



## FEATURE

# APPALACHIAN MUSIC: THE ROOTS OF AMERICAN MUSICAL STYLES

*Meets National Core Arts Anchor Standards 7-9, 11*

## OBJECTIVES

- Perceive and analyze artistic work. (Re7)
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. (Re8)
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. (Re9)
- Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding. (Cn11)

## MATERIALS

- *Music Alive!* magazines (Vol.41 No.1)
- Computer or mobile device with internet access

## START

Ask your students to read *Appalachian Music: The Roots of American Musical Styles* on pages 10-13. Then, go over the following highlighted words. [This reinforces comprehension and vocabulary.]

**TRADITIONAL** – produced, done, or used in accordance with tradition.

**OLD-TIME** – denoting traditional or folk styles of American popular music

**FIDDLE** – a violin, especially when used to play folk music.

**CELTIC** – a branch of the Indo-European family and include Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, Breton, Manx, Cornish.

**BANJO** – a stringed musical instrument with a long neck and a round open-backed body consisting of parchment stretched over a metal hoop like a tambourine, played by plucking or with a plectrum.

**BALLAD** – a poem or song narrating a story in short stanzas. Traditional ballads are typically of unknown authorship, having been passed on orally from one generation to the next as part of the folk culture.

**SAWSTROKE** – a powerful, rhythmic short bowing technique that became synonymous with Appalachian music.

**DULCIMER** – a musical instrument with a long-rounded body and a fretted fingerboard, played by bowing, plucking, and strumming. Also called mountain dulcimer.

**FOLK PROCESS** – the act of imparting historical information through speaking rather than writing or reading.

**STRING BAND** – an old-time music or jazz ensemble made up mainly or solely of string instruments. String bands were popular in the 1920s and 1930s and are among the forerunners of modern country music and bluegrass.

**HARMONICA** - a small rectangular wind instrument with a row of metal reeds along its length, held against the lips and moved from side to side to produce different notes by blowing or sucking.

## DEVELOP

As a class, watch the video on old time fiddling.

- How did the two players interact with one another?
- What techniques in the video are advanced or difficult techniques?
- How did the music make you feel? Did it make you move, or want to dance?

## LISTEN TO THE MUSIC IN HEAR THE MUSIC.

- How important is it to know what early Appalachian music sounded like in order to play it? Why do you think so?
- Can you describe how this music sounds?
- Can you tell which instruments are in each song?
- Why were Appalachian groups largely string bands?
- What do you think is important about preserving early music?
- What does this tell you about how historians figure out what happened in the past?
- How do you think we could help the historians of the future know about what the music of our time is like?
- Can you detect a steady beat?
- Does this music sound like today's music? How does it sound different?

Compare Aaron Copland's "Appalachian Spring" to the traditional ballad "Simple Gifts."

- Can you hear the similarities between the two pieces?
- Does it sound different arranged for a symphony orchestra?
- Why do you think the ballad served as inspiration for Copland?

## CLOSE

How has Appalachian music influenced music as we know it? Should we take any additional efforts to preserve its history?

## ASSESS

- Did the students read the article?
- Did they review the vocabulary words?
- Did they answer the supplemental questions?