



PRESENTED BY THE CHARLOTTE BLUES SOCIETY

Educator Starter Packet

Shake Hands with the Blues Youth Challenge

ONE SONG. REAL LEARNING. A REASON TO FINISH.

Ready-to-use lesson paths, selected North Carolina Music Standards connections, student evidence tools, and simple recording guidance. Choose the time you have. The learning works even if a student never enters the Challenge.

FOR MUSIC EDUCATORS AND YOUTH LEADERS

Choose the size. We organized the rest.

Use one activity inside work you already teach, or connect the pieces into a student-led performance project.

15 MINUTES**Meet one song**

Listen, notice, and support a response with musical evidence.

ONE CLASS**Change two things**

Arrange a short section and explain the musical choices.

THREE SESSIONS**Build an entry**

Rehearse, revise, reflect, and optionally record for the Challenge.

CHALLENGE SNAPSHOT

- Singers and instrumentalists age 25 and younger on February 7, 2027 may participate as soloists, duos, or bands.
- The Challenge serves Charlotte and the surrounding region, generally within 250 miles of Charlotte. This is a regional guideline, not a North Carolina-only requirement.
- Students choose one of five songs and may create their own arrangement. An approved backing track is optional.
- First-round entries are private audio. Selected finalists perform live on Sunday, February 7, 2027, in the Skyline Room at Heist Brewery and Barrel Arts in Charlotte. There will be no livestream or broadcast.
- The prize pool totals \$1,000: \$500 first place, \$250 second, \$100 third, plus two \$75 awards for attitude and spirit.

USE NOW

The Five-Song Listening Lab on the Challenge website provides a direct YouTube listening link for each song, so teachers and students do not need to search. Official registration, parent or guardian information, licensed Challenge track access, and private submission instructions will appear there before entries open.

15 MINUTES

Meet one song

A low-prep listening opener that gives every student a way into the Blues.

TEACHER PREP

The direct YouTube listening link in the online Five-Song Listening Lab, and something to write with.

LEARNING SEQUENCE

- 1 Play one Challenge song without explaining what students should hear.
- 2 Ask students to write one word for the groove, one for the feeling, and one musical choice they noticed.
- 3 Play a short section again. Students point to one sound that supports one of their words.
- 4 Close with the four-line listening response on page 8.

STUDENT EVIDENCE

A short listening response supported by a musical detail. Save it as a quick formative check or an entry point for discussion.

SELECTED STANDARDS

6.CN.1.3, 6.RE.1.2, 6.RE.2.1, N.RE.2.1

ONE CLASS PERIOD

Change two things

Students discover that interpretation begins with intentional musical choices.

TEACHER PREP

The direct YouTube listening link in the online Five-Song Listening Lab; voices, classroom instruments, or student instruments.

LEARNING SEQUENCE

- 1 Choose a short section and identify its groove, dynamics, phrasing, and texture.
- 2 In pairs or groups, choose two elements to change: tempo, dynamics, instrumentation, rhythm, texture, phrasing, or call-and-response.
- 3 Rehearse a short interpretation, then share it informally with the class or another group.
- 4 Use one warm comment and one useful suggestion. Rehearse again and name what changed.

STUDENT EVIDENCE

An arrangement plan, a short performance, one piece of peer feedback, and a revision note.

SELECTED STANDARDS

6.CR.2.1, 6.PR.1.1, 6.PR.1.4, 6.RE.2.2, N.CR.2.1, N.PR.1.1

THREE OR MORE SESSIONS

Build a Challenge entry

Turn classroom learning into an authentic goal without making contest entry a class requirement.

TEACHER PREP

Student choice, rehearsal time, and a phone or other simple audio recorder.

LEARNING SEQUENCE

- 1 Explore the five songs and let each student or group choose the best musical fit.
- 2 Choose a role and make an arrangement plan. Singing, instrumental performance, solo, duo, and band paths are welcome.
- 3 Rehearse, collect feedback, revise, and keep a short record of the musical decisions made.
- 4 Make one clear private audio recording. When registration opens, interested eligible students may submit one entry.

STUDENT EVIDENCE

Listening notes, an arrangement plan, feedback, a revision note, a reflection, and an optional private audio entry.

SELECTED STANDARDS

Connect, Create, Present, and Respond objectives selected by grade or proficiency level

SELECTED 2024 NORTH CAROLINA MUSIC STANDARDS

Learning and evidence, connected.

These are strong starting points for Sixth Grade General Music and Novice Vocal and Instrumental Music. Educators select the objectives appropriate to their course and students.

Objective	Official objective language	Packet connection	Evidence
6.CN.1.3	Describe sensory, emotional, personal, or intellectual responses to a variety of music.	Listen and name the groove, feeling, and one supporting detail.	Listening note
6.CR.2.1	Arrange an existing piece of music, changing two or more musical elements.	Change tempo, dynamics, rhythm, instrumentation, texture, or phrasing.	Arrangement plan
6.PR.1.1	Apply feedback from instructors to refine musical presentations, compositions, or ideas.	Rehearse, receive one useful suggestion, revise, and perform again.	Feedback and revision
6.RE.1.2	Identify multiple meanings for musical works, citing evidence.	Explain an interpretation and support it with sound-based evidence.	Supported response
6.RE.2.2	Evaluate musical presentations, compositions, and musical ideas using given criteria.	Use shared criteria for warm feedback and one next step.	Peer response
N.CR.1.1	Improvise short rhythmic phrases.	Trade a lead rhythmic phrase and a group response.	Recorded idea
N.CR.2.1	Arrange a simple musical variation on a given musical phrase.	Create a short variation while keeping the source recognizable.	Variation plan
N.PR.1.1	Identify strategies to improve personal musical technique based on feedback.	Name and use one rehearsal strategy after feedback.	Technique goal
N.RE.1.2	Identify the artistic choices made by peers and others.	Point to choices in dynamics, space, timbre, phrasing, or texture.	Listening response
N.RE.2.2	Evaluate musical performances, compositions, and technique using specific criteria.	Evaluate a draft and identify a practical improvement.	Criteria and reflection

Important: This crosswalk supports lesson planning and classroom evidence. Participation alone does not award course credit or satisfy an entire Arts Education course requirement. Local educators and public school units determine curriculum use.

SONGS ONE THROUGH THREE

Give students something specific to hear.

The Challenge website's Five-Song Listening Lab gives you a direct YouTube listening link for each song. These prompts teach listening and interpretation without distributing lyrics, chord charts, sheet music, or Challenge backing tracks.

SONG 1 - ROBERT JOHNSON

Sweet Home Chicago

Listen for: Repeating Blues movement, a forward-driving groove, turnaround, and call-and-response possibilities.

Try this: Keep the pulse steady while a voice or instrument answers each lead phrase.

Ask: What makes this song feel as if it is moving somewhere?

SONG 2 - MUDDY WATERS

Hoochie Coochie Man

Listen for: Stop-time accents, dramatic space, confident storytelling, and the band entering together.

Try this: Speak, sing, or play a line, then let the group answer with one strong rhythmic figure.

Ask: How does the silence make the next sound stronger?

SONG 3 - B.B. KING

The Thrill Is Gone

Listen for: Minor-key color, sustained notes, dynamics, space, and short phrases that carry emotion.

Try this: Play fewer notes and make one note speak through touch, timing, or vibrato.

Ask: What does the performer leave out, and why does that matter?

SONGS FOUR AND FIVE

Listen. Notice. Make a choice.

The goal is not imitation. Students identify what the music is doing, then make one intentional choice of their own.

SONG 4 - MUDDY WATERS

Got My Mojo Working

Listen for: A driving groove, repeated response, ensemble energy, and a lead voice pushing the group forward.

Try this: Trade a lead phrase and a group response using voices, claps, or instruments.

Ask: How can a group sound energetic without everyone doing the same thing?

SONG 5 - ETTA JAMES

I'd Rather Go Blind

Listen for: A slow rolling pulse, expressive phrasing, restraint, dynamics, and musical conversation.

Try this: Perform one phrase twice, changing only the timing or dynamics the second time.

Ask: How can a small musical change make the feeling more believable?

FOUR-LINE LISTENING RESPONSE

The groove feels _____.

The music seems to say or feel _____.

One musical detail that supports my answer is _____.

If I performed it, one choice I would make is _____.

SIMPLE RECORDING SUPPORT

A phone is enough.

The goal is a clear, honest performance, not studio polish. Make a ten-second test before recording the complete performance.

WITHOUT A TRACK

Use one phone

- 1 Choose a quiet room and silence notifications.
- 2 Place the phone on a stable surface several feet away.
- 3 Test the loudest section and adjust the distance.
- 4 Record the complete performance and keep the original file.

WITH AN APPROVED TRACK

Use a Recording Buddy

- 1 Device one plays the approved track at moderate volume.
- 2 Device two records the performer and track together.
- 3 Test so the performer is clearly heard above the track.
- 4 Switch roles: Help me with mine. I'll help you with yours.

DUO OR BAND

Let balance choose the spot

- 1 Place the phone where a listener would stand.
- 2 Play the loudest section for ten seconds.
- 3 Move players or the phone until important parts are heard.
- 4 Record one complete take and label the file clearly.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBLE USE

- Use the direct YouTube listening links in the Challenge website's Five-Song Listening Lab for classroom listening.
- Do not copy, repost, or publicly distribute Challenge backing tracks, alternate mixes, lyrics, chord charts, or sheet music.
- Licensed Challenge tracks will use controlled access when registration opens.
- Backing tracks are optional. Students may perform with voice, instruments, a duo, or a band.

COPY OR PRINT FOR STUDENTS

Try one song on.

This page supports classroom work. It does not register or enter a student in the Challenge.

STUDENT OR GROUP

SONG CHOICE

MY MUSICAL ROLE

What I hear

One word for the groove, one for the feeling, and one musical detail that supports my answer.

What I will change

Name two musical elements: tempo, dynamics, rhythm, instrumentation, texture, phrasing, form, or another choice.

My performance plan

Who does what? Where will we begin and end? What should a listener notice?

KEEP WHAT SHOWS THE LEARNING

Feedback. Revision. Reflection.

Contest participation is optional. The evidence below stands on its own as classroom work.

Feedback I received

Write one useful suggestion from a teacher or peer.

What I changed

Explain one revision and what it did for the performance.

Now it sounds more like me because

Name the musical choice that made the performance feel more personal or believable.

MY EVIDENCE

☐ Listening note

☐ Arrangement plan

☐ Feedback

☐ Revision

☐ Reflection

☐ Optional private recording

CHALLENGE INFORMATION

Official rules, registration, parent or guardian information, licensed song access, and private submission instructions will appear on the Challenge website before entries open.



challenge.charlottebluessociety.org

FOR EDUCATOR PLANNING

Official references and next steps.

Use the Challenge site for current program information and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction for the complete standards and supporting resources.

North Carolina Music Standards

The 2024 North Carolina Arts Education Standards organize music learning around Connect, Create, Present, and Respond. The selected connections in this packet are starting points, not a complete curriculum.

<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/office-teaching-and-learning/standard-course-study/arts-education/standard-course-study-supporting-resources>

Shake Hands with the Blues Youth Challenge

Current Challenge information, educator resources, official registration status, and future licensed track access are maintained at the Challenge website.

<https://challenge.charlottebluessociety.org/>

Teacher-use note

Educators should select standards, assessments, accommodations, and extensions appropriate to their students, course, and local public school unit. This packet is designed to reduce preparation time while preserving educator judgment.

THE PARTICIPATION TEST

Does this make participation easier?

Start small. Let students listen before they perform. Make backing tracks optional. Keep recording simple. Give every student a musical role and a clear next step.