Analyzing interaction between humans and the physical environment

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SOCIAL STUDIES - GRADE 5

PART 1 World War I and Between the Wars (1920s–1940s)

5.14 Examine the growth of popular culture during the “Roaring Twenties” with respect to the following:

- Music, clothing, and entertainment
- Automobiles and appliances
- Harlem Renaissance

Strands: C, E, T

Part 2 Tennessee in the 20th Century (1900–Present)

5.51 Discuss the development of the music industry in Tennessee, including (T.C.A. § 49-6-1028):

- Country music (e.g., Grand Ole Opry, WSM, and The Carter Family)
- Blues music (e.g., W. C. Handy and Bessie Smith)
- Rock ‘n’ roll (e.g., Elvis Presley, Stax Records, and Sun Studio)

Strands: C, H, T, TCA

VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING (SOLS) ADDRESSED:

Students will develop the skills needed to analyze, interpret, and demonstrate knowledge of important events and ideas in our history and will understand the contributions made by people of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

[History and Social Science Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools](#) – March 2015

Skills: Gather and Analyze Information from Primary and Secondary Sources

Connections across Space and Time

Researching to Develop Products – textually, orally, and technologically

VIRGINIA STUDIES [VS] – GRADE 4

Skills

- VS.1** The student will demonstrate skills for historical thinking, geographical analysis, economic decision making, and responsible citizenship by
- a) analyzing and interpreting artifacts and primary and secondary sources to understand events in Virginia history;
 - b) analyzing the impact of geographic features on people, places, and events to support an understanding of events in Virginia history;
 - g) explaining connections across time and place.

Virginia: 1900 to the Present

VS.9 The student will demonstrate an understanding of Virginia during the twentieth century and beyond by

- a) describing the economic and social transition from a rural, agricultural society to a more urban, industrialized society;
- b) describing how national events, including... the Great Depression, affected Virginia and its citizens.

VS.10 The student will demonstrate an understanding of Virginia government, geography, and economics by

- b) describing the major products and industries important to Virginia’s economy;
- c) explaining how advances in transportation, communications, and technology have contributed to Virginia’s prosperity and role in the global economy.