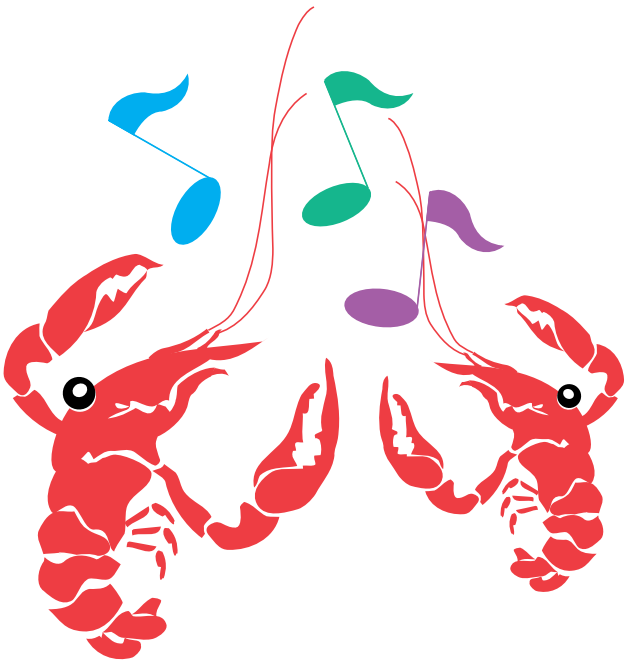
Lesson Seven:

Musical Meaning

Setting The Stage

Music and song lyrics can make us think and feel a certain way about an issue. Songs have been used for centuries to provide information, debate issues, convey a story or express a sentiment.

For example, the song "Jambalaya" * by Hank Williams provides a picture of the Cajun/wetland way of life. He actually adapted this song from Cajun French Song entitled, "Grand Texas." He used the melody from the Cajun version and wrote the following lyrics:



Goodbye Joe, me gotta go, me oh my oh
Me gotta go pole the pirogue down the bayou
My Yvonne, the sweetest one, me oh my oh
Son of a gun, we'll have good fun on the bayou

CHORUS:
Jambalaya, a-crawfish pie and-a file gumbo
'Cause tonight I'm gonna see my ma cher amio
Pick guitar, fill fruit jar and be gay-oh
Son of a gun, we'll have big fun on the bayou.

Thibodeaux, Fontainbleau, the place is buzzin'
Kinfolk come to see Yvonne by the dozen
Dress in style, go hog wild, me oh my oh
Son of a gun, we'll have big fun on the bayou.

REPEAT CHORUS

FINAL CHORUS:
Jambalaya, a-crawfish pie and-a fillet gumbo
'Cause tonight I'm gonna see my ma cher amio
Pick guitar, fill fruit jar and be gay-oh
Son of a gun, we'll have big fun on the bayou.
Son of a gun, we'll have big fun on the bayou.
Son of a gun, we'll have big fun on the bayou.

* This song is being used for educational purposes only.
No profit will be made from its use in this curriculum guide.

Cajuns then re-wrote the song in French:

"Goodby Joe" j'ai pour allez, mi-o-ma-y-o
j'ai pour allez moi tout seul sur le bayou
ma yvonne, la plus jolie sur le bayou
tonnerre m'ecrase un va avoir un bon temp sur le bayou

REFRAIN
Jambalaya, Des Tartes D'ecreuvisse, File Gombo
par a soir moi j'va allez voir ma chere ami-o
jouer l'guitar, boire de la jogue(cruche) et fair de la musique
tomnnerre m'ecrase un va avoir un bon temp de sur le bayou

thibodeaux, fontenot, la place apre sonner
ca vien "en tas" pour voir yvonne par les douzaines
fair bien l'amour, et fair le fou, fair la musique
tonnerre m'ecrase un va avoir un bon temp

Objectives

STUDENTS WILL

- **learn about wetlands by researching songs that have lyrics describing them.**
- **interpret the meaning of the lyrics and what they mean to them.**

MATERIALS

- Copy of lyrics to "Jambalaya" song
- Internet access
- CD/tape player
- Handout: *Lyrics of "Jambalaya"* (p.4)
- CD/tape of song
- Access to music store/library
- Handout: *Journal Page: Song Interpretation* (p.5)

GETTING READY

1. Familiarize yourself with the song and its lyrics.
2. Make copies of the handout *Journal Page: Song Interpretation for the class.*

PROCESS

1. Play the song "Jambalaya" for the class and provide them with a copy of the lyrics. Discuss the meaning of the lyrics and how the music reflects those lyrics.

2. Facilitate a class participation exercise by completing the handout *Journal Page: Song Interpretation* using "Jambalaya."

3. Ask students to research and find a song that has lyrics about the natural features or cultural heritage of the south Louisiana wetlands. Natural features can include water, forests, swamps, marsh, bayous, animals, etc.

4. Instruct the students to interpret the lyrics of the song in their own words as a reflective journal entry. Make sure they know to include their feelings about the subject of the song.

5. Have the students read their journals to their peers, and bring a CD or tape of the song to play for the class.

ASSESSMENT

- **Song:** The song lyrics reflect the natural or cultural features of the estuary. Yes No
- **Journal:** The interpretation of the lyrics paraphrase or reflect the content of the actual lyrics. Yes No
- **Journal:** The reflection includes an emotional response to the song. Yes No

EXTENSIONS

- Have students write their own lyrics to the tune of "Jambalaya" or another song that reflect what they've learned about wetlands. Have them perform their song to the class or make a recording.
- Create a PowerPoint presentation, matching photographs/drawings to the song lyrics/music.

HANDOUT: LYRICS OF *"JAMBALAYA"* by Hank Williams

Goodbye Joe, me gotta go, me oh my oh
Me gotta go pole the pirogue down the bayou
My Yvonne, the sweetest one, me oh my oh
Son of a gun, we'll have good fun on the bayou

CHORUS:

Jambalaya, a-crawfish pie and-a file gumbo
'Cause tonight I'm gonna see my ma cher amio
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FRENCH VERSION

"Goodby Joe" j'ai pour allez, mi-o-ma-y-o
j'ai pour allez moi tout seul sur le bayou
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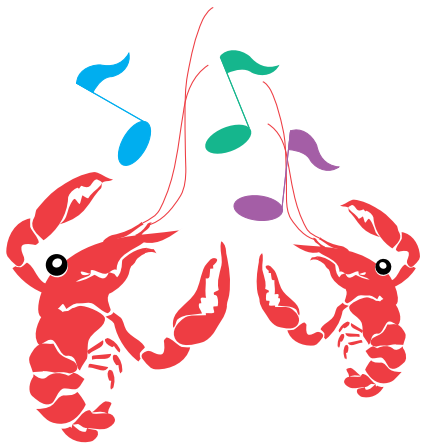


HANDOUT: JOURNAL PAGE: SONG INTERPRETATION

NAME OF SONG

NAME OF ARTIST

NATURAL FEATURES FOUND IN THE LYRICS

INTERPRETATION OF LYRICS

MY FEELINGS ABOUT THE SONG

RESOURCES

BOOKS

Ancelet, B. J., (1999). *Cajun and Creole Music Makers*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.

Campbell, P. S. (1998). *Songs in their heads: Music and its Meaning in Children's Lives.* NYC, NY: Oxford University Press.

Doucet, M. (1995). *Le Hoogie Boogie.* (Cajun and zydeco music by Beausoleil for children with French and English lyrics.) Cambridge, MA: Rounder/Polygram.

Maygarden, D.F., Frierson, G.M., & Rheams, A.B. (2000). *A Guide to the Wetlands of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin.* Metairie, LA: The Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundatation. New Orleans, LA and The Coastal Research Laboratory in the Geology Department of the University of New Orleans: New Orleans, LA

Olivier, R. (photographer) and Sandmel B. (1999). *Zydeco.* University Press of Mississippi: Jackson, Mississippi.

WEB SITES

America's Wetland Campaign creates awareness for the country about Louisiana's wetland loss.
http://www.americaswetland.com/

Barataria Terrebonne National Estuary Program
Part of the US Environmental Protection Agency, this program manages, restores, promotes and educates about the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary.
http://www.btnep.org/

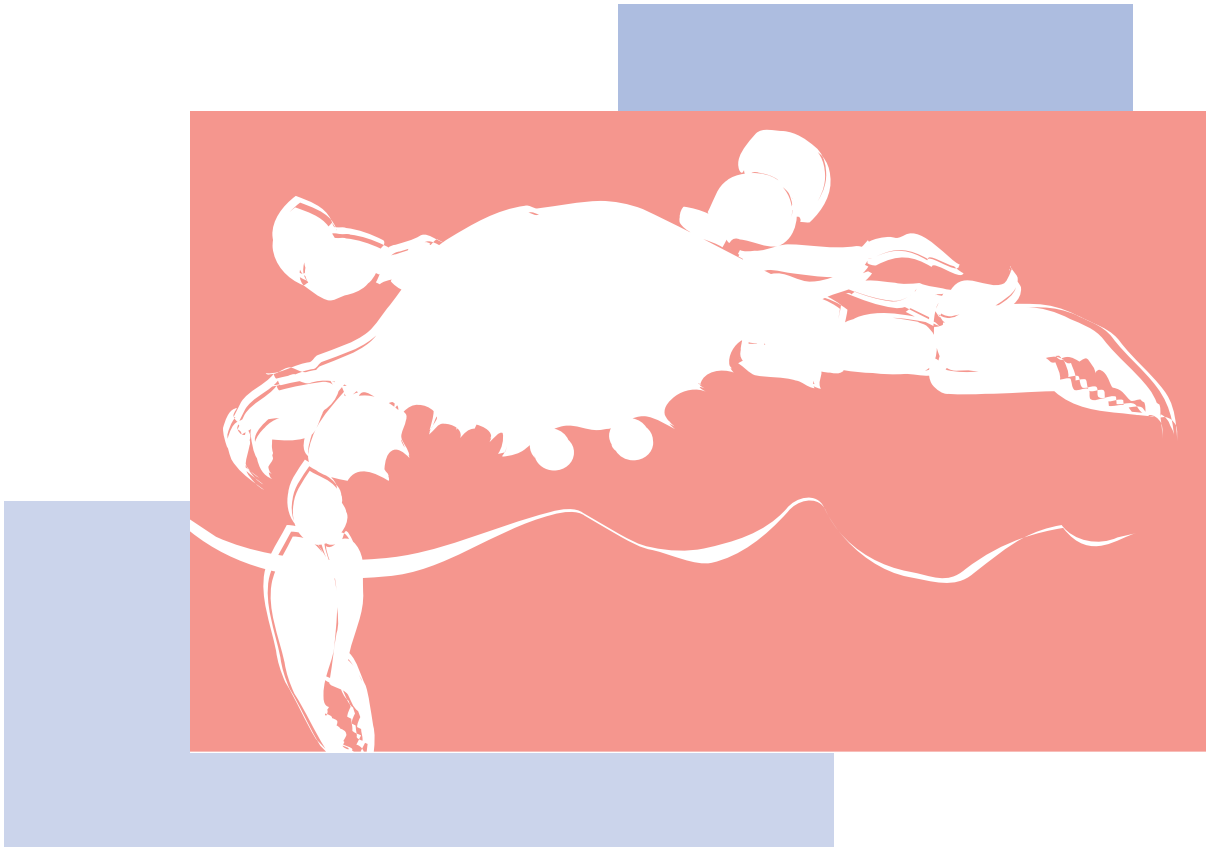
Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation
A private, non-profit organization, its mission is to restore and protect the Pontchartrain Basin. Its programs include water quality monitoring, habitat protection, education/outreach and public access.
http://www.saveourlake.org/

One of the best web sites for Cajun and Zydeco music is found at Louisiana State University Eunice.
www.lsue.edu/acadgate/music/musicmain.htm

The Louisiana State Department of Natural Resources has a web site for teachers with good information about the state's wetland resources.
http://www.dnr.louisiana.gov

The Louisiana State Department of Wildlife and Fisheries provides teachers with information on the function and values of wetlands and the animal and plants that call them home.
http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/apps/netgear/index.asp?cn=lawlf&pid=392

Louisiana Voices has a great web site that provides teachers with excellent resources on Louisiana culture and folklife.
http://www.louisianavoices.org/edu_home.html

The USGS' National Wetlands Resources Center provides excellent information for teachers about wetland science.
http://www.nwrc.usgs.gov/

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette provides a wealth of information through its Center for Cultural and Ecotourism Program.
http://ccet.louisiana.edu/