

NEW ORLEANS JAZZ NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK  
*BECOMING A STORYTELLER*

Lesson by Richard Johnson, assisted by Allison Baffoni

## OVERVIEW

In this lesson students are introduced to the concept of storytelling as oral history. They will hear two narratives on the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park cd *Songs of the Mississippi River*. One narration, selection #8, *Ode to Willie Barnes, Sr.* tells the story of a group of men working on the levees during the Great Flood of 1927. In the other, selection # 16, *Captain Doc Hawley Interview*, students will hear directly from riverboat captain and steam calliope player Doc Hawley about his life on the river. Students will then create and record their own personal narratives.

## CRITICAL CONTENT

How do our personal experiences form us as people?

## BACKGROUND

This is a single two hour lesson that is easily divided into separate days. While the lesson has been created for students in grades 2, 3, and 4, it could easily be used by students of all ages.

## OBJECTIVES ADAPTED FROM LANGUAGE ARTS COMMON CORE STANDARDS

**GRADE 2:** [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.5](#) Create audio recordings of stories or poems; add drawings or other visual displays to stories or recounts of experiences when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings

**GRADE 3:** [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.4](#) Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.5](#) Create engaging audio recordings of stories or poems that demonstrate fluid reading at an understandable pace; add visual displays when appropriate to emphasize or enhance certain facts or details.

**GRADE 4:** [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.4](#) Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.5](#) Add audio recordings and visual displays to presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.

## MATERIALS

Music from the cd *Songs of the Mississippi River* produced by the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park.

A means of playing the cd

Computer and projector

A means of recording student projects, such as flip cams.

## PROCEDURE

**STEP 1:** Discuss with students the idea of *Story Telling*.

- ❖ Story Telling should be seen as relating an event in an entertaining way. (Shape your explanation to match the age level of the students.)
  - TASK: To make those hearing the story feel as if they are living it.
  - Use interesting details to pull the listener in.
  - Use voice inflection and other sounds to add to the atmosphere or feeling of the story.
- ❖ Ask students to remember when the teacher or others have read stories to children, using facial expressions and voice characteristics to make the story more interesting.
- ❖ Ask students to explain the difference between a true story and a fictional story.

**STEP 2:** Introduction to the Mississippi River

- ❖ Explain to the students that the true stories they will hear are about the Mississippi River.
- ❖ What is the Mississippi?
  - Ask students to define the term **RIVER**.
  - Ask them to give words that would describe a river. You might wish to write these on the board for discussion.
  - Ask students to name some rivers. These also could be written on the board.
  - Have a student locate the Mississippi on a map of the United States.
  - Show the Mississippi Watershed map found at the bottom of this document.
  - Point out that several large rivers flow into the Mississippi.
- ❖ Flooding of the Mississippi and Commerce on the Mississippi.
  - In a short discussion while looking at the map, lead students to these insights:
    - As many creeks and rivers flow into the Mississippi, the river can have devastating floods that submerge miles of territory.
    - To keep the waters from overflowing, people along the Mississippi have built up the natural river banks, called “levees”. In emergencies they will sometimes pile up sandbags and other material to raise the levees. Selection #8 will tell a story about the flooding of the levees.

- Just as the many rivers connect to bring water down the river, this same connection allows for commerce to go up and down the river.
- One of the main means of travel up and down the river was the Steam Powered Paddle Boat. (See youtube video of paddle wheeler and picture of a paddle wheeler at end of this document)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55WIF3VRswQ>.)
- Passenger Paddleboats also provided musical entertainment.
- One common instrument was the *Steam Calliope*. Selection # 16 will share an interview with a paddleboat ship captain who was also a calliope player. (Youtube video links)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kODmr4TfuBU>  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcmweI3pQIM>

**STEP 3:** Play two selections from the cd *Songs of the Mississippi River*.

- ❖ Selection #8 *Ode to Willie Barnes, Sr*
- ❖ Selection # 16 *Captain Jack Hawley Interview*

**STEP 4:** DISCUSSION. Play each selection separately and then engage in discussion afterwards. Suggested questions are given below in bold, with basic answers likely to be given by younger students in plain text. Projection of lyrics will aid in remembering

❖ *Ode to Willie Barnes, Sr.*

- **In what way did the music in the story communicate feelings?**
  - It was a slow and bluesy music that communicated the sadness of the story.
  - It was traditional music from the Mississippi Delta and so was the kind of music the men would have listened to and sang.
- **What is this story about?**
  - A flood
  - Men working on the levee
  - People drowning
  - A man's daddy
- **Where did the story take place?**
  - On the Mississippi River
- **What was happening in the story?**
  - A flood
- **What were the men doing?**
  - Filling sandbags

- Building up the levee.
- Trying to save people from the flood.
- **What did the men see floating by?**
  - Drowned animals
  - Cows
  - Trees
- **What did some men do to try to save themselves?**
  - Swam off the levee and grabbed hold of things floating by.
- **How do you think the men felt?**
  - Scared
- **What details in the story tell you how the men felt?**
  - That they were crying all night.
- **What did the music add to the story?**

❖ Captain Doc Hawley Interview

- **In what way did the music add to the story?**
  - It let us hear the kind of music Captain Doc played.
  - It was a happy and funny music and made the story seem happy and funny.
- **What kind of boat did Captain Doc work on?**
  - Paddleboat
- **What musical instrument does he play on the boat?**
  - Steam calliope.
- **When did he start doing this?**
  - As a kid, 60 years ago.
- **What allows the calliope to make sounds?**
  - Steam going through a whistle
- **Why does the calliope go out of tune?**
  - The heat from the steam.
- **How hot do the whistles get?**
  - Hot enough to fry an egg.
- **What did the boats carry to entertain people?**
  - Bands
- **What did the showboats encourage people to do when they saw the villain in the shows?**
  - Throw rotten fruit
- **What kind of music was carried up the river by the New Orleans bands?**
  - Jazz
- **What great New Orleans musician traveled up the river that way?**
  - Louis Armstrong

## **STEP 5: STUDENT LIFE STORY**

TASK: Students will prepare and record a personal story.

After completing steps 1-4, students should be familiar with the idea of telling a personal story. Their task will be to record a story. This should not be regarded as a research project. Instead, it should be seen as a fun and creative process of telling a tale about one's self.

Additional guidance by the teacher might be required based upon the maturity level of the students.

- 1) Students will complete the Preparation Sheet as a means of determining what story they wish to tell.
- 2) Students will meet in small groups to review and critique each other's Preparation Sheets. Students should use the Rubric that is on the back of the Preparation Sheet.
- 3) After group assessment, students should rework their sheets if necessary (possibly as homework, or as an end of day assignment so the Teacher can review them)
- 4) After Teacher has reviewed the Preparation Sheets it might be advisable to meet with students to discuss the upcoming narratives. At Teacher's discretion, students could be required to prepare or use other artifacts such as posters, props, etc.
- 5) Older students should write out scripts for use in recording the narration.
- 6) Student recording of narrative: Students will record their narrations. Small groups of students should help each other in some quiet space while other students carry on with a different quiet assignment. Music can most easily be put on the narratives by playing music on a cd or from a computer during recording.
- 7) Viewing of narratives. Teacher should use discretion in case shy students are reluctant for their narrations to be viewed.

PREPARATION SHEET

STUDENT'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Will you tell a story about yourself, as Captain Doc did, about someone else, as Bruce Barnes did about someone you know?

What will your story be like? Happy, Exciting, Sad, Other ?

What title would you give to your story?

List at least 5 facts that you would relate in your story:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

What kind of music do you plan to use to communicate the feeling of your story?

Why did you choose that music?

Do you have a cd or other recording of that music?

## RUBRIC

- Sheet is completely filled in:  
YES    MOSTLY    ONLY PARTIALLY    NO
- STORY TITLE COMMUNICATES THE SUBJECT OF THE STORY  
YES    SOMEWHAT    NO
- THE FIVE FACTS GIVEN ARE CLEAR AND UNDERSTANDABLE  
YES    NO    SOMEWHAT
- THE FIVE FACTS GIVEN RELATE TO EACH OTHER  
  
YES    SOMEWHAT    NO
- THE SUGGESTED MUSIC WILL COMMUNICATE THE FEELING OF THE STORY  
YES    SOMEWHAT    NO

TEACHER NARRATION RUBRIC

- STUDENT SPOKE CLEARLY AND WITH SUFFICIENT VOLUME

1            2            3            4            5

- NARRATION WAS LOGICAL AND EASY TO FOLLOW

1            2            3            4            5

- NARRATION WAS INTERESTING

1            2            3            4            5

- NARRATOR PROPERLY COMMUNICATED THE EMOTION AND FEEL OF THE STORY

1            2            3            4            5

- MUSIC ADDED TO THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF THE NARRATION

1            2            3            4            5

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_ x 4= \_\_\_\_\_ -





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