
The Origins of the Blues



The “Blues”: what does the phrase mean?

- What does someone mean if they say they have got “the blues”?
 - Usually having “the blues” means we feel depressed, low or down in the dumps.
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The Blues: Lyrics

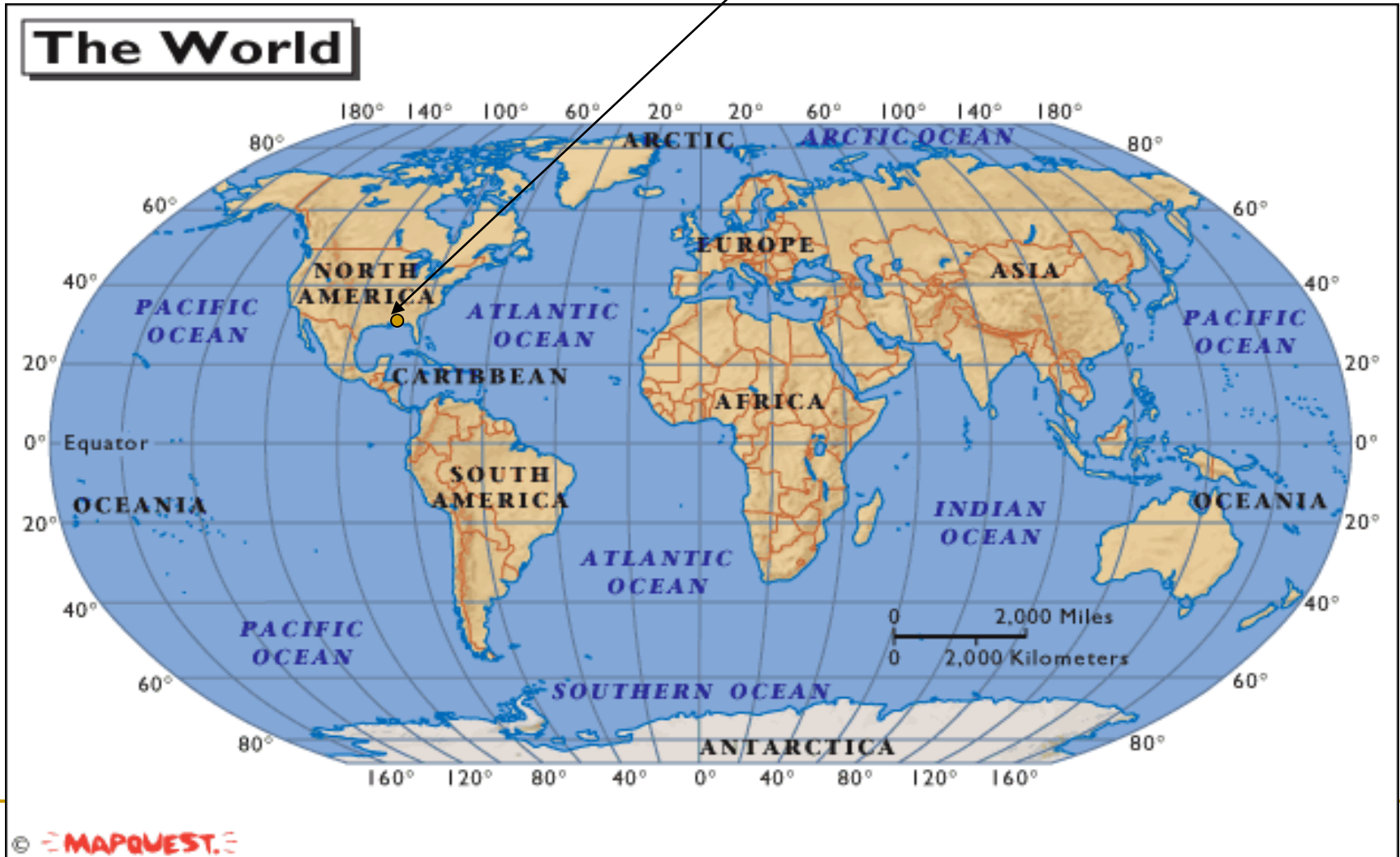
- The lyrics of Blues music are very important. They often describe feelings of sadness, pain or difficult circumstances.
- Listen to the lyrics in this song:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=go6TiLleVZA&feature=fvw>

Where does the Blues come from?

Blues began in the South of the United States of America, around cities such as New Orleans.

Where is New Orleans?



The Blues: how did it develop?

- In the 17th and 18th century (between 200 and 300 years ago) people were taken prisoner from where they lived in countries such as Ghana, West Africa, and brought to America by ship.
 - Plantation owners would then buy these people who had been taken from their homes and force them to work as slaves. Slaves were treated very badly. Many of them died on the long journey across the ocean before they even arrived in America.
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The Blues: how did it develop?

- Even when slavery was made illegal in the south of the USA in 1865, many laws still existed that meant that people of black African origin were not allowed to mix with white people or have the same rights. They were made to go to separate churches and schools, for example.
 - The long-term effects of slavery are still felt in societies and communities to this day.
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The Blues: how did it develop?

- The slaves brought with them their own music. They would sing songs and spirituals in the fields while they worked, such as Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.

Swing low, sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home!

Swing low, sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home!

I looked over Jordan and what did I see,
Comin' for to carry me home!
A band of angels comin' after me,
Comin' for to carry me home!

The Blues: how did it develop?

The styles of **work songs, spirituals and gospel** began to mix. **By 1900 “The Blues” had begun as a style of it’s own.**

Work Song Example (I Be So Glad When the Sun Goes Down):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-zISq4mWiE&list=PL5gesReHGwww6aCtl1VdBUVJHzSwzy0CD&index=2>

Spiritual Example (Wade in the Water):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-zISq4mWiE&list=PL5gesReHGwww6aCtl1VdBUVJHzSwzy0CD&index=2>

Gospel Example (Church Gospel Music)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etGrFu6dyAE>

Further Research

- Research into five musicians who performed or composed blues music.
 - Create a fact file, PowerPoint presentation or video about these musicians.
 - You could include pictures, dates of when the musicians lived, information about their lives and links to the music they composed and performed.
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