

# NIGHT TRAIN TO NASHVILLE



*Teacher's Lesson Kit*



HONOR THY MUSIC®



# **NIGHT TRAIN TO NASHVILLE**



*Teacher's Lesson Kit*





*This lesson kit contains materials designed to help teachers prepare students for an in-depth tour of the exhibit*

## **Night Train to Nashville: Music City Rhythm & Blues, 1945-1970.**

*This lesson kit addresses specific curriculum objectives in music, social studies, and language arts for students in grades 6-12.*

*All curricular connections are based on the Tennessee state curriculum standards and are indicated numerically.*

## **ABOUT THE EXHIBIT**



*Night Train to Nashville* describes one of the most important live music scenes in the South, where developing artists such as Little Richard and Jimi Hendrix spent hours learning their trade on local bandstands, and where major stars such as Ray Charles, James Brown, and B. B. King visited frequently to play in local clubs or record.

The exhibit also tells the story of local singers and the independent record labels for which they recorded, and of the international hits and the great-but-obscure misses those record sessions sometimes produced. Part of the *Night Train* exhibit looks at 50,000-watt radio station WLAC, whose late-night DJs blasted R&B across the nation, when virtually no one else was doing so, and at a small,

daytime-only station, WSOK (later WVOL), which was one of the first in the country to adopt an all-black format. The exhibit story also recalls *Night Train* and *The!!!!Beat*, two pioneering syndicated R&B TV series staffed with Nashville talent.

Above all else, *Night Train to Nashville* is a story whose drama resides in its near-complete disappearance from public view. Until recent CD reissues called attention to this episode in Nashville history, all but the participants themselves and a scattering of devoted historians and fans had virtually forgotten it.

Information about some of the specific people and places who are a part of this history are found throughout this lesson kit.



## 1

MUSIC CITY  
USA

## Tennessee State Curriculum Standards:

## Language Arts

2.02 Write for a variety of audiences and purposes.

2.04 Compose drafts of written works.

2.10 Write expressively in order to develop an effective writing style.

## Social Studies

1.0 Culture encompasses similarities and differences among people, including their beliefs, knowledge, changes, values, and traditions. Students will explore these elements of society to develop an appreciation and respect for the variety of human cultures.

6.0 Personal development and identity are shaped by factors including culture, groups, and institutions. Central to this development are exploration, identification, and analysis of how individuals and groups work independently and cooperatively.



★ CLIFFORD CURRY AT NASHVILLE'S  
CENTENNIAL PARK, CIRCA 1968. ★

**Objective:** Students will write to reflect on their perceptions of Nashville as Music City. They will use these writings in a post-visit activity to examine if and how their perceptions change about Nashville after seeing the *Night Train to Nashville* exhibit and discovering Nashville's R&B history.

**Prep Time:** None

**Materials:** Paper and Pencil

**1. Ask students to write one page addressing the following questions, and then encourage students to share their thoughts with the class:**

- What do you think of when you think of Nashville?
- What is Nashville famous for?
- What nickname have you heard for Nashville?
- Where did you hear it?
- Why do you think Nashville has this nickname?
- Have you ever heard Nashville called Music City?
- How do you think Nashville got this nickname?
- Do you associate a particular kind of music with Nashville? Why?

**2. Keep these essays for use in the post-visit lesson.**

**3. Please send a copy of these writings to the Museum prior to your visit.**

**Mail to:**

School Programs Coordinator  
Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum  
222 Fifth Ave. South  
Nashville, TN 37203



## 2 | NASHVILLE JUMPS

### Tennessee State Curriculum Standards:

#### Music

**6.0** Students will listen to, analyze, and describe music.

**9.0** Students will understand music in relation to history and culture.

#### Social Studies

**1.0** Culture encompasses similarities and differences among people, including their beliefs, knowledge, changes, values, and traditions. Students will explore these elements of society to develop an appreciation and respect for the variety of human cultures.

**5.0** History involves people, events, and issues. Students will evaluate evidence to develop comparative and causal analyses, and to interpret primary sources. They will construct sound historical arguments and perspectives on which informed decisions in contemporary life can be based.

**Objective:** Students will examine the words of a song written in 1946 about Nashville to evaluate the writer's view of the city and as a basis for discussion of Nashville's importance to rhythm & blues music. Students will also evaluate the music of the song and discuss the meaning of the term "rhythm & blues."

**Prep Time:** Five minutes to set up CD player and cue CD

**Materials:** CD player, lesson kit CD, "Nashville Jumps" lyric sheet

**Teacher's Note:** The song "Nashville Jumps" makes reference to whiskey and drinking, a theme common in popular music. Please examine the lyrics and listen to the song before doing this activity with students, to make sure you are comfortable with its content.



### 1. Share the following with students:

We are going to listen to a song about Nashville written and performed in 1946 by Cecil Gant. First, we will focus on the style of the music and the musical instruments in the song. Raised in Nashville, Gant was an army private in California when he recorded his breakthrough hit, the enduring blues ballad "I Wonder," which went to #1 on the R&B charts in 1944. Later, we will discuss what the words tell us about the writer's feelings toward Nashville.

**2. Distribute the "Nashville Jumps" lyric sheets for students to reference as they listen to the song. Play "Nashville Jumps" (lesson kit CD, track #1), and discuss the following questions with students:**

- What style of music do you think this is? Why do you think this?
- Do you like the song? Why or why not?
- What instruments do you hear?
- How would you describe the vocals?
- How is it similar to or different from the music you listen to at home or in the car?





3. Share the following with students:

"Nashville Jumps" by Cecil Gant is an example of rhythm & blues, or R&B, music.

- Do any of you listen to R&B?
- What is it?
- How would you describe it?
- Who are modern R&B performers you know?



The term "rhythm & blues," or "R&B," came into common usage in the late 1940s to describe an African-American popular music that evolved primarily from pre-war jazz, blues, and gospel. This music became popular with both black and white audiences all over the United States. During this same time period, many other styles or genres of music were emerging as well, such as bluegrass and rock & roll.

4. Play "Nashville Jumps" again, encouraging students to listen closely to the words, and then use the following questions for discussion:

- How is Nashville described in the song?
- What other Tennessee references are made in the song?
- How do you think the singer feels about Nashville?
- What is the storyline of the song? What has happened to the singer?
- Why would he "rather be in Nashville?"
- What do you think the singer means by the phrase "Nashville really jumps"?
- How would you change this song to fit Nashville today?
- Complete this line, while thinking about Nashville as it is right now: Nashville really \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Share the following with students:

In the 1940s and 1950s, when jazz and blues flourished in black nightclubs and theaters, and the gospel influence had taken hold in churches, Nashville was segregated. Segregation meant that races were kept apart inside public buildings and businesses. Many who played R&B music learned their craft in the rigorous education programs of the city's black high schools and colleges, such as Pearl High School and Tennessee State University. Nashville became a center for rhythm & blues music, with a rich live-music scene; vigorous radio, recording, and television activity; and important retail shops and mail-order outlets for R&B recordings. We will learn more about these aspects of Nashville's history in other lessons.



## Tennessee State Curriculum Standards:

## Social Studies

**1.0** Culture encompasses similarities and differences among people, including their beliefs, knowledge, changes, values, and traditions. Students will explore these elements of society to develop an appreciation and respect for the variety of human cultures.

**4.0** Governance establishes structures of power and authority in order to provide order and stability. Civic efficacy requires understanding rights and responsibilities, ethical behavior, and the role of citizens within their community, nation, and world.

**5.0** History involves people, events, and issues. Students will evaluate evidence to develop comparative and causal analyses, and to interpret primary sources. They will construct sound historical arguments and perspectives on which informed decisions in contemporary life can be based.

**6.0** Personal development and identity are shaped by factors including culture, groups, and institutions. Central to this development are exploration, identification, and analysis of how individuals and groups work independently and cooperatively.

**Objective:** Students will examine historical photos of Nashville's life to discuss how segregation was a part of our community. They will look at how the music community was often more integrated than the rest of Nashville. Students will discuss the "Jim Crow" laws to understand the national climate during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.

**Prep Time:** None

**Materials:** Lesson kit photos

**Teacher's Note:** *There are many books available at the public library on the topic of segregation. The Downtown Nashville Public Library has many resources on this topic in its Civil Rights Room. For information on scheduling a visit for your class to the Downtown Nashville Public Library Civil Rights Room, call 615-862-5804. In addition,*

*you may encourage students to visit the Civil Rights Room on their own. Students may view films there including "With All Deliberate Speed," about the integration of Nashville schools, and "Anatomy of a Demonstration," a CBS documentary about a non-violent resistance workshop conducted in Nashville in 1960. Some specific information about the term "Jim Crow" is given below, and more can be found on the Web at [www.jimcrowhistory.org](http://www.jimcrowhistory.org).*

**1. Show students the photo "FIVE SATINS AT WAR MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM." Tell students the photo was taken in 1957, and then discuss the following questions:**

- What is happening in the photo? What kind of event is this?
- Where does it look like it is taking place?
- What do you notice about the performers?
- What do you notice about the audience?
- Are you familiar with the "Jim Crow" laws? What are they?
- Where have you heard them referred to and in what context?

**2. Share the following with students:**

This photo was taken during the time of "Jim Crow" segregation, meaning that races had to be kept apart inside public buildings and businesses.

The term "Jim Crow" originated as a character in a minstrel show of the 1830s. Minstrelsy was a type of theater in which white actors performed in "blackface" makeup. By the 1850s, the Jim Crow character was a standard in minstrel show acts. How this term came to be synonymous with segregation in the late 1800s is not clear, but by 1900 the term was generally identified with any law or action



that deprived African Americans of their civil rights. Through the 1900s and into the civil rights era of the 1950s and 1960s, this term continued to refer to various laws that were discriminatory toward blacks.

R&B music had white fans, as seen in the photo, but because of the “Jim Crow” laws, R&B performers performed separate shows, one for black audiences and one for white audiences, or they performed one show with separate seating for whites and blacks. These rules were often ignored by the musicians themselves. Let’s look next at photos depicting this.

**3. Show students the photos “JIMMY SWEENEY RECORDING SESSION” and “BOBBY HEBB ON THE GRAND OLE OPRY.” Then discuss the following questions:**

- What is taking place in each of these photos?
- What do you notice about the people in the photos?
- How are these photos different from the War Memorial photo?

**4. Share the following with students:**

Country and R&B performers worked together in studios and performed together on stage at a time when they could not sit together in the audience at a performance. In some ways, the Nashville music community was more integrated than the general public.

**5. Discuss the following questions, or have students respond to these questions in their journals:**

At this time in history, why do you think musicians often worked together regardless of the color of their skin?

Ask students to share their thoughts about segregation and this period in our history.

### **The Five Satins at War Memorial Auditorium Photograph**

#### **Background Information**

*This 1957 photograph of the Five Satins was taken at Nashville’s War Memorial Auditorium. The Five Satins’ most successful song, “In the Still of the Nite,” was their first single. In 1956, this song took the Connecticut-based group to #3 on the R&B charts and #24 on the pop charts.*

### **Jimmy Sweeney Recording Session Photograph**

#### **Background Information**

*Nashville native Jimmy Sweeney was a songwriter and performer who wrote for the country publishing company Acuff-Rose Publications. He also wrote songs for country legends such as Marty Robbins. Jimmy Sweeney is pictured here in a 1958 recording session surrounded by elite Nashville recording session musicians. These particular musicians—(left to right) guitarist Hank Garland, bassist Floyd “Lightnin’” Chance, songwriter Boudleaux Bryant, and pianist Floyd Cramer—made their living working mostly on country recordings. All but Bryant were recording-session musicians. Bryant made his living as a songwriter. Bryant and Cramer are members of the Country Music Hall of Fame®.*

### **Bobby Hebb on the Grand Ole Opry Photograph**

#### **Background Information**

*Bobby Hebb is a member of a large and well-known Nashville family of musicians. He wrote “Sunny,” which became a huge pop hit in 1966. He began his career as a child entertainer at the Bijou Theater. As a teenager, Hebb worked for future Country Music Hall of Fame® member Roy Acuff and his band, the Smoky Mountain Boys. Hebb is pictured here performing with the Smoky Mountain Boys on the stage of the Ryman Auditorium ca. 1950, as part of the Grand Ole Opry. The other Smoky Mountain Boys on stage with Hebb are (left to right) Robert Lunn, Jimmie Riddle, Howdy Forrester, Oral “Curly” Rhodes, Joe Zinkan, and Roy Acuff.*



# 4 | KNOW WHERE YOU LIVE

## Tennessee State Curriculum Standards:

### Social Studies

**1.0** Culture encompasses similarities and differences among people, including their beliefs, knowledge, changes, values, and traditions. Students will explore these elements of society to develop an appreciation and respect for the variety of human cultures.

**4.0** Governance establishes structures of power and authority in order to provide order and stability. Civic efficacy requires understanding rights and responsibilities, ethical behavior, and the role of citizens within their community, nation, and world.

**5.0** History involves people, events, and issues. Students will evaluate evidence to develop comparative and causal analyses, and to interpret primary sources. They will construct sound historical arguments and perspectives on which informed decisions in contemporary life can be based.

**6.0** Personal development and identity are shaped by factors including culture, groups, and institutions. Central to this development are exploration, identification, and analysis of how individuals and groups work independently and cooperatively.

**Objective:** Students will utilize map skills to locate important Nashville R&B locations and will examine the effect of these cultural centers on their communities. Students will also identify positive and negative outcomes in terms of urban renewal and other changes within cities.

**Prep Time:** Ten minutes to hang or pin up map

**Materials:** Map included in kit, small-tipped permanent markers in three different colors

**1. Tell students that they will be discussing how changes to a city affect neighborhoods and culture. Explain that they will first identify the locations of places they know in Nashville today. Have students identify and mark the following locations on the map provided. Use one color of Magic**

**Marker to mark landmarks opened before 1970 and another color to mark landmarks opened or built after 1970.**

**Your school**

**Bellsouth "Batman" building,**

185 Second Avenue North, opened in 1994

**The Coliseum (Titans stadium),**

1 Titans Way, opened in 1999

**Gaylord Entertainment Center,**

501 Broadway, opened in 1996

**Country Music Hall of Fame® & Museum,**

222 Fifth Avenue South, opened in 2001

**Downtown Nashville Public Library,**

615 Church Street, opened in 2001

**Adventure Science Center** (formerly Cumberland Science Museum),

800 Fort Negley Boulevard, opened in 1944

**Greer Stadium** (home of the Nashville Sounds),

534 Chestnut Street, opened in 1978

**Tennessee State Capitol,**

600 Charlotte Avenue, opened in 1853

**Municipal Auditorium,**

417 Fourth Avenue North, opened in 1962

**Ryman Auditorium** (originally Union Gospel Tabernacle),

116 Fifth Avenue North, opened in 1892

**War Memorial Auditorium,**

301 Sixth Avenue North, opened in 1925

**Tennessee State University,**

3500 John Merritt Boulevard, opened in 1912

**Jefferson Street**

**The section of I-40 that runs parallel to Jefferson Street,**  
opened in 1968

**2. Ask students to locate and mark on the map places that are answers to the following questions:**

- Where do you live?
- Where do you like to shop? Why?
- Where do you buy music?
- Do you ever see live music? Where? Who?
- What are the locations of places where you do other things for enjoyment? See movies? Have dinner? Play sports?





**3. Discuss the following questions as a class:**

Do you notice any patterns in the locations of the places where you spend your time? What are they?

Are these places close to where you live or go to school? Why do you think this is the case?

**4. Share with students the following information about each location as you place them on the map:**

We are now going to examine on the map locations of businesses that no longer exist but were very important to rhythm & blues music in Nashville as well as to the African-American community during the late 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. We are going to mark on the map the location of each of the following in a third color of Magic Marker.

**BIJOU THEATER,**

423-427 Fourth Avenue North (currently the site of Municipal Auditorium), opened in 1904

*The Bijou Theater was a main venue for African-American entertainers touring through Nashville after 1916.*

**CLUB BARON,**

2614 Jefferson Street (currently the Elks Lodge), opened ca. 1956

*Little Richard was a regular performer at Club Baron before he was a national star, and he often speaks of Club Baron as a place where he knew he would be paid well for his performances.*

**CLUB DEL MOROCCO,**

2417 Jefferson Street, opened in 1935

*Club Del Morocco is one of the places Jimi Hendrix got his start playing guitar professionally. He was a member of the house band.*

**NEW ERA CLUB,**

multiple locations after opening near the corner of Fourth Avenue and Charlotte Avenue, opened in 1939

*The New Era Club hosted the biggest R&B stars passing through Nashville, such as B.B. King and Etta James, who recorded her live album Etta James Rocks the House there.*

**BROWN'S DINNER CLUB AND HOTEL,**

1610-1612 Jefferson Street, opened ca. 1949

*Located in the Jefferson Street neighborhood, this hotel would host African-American musicians passing through town.*

**RANDY'S RECORD SHOP,**

corner of North Water and Franklin Streets, Gallatin, opened in 1946

**ERNIE'S RECORD MART,**

177-179 Third Avenue North, opened in 1946

*Major sponsors of WLAC, these two record shops became major national outlets for R&B records and spawned their own labels, Dot Records and Excello Records, respectively.*

**5. Consider the following questions:**

- Where are most of these places located?
- What part(s) of town?
- Do you notice a pattern of any kind, such as being on or near a particular street or in a particular neighborhood?
- Why do you think this pattern exists?

**6. Share the following with students and use the discussion questions provided:**

Jefferson Street and downtown Nashville were business centers where clubs and record shops were located. This is where much of the Nashville R&B music scene developed. During this time of segregation, Jefferson Street not only was important musically, but also was a main center of the black community in Nashville. By day, African-Americans did their banking, grocery shopping, laundry, or went to the beauty parlor on the street. By night, it was a lively entertainment district where people could go out to dinner, hear live music, and gamble.

The life of the downtown black community changed drastically when a federally funded urban renewal project, the Capitol Hill redevelopment of the 1950s, did away with most of the black commercial district centered on Fourth Avenue North. In 1957, the Bijou



Theater gave way to the wrecking ball and the subsequent construction on its site of the Municipal Auditorium. The arrival of the interstate highway a decade later had a similar impact on Jefferson Street.

Also, as Nashville was integrated, blacks had more choices of where to spend time and money. There were options other than Jefferson Street for dining, entertainment, shopping, and other daily activities.

**7. Assign students the following roles, and ask them to discuss the following questions as if they were that individual and had a community meeting about upcoming changes to the city. As students assume their roles, they should consider what priority is important to them in their profession:**

- Club Del Morocco worker
- Jefferson Street homeowner
- Jefferson Street neighborhood resident currently driving to another neighborhood to work
- Owner of Brown's Dinner Club and Hotel
- Jefferson Street resident who works for the company that would build the I-40 interstate
- Musician in the Jefferson Street nightclubs

**Discussion Questions:**

- Will the construction of I-40 be good for our community? Why or why not?
- What will be the negative effects of I-40 on our community?
- How will the construction of this interstate affect you?
- What will this do to the music of our community?
- Are you concerned about the music establishments in our community? Why or why not?

- How will this affect our neighborhood's residents?
- How will this affect the culture of our neighborhood?
- What are some good outcomes of the changes?
- What are some negative outcomes?

**8. Once the role-playing is complete, ask students to respond to the following questions based on their own life experiences:**

- What changes have you seen in the city and your neighborhood since you were born? New houses or apartment buildings, new streets, new businesses, more or less traffic?
- How have they affected you or people you know?
- What has been positive about these changes?
- What has been negative?
- What changes would you like to see in your city or neighborhood?

**9. As a class, choose some of the answers that were given to the last question and use the chalk or white board to create a list of pros and cons if that particular change occurred in the city. Also, consider who would be affected and how.**

**Teacher's Note:** You may extend this lesson by encouraging students to visit Jefferson Street as a class or on their own. A representative from Jefferson Street United Merchant's Partnership (JUMP), a Jefferson street development group, may be willing to visit your class. For information about JUMP, call 615-726-5867. You may also learn more about Jefferson Street from JUMP's website [www.jumptojefferson.com](http://www.jumptojefferson.com).



# 5 | HEY, MR. DJ

## Tennessee State Curriculum Standards:

### Social Studies

**1.0** Culture encompasses similarities and differences among people, including their beliefs, knowledge, changes, values, and traditions. Students will explore these elements of society to develop an appreciation and respect for the variety of human cultures.

**3.0** Geography enables the student to see, understand, and appreciate the web of relationships between people, places, and environments. Students will use the knowledge, skills, and understanding of concepts within the six essential elements of geography: world in spatial terms, places and regions, physical systems, human systems, environment and society, and the uses of geography.

**5.0** History involves people, events, and issues. Students will evaluate evidence to develop comparative and causal analyses, and to interpret primary sources. They will construct sound historical arguments and perspectives on which informed decisions in contemporary life can be based.

**6.0** Personal development and identity are shaped by factors including culture, groups, and institutions. Central to this development are exploration, identification, and analysis of how individuals and groups work independently and cooperatively.

**Objective:** Students will examine the influence that Nashville radio had locally and nationally on R&B music, including record sales from Nashville area record shops.

**Prep Time:** None

**Materials:** Lesson kit handout of WLAC coverage map

**1. Assign students one of the following radio stations to listen to for three days or over a weekend. Ask them to consider the questions listed as they listen to these stations in preparation for class discussion. Once the students have had time to listen to their particular station, use the questions as a basis for class discussion about what they heard.**

### RADIO STATIONS

Call Letters	Frequency	Format
WAMB	1160 AM	Big Band
WBUZ	102.9 FM	New Rock
WKDF	103.3 FM	Country
WMDB	880 AM	Vintage Soul, R&B, and Gospel
WNPL	106.7 FM	Hip-Hop
WNRQ	105.9 FM	Classic Rock
WQKK	92.1 FM	Adult Contemporary R&B
WQZQ	102.5 FM	Top 40
WRLT	100.1 FM	Alternative Rock
WRQQ	97.1 FM	Hits of the '80s & '90s
WSIX	97.9 FM	Country
WSM	650 AM	Classic Country
WSM	95.5 FM	Country
WUBT	101.1 FM	Hip-Hop and R&B
WVOL	1470 AM	Vintage Soul and Gospel



★ DISC JOCKEY MORGAN BABB ("HAPPY JACK") ★  
OF NASHVILLE STATION WSOK, CIRCA 1954.



### Discussion Questions:

- How would you describe the music played on this station?
- Is this music you would normally listen to?
- How is it different from the music on the radio station you would normally listen to?
- How is it the same?
- Do you like the music you hear on your assigned station? Why or why not?
- How would you describe the DJs?
- What do you notice about the commercials on this station?
- What products or events are being advertised?
- Are the advertisements for local businesses or national ones or both?
- What age or type of person do you think the station is targeted toward?
- How do you think radio stations help musicians in their careers?

### 2. Share the following with students:

Just as you might listen to a particular radio station today to hear your favorite music, so did fans of R&B music listen to the radio in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. They had limited access to the music they wanted to hear, because very few stations played R&B. One that did was here in Nashville. It had a far-reaching signal, which made it an important resource for R&B acts from all over the country. The station was WLAC 1510 AM. Let's examine its impact on R&B music.

**3. Show students the WLAC coverage map. Tell them that this map shows how far away from Nashville the radio station could be heard. This map is not precise. Under**

**certain conditions, the frequency could be heard much farther away than shown. Keeping in mind that WLAC is located in Nashville, consider the following questions based on the coverage map:**

- What is the farthest north the station could be heard?
- The farthest east? west? south?
- If you were a performer, what would be the advantage of having your music played on WLAC?

### 4. Share the following with students:

Because its powerful signal reached so many people across the nation, WLAC provided an important outlet for R&B recording artists. By listening to WLAC, fans heard new R&B tunes and learned how to buy the hard-to-find music through the mail or in person from record stores such as Ernie's Record Mart in Nashville and Randy's Record Shop in Gallatin, both important advertisers on WLAC. Nashville radio station WSOK went on the air in 1951 and was one of the nation's first full-time, all-black stations. It later became WVOL-AM (1470) and continues to play R&B today at the same radio frequency.

**Teacher's Note:** *You may extend this lesson by encouraging students to interview older relatives and neighbors about this time in Nashville's history. Students should ask seniors if they ever listened to WLAC or WSOK and if they ever shopped at Randy's Record Shop or Ernie's Record Mart. Have students share what they learned as part of a class discussion.*





## 6 | A LITTLE BIT COUNTRY, A LITTLE BIT R&B

### Tennessee State Curriculum Standards:

#### Music

**6.0** Students will listen to, analyze, and describe music.

**7.0** Students will evaluate music and musical performances.

**9.0** Students will understand music in relation to history and culture.

#### Social Studies

**1.0** Culture encompasses similarities and differences among people, including their beliefs, knowledge, changes, values, and traditions. Students will explore these elements of society to develop an appreciation and respect for the variety of human cultures.

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**5.0** History involves people, events, and issues. Students will evaluate evidence to develop comparative and causal analyses, and to interpret primary sources. They will construct sound historical arguments and perspectives on which informed decisions in contemporary life can be based.

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**Objective:** Students will listen to two songs, recorded in both country and R&B versions, to compare and contrast the music and discuss the significance of how these songs were shared by black and white communities in the South.

**Prep Time:** Five minutes to set up CD player and cue CD

**Materials:** CD player and lesson kit CD

**1. Share the following information with students:**

During the late 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, Nashville emerged as a recording center and earned its identity as Music City USA. While we often associate Nashville with country music,

huge R&B hits were recorded here as well and were a part of Nashville's reputation as a music center. As we learned in an earlier activity, "Jim Crow" segregation laws were sometimes ignored within the music community. Making good music was a goal of those involved in a recording session. Race sometimes did not matter, and often good songs would be recorded and released for both the country and R&B markets. Let's look at some examples.

**2. Play the song selections listed below, and lead students in discussion of each set of recordings using the questions provided.**

#### Set 1

**"LOVE, LOVE, LOVE," TED JARRETT,  
lesson kit CD track # 2**

*Written and performed by Ted Jarrett, this version of "Love, Love, Love" released in 1955 did not chart. An interesting note is that Jarrett rarely recorded his own songs. Rather he wrote songs for and produced other artists. His song "It's Love Baby (24 Hours a Day)," performed by Louis Brooks & His Hi-Toppers, was near the top of the R&B chart at the same time Jarrett had a #1 country hit with Webb Pierce's version of "Love, Love, Love."*

**"LOVE, LOVE, LOVE," WEBB PIERCE,  
lesson kit CD track # 3**

*During the 1950s, Country Music Hall of Fame® member Webb Pierce had more #1 songs on the country chart than any other performer. His version of "Love, Love, Love" went to #1 in 1955.*

#### Set 2

**"RELEASE ME," KITTY WELLS,  
lesson kit CD track # 4**

*Country Music Hall of Fame® member Kitty Wells is often credited for breaking many barriers for women in country music. As the top female country star of*



her generation, she accumulated thirty-eight Billboard Top Ten records and eighty-four charted singles. She challenged the notion that women artists couldn't sell records and headline shows. Her 1954 version of "Release Me" went to #8 on the country chart.

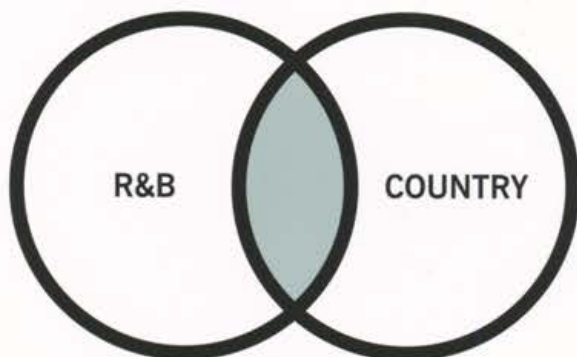
**"Release Me," Esther Phillips,  
lesson kit CD track # 5**

"Little Esther" Phillips enjoyed great success early in life as an R&B singer, registering seven Top Ten hits on the R&B charts in 1950. Later, she recorded R&B versions of country standards in a Nashville studio, and her 1962 rendition of "Release Me" went to #1 on the R&B chart and #8 on the pop chart.

**Discussion questions for each song:**

- Do you like this song? Why or why not?
- What instruments do you hear in each version?
- How would you describe the vocals in each?
- What musical styles are represented in each song?
- How do these recordings sound similar to or different from something you might hear on the radio today?
- Do you like one version of the song better than the other? Why or why not?
- Why do you think these songs were recorded by both R&B and country artists?

**Teacher's Note:** A good method for comparing these songs is to draw a Venn diagram on the chalk or white board and use it for comparison.



**3. Share the following with students and then consider the discussion questions provided:**

The songs "Love, Love, Love" and "Release Me" made for good recordings, whether in R&B or country style. "Love, Love, Love" began as an R&B song, written by a successful R&B writer and producer. "Release Me" comes from country songwriter Eddie Miller and made its first appearance as a country song. R&B music was performed predominantly by black musicians; country music was performed mostly by white musicians. But a hit song often would be recorded in both styles, transcending racial barriers.

**Teacher's Note:** The following discussion questions can be used for class discussion, or you may prefer that students write their responses in their journals:

- Can you think of songs today that are recorded in different musical styles? Give some examples.
  - Do you have any examples of this in your own CD collection? What are they?
  - What do you think about artists from one style of music recording songs from another?
  - Do you think it is a sign of respect for a musician to perform another social, regional, or ethnic group's style of music? Why or why not?
  - Do you think it is appropriate to record any song in any style of music regardless of your cultural background? Why or why not?
  - Is it appropriate to perform any song in any musical style?
- For example, let's look at our national anthem, "The Star Spangled Banner." What styles of music do you think we could put to this patriotic song?
- What styles of music would you consider appropriate for the national anthem?
  - Are there any styles you think would be inappropriate for the national anthem? Why or why not?



# 1 | MUSIC CITY, RECONSIDER ME

Tennessee State Curriculum Standards:

## Language Arts

- 2.02 Write for a variety of audiences and purposes.
- 2.04 Compose drafts of written works.
- 2.10 Write expressively in order to develop an effective writing style.

## Social Studies

- 1.0 Culture encompasses similarities and differences among people including their beliefs, knowledge, changes, values, and traditions. Students will explore these elements of society to develop an appreciation and respect for the variety of human cultures.
- 4.0 Governance establishes structures of power and authority in order to provide order and stability. Civic efficacy requires understanding rights and responsibilities, ethical behavior, and the role of citizens within their community, nation, and world.
- 5.0 History involves people, events, and issues. Students will evaluate evidence to develop comparative and causal analyses, and to interpret primary sources. They will construct sound historical arguments and perspectives on which informed decisions in contemporary life can be based.
- 6.0 Personal development and identity are shaped by factors including culture, groups, and institutions. Central to this development are exploration, identification, and analysis of how individuals and groups work independently and cooperatively.

**Objective:** Students will write to reflect on their perceptions of Nashville as Music City and how that might have changed as a result of their experiences with the *Night Train to Nashville* exhibit.

**Prep Time:** None

**Materials:** Paper and Pencil, essays written in lesson one

1. Distribute essays that students composed in lesson one before visiting the *Night Train to Nashville* exhibit. Remind students of the questions they were asked to address in their essay. These questions were as follows:

- What do you think of when you think of Nashville?
- What is Nashville famous for?
- What is a nickname you have heard for Nashville?
- Where did you hear it?
- Why do you think it has this nickname?
- Have you ever heard Nashville called Music City?
- How do you think Nashville got this nickname?
- Do you associate a particular kind of music with Nashville? Why?



★ EARL GAINES BAND AT NASHVILLE'S  
SUGAR HILL CLUB, EARLY 1960'S ★

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2. Ask students to write another one-page essay on how their answers to these questions may have changed, and then encourage students to share their responses with the class. Have students consider the following questions in their writing:

- What new things did you learn about Nashville?
- What surprised you?
- What impressed you most?
- Does living in Nashville affect what music you listen to? Do you think it would have in 1955?
- How has Nashville changed physically since 1955? Has this been good or bad? Why?
- Can you think of places in Nashville that you could go now to hear the following types of music?
  - Jazz
  - Rock
  - Blues
  - R&B
  - Country
  - Hip-Hop
  - Bluegrass
- Do you feel more open to different types of music? Why or why not?
- Does listening to different types of music make you more open to different groups of people? Explain.

3. Please send these writings to the museum. We are always interested in students' responses to our programs.

Mail to:

School Programs Coordinator  
Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum  
222 Fifth Ave. South  
Nashville, TN 37203



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