

THE BLUES

This topic explores the history and development of Blues Music. you will learn how the music developed from African Slave songs into the music we know as Blues today. You will learn the key music features of Blues music and you will compose a short piece that includes the blues scale, walking bass, 12 bar blues chords and improvisation.

ORIGINS: African slaves brought their musical traditions with them when they were transported to work in the North American colonies. These **work songs** were sung rhythmically in time with the task being completed. They used **call and response** where a phrase from the lead singer was followed by the rest of the group singing a response. Early blues music was usually a solo singer accompanied by guitar or piano, sometimes with added drums or harmonica.

12 BAR BLUES CHORDS: Blues music is based around a chord progression that lasts for 12 bars. There are three chords in a specific order that gives blues its distinctive sound. The chords are always chord 1, chord 4 and chord 5 in whatever key the music is in. This example shows the chords in C major.

Walking Bass

C E G A Bb A G E C E G A Bb A G E

F A C D Eb D C A C E G A Bb A G E

G B D E F A C D C E G A Bb A G

WALKING BASS: The bass part in blues music is called a walking bass because it consists of the notes of the chords played one at a time on each beat of the bar. It creates a steady, continuous beat. This is an example of a walking bass line in the key of C.

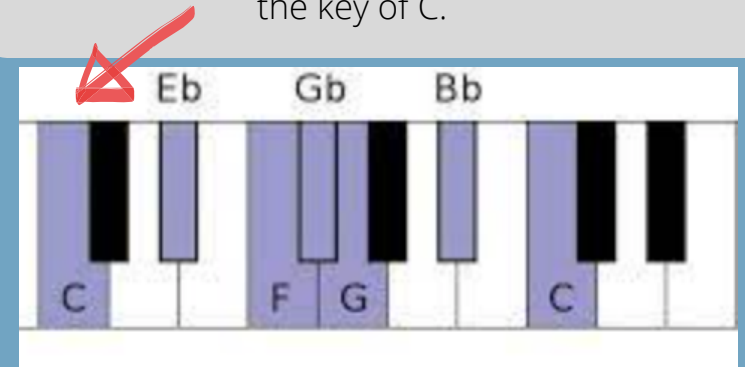
LYRICS In blues music the lyrics are often about sad subject such as loneliness and poverty. A verse usually consists of three lines to reflect the structure of the chord progression. The first and second lines are the same and the third line is different.

TEMPO: The tempo of blues music is slow.

IMPROVISATION: Music that is made up as you go along.

C Chord 1	C Chord 1	C Chord 1	C Chord 1
F Chord 4	F Chord 4	C Chord 1	C Chord 1
G Chord 5	F Chord 4	C Chord 1	C Chord 1

BLUES SCALE: The blues scale is a specific selection of notes used for improvisation and the melody. It has a flattened third and seventh which gives it the distinctive 'blues' sound. This is the blues scale in the key of C.



THEME AND VARIATIONS

THEME AND VARIATIONS IS A STYLE OF COMPOSITION THAT HAS AN INITIAL MELODY (THEME) FOLLOWED BY A NUMBER OF SECTIONS (VARIATIONS) WHICH TRANSFORM AND DEVELOP THE THEME IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF A THEME.

IT IS A SIMPLE MELODY THAT USES A LIMITED RANGE OF NOTES. IT IS ALSO QUITE REPETITIVE.



CREATING A VARIATION;

THERE ARE MANY WAYS IN WHICH THE THEME COULD BE TRANSFORMED TO CREATION A VARIATION. HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS;

- ADD EXTRA NOTES OR TAKE NOTES AWAY.
- CHANGE THE RHYTHM OR TIME SIGNATURE.
- TAKE A SMALL PART OF THE THEME AND MAKE IT INTO A SEQUENCE.
- PLAY THE THEME AT A DIFFERENT PITCH.
- ADD DIFFERENT ACCOMPANIMENTS SUCH AS CHORDS, DRONE OR OSTINATO.
- CHANGE THE TEMPO.
- CHANGE THE TONALITY. FOR EXAMPLE, FROM A MAJOR KEY TO A MINOR KEY.

KEY TERMS;

- MELODY - NOTES OF VARIOUS PITCHES AND RHYTHMS PLAYED ONE AFTER ANOTHER. A TUNE.
- ACCOMPANIMENT - THE BACKGROUND MUSIC WHICH IS NOT THE MELODY. FOR EXAMPLE, CHORDS AND BASS.
- CHORDS - MORE THAN TWO NOTES PLAYED AT THE SAME TIME.
- DRONE - A REPEATED NOTE OR NOTES HELD THROUGHOUT A PASSAGE OF MUSIC.
- OSTINATO - A SHORT REPEATED PATTERN.
- SEQUENCE - A REPETITION OF A SHORT MUSICAL IDEA BUT AT A DIFFERENT PITCH.
- TIME SIGNATURE - HOW MANY BEATS IN THE BAR.
- TEMPO - THE SPEED OF THE MUSIC.

SUGGESTED LISTENING;

AIR AND VARIATIONS BY G. HANDEL; [HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/MZA-xQK778K](https://youtu.be/mZA-xQK778K)

MOVEMENT 4 FROM THE TROUT QUINTET BY F. SCHUBERT [HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/HWBWVGTAZGO](https://youtu.be/HWBWVGTAZGO)

