



Young Audiences of Massachusetts

Educational Materials

Please forward to teachers

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

Jeff Davis: *American Sampler*

Grade levels: K-5

American Sampler offers a journey into the history of rural America. With humor, warmth and scholarship, Jeff invites students to relive American heritage. Students will hear the songs of the Revolutionary War, Appalachian cloggers and sailors, as well as African-American banjo, Irish fiddle tunes and cowboy ditties. Jeff accompanies himself with a myriad of instruments ranging from a nose flute to a one-of-a-kind fretless banjo. Hands-on instruments, such as bones and spoons, contribute to this unique interactive presentation.

LEARNING GOALS:

1. To be introduced to folk music.
2. To explore American history and culture through folk music.
3. To get familiarized with a variety of traditional folk instruments including banjo, fiddle, guitar, spoons, Jew's harp, etc.

PRE-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: *Oral Transmission*

Play the game "Telephone." Discuss oral transmission. How does information change when passed from person to person? Divide students into groups and ask each group to write a short paragraph or phrase. Have the groups share their paragraphs with the class. Ask the class to repeat the paragraph after one hearing. Repeat the activity.

POST-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: *Everyday Music*

Discuss American folk music. What do students remember from Jeff Davis's program? What did he tell through song? Have students write short paragraphs about an everyday activity in their lives (i.e., walking the dog, feeding the cat, doing homework, cleaning, etc.). Have students present these stories to the class. Choose a few of these stories, and work as a class to try to turn these stories into songs. Have the class sing the songs.

CURRICULUM LINKS:

History and Social Sciences (American History), English Language Arts, Music

PRE-ACTIVITY: ORAL TRANSMISSION

LEARNING GOAL:

To understand how stories or songs change from generation to generation.

TIME:

45 minutes

TIPS FOR THE TEACHER:

* For younger students, have them play "Telephone" again using a longer phrase or sentence.

STEP 1:

Play the game "Telephone". Have the class sit in a circle. Give the first person a simple phrase. Have him/her quietly tell the next person in the circle. After students have passed the phrase around the circle, have the last person say the phrase aloud. Write the original phrase and the new phrase on the board. How did the phrase change? Why did it change?

STEP 2:

Discuss oral transmission. How were stories or songs passed from generation to generation? What can happen if the story or song is not written down?

STEP 3:

Divide the class into groups. Ask each group to write a short paragraph.

STEP 4:

Have one group share its paragraph with the rest of the class once. Ask the rest of the class to repeat the paragraph back to the group. Ask another group to share its paragraph. This time, have the group repeat the story. Have the class try to repeat the paragraph back to the group.

STEP 5:

Discuss the activity. Was it difficult to talk about the paragraph after hearing it only once? Was it easier when the students heard it two times? Have students think about this activity in terms of passing songs from person to person.

EXTENSIONS:

- 1) **Discuss** different clubs or teams to which students belong. What traditions or customs are specific to these groups? Which stories or traditions were created by the present group? Which stories have they learned from previous generations?
- 2) **Discuss** life and entertainment options in the United States in earlier centuries.



POST-ACTIVITY: *EVERYDAY MUSIC*

LEARNING GOAL

To understand how song lyrics were created from simple stories.

To write a short story.

TIME:

one hour

TIPS FOR THE TEACHER:

* To modify for younger students, have students draw a picture of an everyday event or have them tell a story.

STEP 1:

Discuss American folk music. What did students notice about the songs in the performance? Ask students to think about the stories that the songs told. Discuss the fact that American folk music is based on stories from everyday life.

STEP 2:

Ask students to suggest everyday activities.

STEP 3:

Have students write a short paragraph about something from their everyday lives (walking the dog, feeding the cat, cleaning the house, doing homework, etc.).

STEP 4:

Have students share their paragraphs with the rest of the class. Have the students select a few of the paragraphs and try to turn each story into a song. Have the class sing their new songs.

STEP 5:

Discuss how people have created songs from stories in their own lives over the years.

EXTENSIONS:

- 1) **Have** students share their familial histories. How were the lives of their grandparents as children different from their own?
- 2) **Have** students share songs that are sung in their families. When and why are these songs sung?



ENCLOSURE:

INSTRUMENTS

Five-string banjo: While the banjo is a truly representative American instrument, it is not native to this country. It came from western Africa with the slaves in the 17th and 18th centuries. The banjo's main characteristics, a resonating animal skin drum head and an extra, shorter fifth string, are found on instruments in Africa and India today. Originally black slaves played the banjo exclusively, but in the 19th and 20th centuries white musicians also started to play it. Banjos were not produced commercially until the 1850. Most rural banjos were hand-made and had smooth, unfretted fingerboards. The old playing styles, therefore, included a great deal of sliding from note to note.

Concertina: The concertina, sometimes called the "squeeze box" is a free-reed instrument similar to the accordion. Dr. Charles Wheatstone, an English scientist, developed the concertina in the 1830s. It did not become a popular folk instrument until the 1860s. The concertina employs a large number of metal reeds, but there is no accordion-like keyboard. Instead there is a system of buttons.

Fretted or Appalachian Mountain dulcimer: The German "Pennsylvania Dutch" settlers developed this instrument. It is an American "cousin" of instruments found throughout northern Europe. The dulcimer is constructed in an elongated hourglass shape with a fretted fingerboard, with strings running its length. It has been found almost exclusively in the mountains of the South. In recent years, however, it has had a renaissance, and is now found nationwide. In the 19th century, it was the primary instrument in the Appalachian Mountains, but at the time the churches thought that dance music was sinful and banned all fiddle and banjo playing. Luckily, the dulcimer escaped the wrath of the church.

Fiddle: The first European instrument brought to this country was the fiddle. It was our most important and popular instrument for several centuries. The fiddle was played in every state, and each region had its own styles and tunes. When used for folk music, it was played by a solo performer. Fiddlers, therefore, had to both carry the tune and provide a strong rhythm, so techniques developed along different lines than those of classical violin playing.

Guitar: The guitar is the preeminent folk instrument. Imported to the colonies from England in the 18th century, it was a late-comer to traditional music. The wealthier classes exclusively used the guitar for formal parlor music. In the 19th century, the guitar was used in minstrel shows but was not nearly as popular as the banjo. The guitar was adopted by black musicians in the south and subsequently picked up by white musicians.

Jew's harp: The Jew's harp is a free-reed related instrument. It is held against the teeth, using the mouth to provide both pitch and amplification. The oldest one on record dates from 14th century China, though the instrument is probably far older than that. It is found in most parts of the world. The name comes from a mis-hearing of its Dutch name, *jeugetrump* (child's trumpet), or from the French *jeu d'harp* (play harp). In Italian, it is called *scaccpensieri* (chase away all thought).

Spoons and Bones: Because standard instruments were not always available to rural people, they used anything at hand. This is how the common spoon, wooden or metal, became a musical instrument. Playing bones is, perhaps, even older than art. Drawings of figures playing bones adorn Egyptian vases dating from 3000 B.C. Today, "bones" are made of wood and the musician plays with one set in each hand. They are played by clacking the bones together in complicated rhythms.

RESOURCES:

Antle, Nancy. Sam's Wild West Show. Puffin. 1998.

Conlon-McKenna, Marita. Wildflower Girl. Puffin, 1994.

Rolvaag, O.E. Giants in the Earth: A Saga of the Prairie. Harper Collins, 1999.

Web Sites:

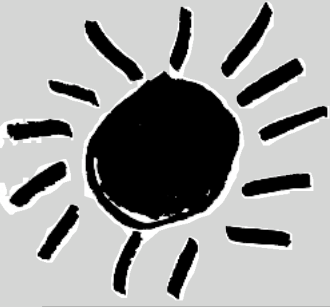
www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/index.html

ABOUT THE PERFORMER:

Jeff Davis is one of the nation's foremost performers, interpreters and collectors of traditional American folk songs, tunes, and stories. He plays banjo, guitar, bones, spoons, fiddle, Appalachian dulcimer, Jew's Harp, Native American flute, and several instruments in the mandolin family. Jeff has appeared at Sturbridge Village and Mystic Seaport regularly, and has performed at folk festivals in the United States and abroad. He has recorded for Flying Fish and Minstrel Records. Jeff received the 1992 UMass-Dartmouth "Eisteddfod" Award for service to the traditional arts. He graduated from Duke University with a degree in Russian history but spent much time in North Carolina learning songs from mountain musicians. After a brief tenure as a middle school history teacher, Jeff began playing music full time at schools, clubs, and festivals. Jeff has been a lecturer for the Smithsonian National Associates Program and has performed for school and community groups through the New York State Council for the Arts and the Ohio Arts Council-Arts in Education program. With his friend Jeff Warner, Jeff Davis has recorded two volumes of traditional music for children, *Old Time Songs for Kids* and *Two Little Boys*.

ABOUT YOUNG AUDIENCES:

Young Audiences of Massachusetts (YA) is the oldest, largest and most utilized arts-in-education organization in the state and one of the largest in a national network of 31 chapters. For 45 years, YA has distinguished itself as the vital link between Massachusetts schoolchildren (K-12) and more than 80 of the region's most accomplished actors, dancers, singers, musicians, and storytellers. Its 36 ensembles offer 57 interactive arts programs that represent a range of cultures, historical periods and artistic disciplines. YA is unique in its flexibility to offer interactive performances, tailor-made residencies, workshops, teacher-training, curriculum planning and multi-year projects. All programs include educational materials and satisfy local, state and/or federal arts education standards



Young Audiences of Massachusetts

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MASSACHUSETTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS CONNECTIONS

Jeff Davis:

American Sampler, The Oregon Trail

<i>Language Arts 6</i>	...describe and analyze how oral dialects differ from each other in English
<i>Language Arts 9</i>	...identify the basic facts and essential ideas in what they have read, heard, or viewed.
<i>History 1</i>	Chronology and Cause...understand the chronological order of historical events and recognize the complexity of historical cause and effect.
<i>History 2</i>	Historical Understanding...understand the meaning, implications, and import of historical events, while recognizing the contingency and unpredictability of history.
<i>History 8</i>	Places and Regions of the World...identify and explain the location and features of places and systems organized over time.
<i>History 13</i>	American and Massachusetts Economic history...describe the development of the American, New England, Massachusetts economy.
<i>Arts-Music 1</i>	Singing...sing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
<i>Arts-Music 3</i>	Playing Instruments...play instruments, alone and with others, to perform a varied repertoire of music.
<i>Arts-Music 5</i>	Critical Response...describe and analyze their own music and the music of others using appropriate music vocabulary.
<i>Arts-Music 6</i>	Purpose and Meaning in the Arts...describe the purpose for which works of dance, music, theatre, visual arts, and architecture were and are created.
<i>Arts-Music 7</i>	Roles of Artists in Communities...describe the roles of artists, patrons, cultural organizations, and art institutions in societies of the past and present.
<i>Arts-Music 8</i>	Concepts of Style, Stylistic Influence, and Stylistic Change...demonstrate understanding of styles, influence, change.
<i>Arts-Music 9</i>	Inventions, Technologies, and the Arts...describe and analyze how performing and visual artists use and have used materials, inventions, and technologies in their work.
<i>Arts-Music 10</i>	Interdisciplinary Connections...apply knowledge of the arts to the study of English language arts, foreign languages, health, history, and social science, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering.