

# Year 8 Be Dramatic: MUSIC

Performers BLUES: Lead Belly, Lemon Jefferson, Robert Johnson

Performers RAGTIME: Scott Joplin, Thomas Alva Edison, William Eckstein

## BLUES

Created at the end of the 19th century, blues music is heavily influenced by African American history.

The original blues music evolved and grew into jazz from the 1920s.

African enslaved people brought their musical traditions with them when they were transported to work in the North American colonies.

African American music included spirituals (religious songs using vocal harmony) and work songs.

Enslaved people would sing work songs while working the plantations and religious spirituals in church.

Work songs were sung rhythmically in time with the task being done.

The early style of blues was known as country blues.

The majority of blues musicians had descendants from Africa

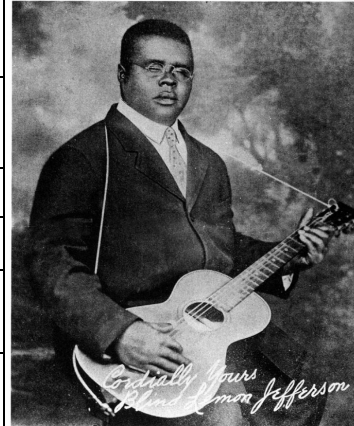
Blues music has had a huge influence on almost every popular musical style.

Many contemporary performers of styles as diverse as hip hop, grime and rhythm 'n' blues cite blues music and blues musicians as key informants for their work.

A blues piece consists of:  
 Melodies move within the blues scale - pentatonic – 5 notes.  
 The main performer often improvises over the blues scale  
 A walking bassline  
 The piece uses primary chords I, IV and V within the structure of 12 bars blues.  
 The instruments consist of: Piano, Guitar, Double Bass, Harmonica, Trumpet, Saxophone, Drum Kit.



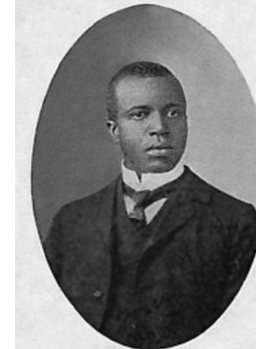
Lead Belly



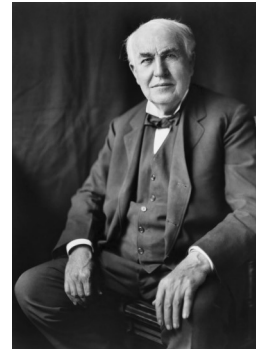
Blind Lemon Jefferson



Robert Johnson



Scott Joplin



Thomas Alva Edison



William 'Willie' Eckstein

## RAG TIME

Ragtime developed as a popular musical style at the end of the 19th Century. It has its origins in the saloon bars and dance halls of African-American communities.

It was originally played on solo piano.

Ragtime music was written down, not improvised. Scott Joplin was the most famous ragtime composer.

Ragtime music was played at a time before music could be recorded. But specific music could be played back on an instrument called a pianola.

What are the musical elements found in ragtime piano music? It has a:

- Syncopated or somewhat “ragged” – sounding rhythm
- Melody that avoids metrical beats by emphasizing notes that follow or anticipate the beat
- Score that is often written in ¾ time (though not always)
- Sense of lilt, forward motion, and swing
- Combination of Western and African cultures and musical influences

Influenced by African American banjo styles, the off-beat dance rhythms of the cakewalk, minstrel-show songs, and even certain elements of European music, ragtime piano music is definitely something you should consider learning.

**Example of Rag time music:**

[Maple Leaf Rag Played by Scott Joplin \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3113111111)

**Example of Blues music:**

[Blind Lemon Jefferson - Match Box Blues \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3113111111)

Even back in the early days of silent films, most movie theatres hired a musician or a group of musicians to provide music, mostly to drown out the sound of the film projectors and people talking. These musicians often played existing pieces of Western European classical music by composers such as Tchaikovsky and Wagner, along with folk and popular music. It was common for the same film playing in different theatres across the country to have entirely different musical accompaniments.

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## KEY VOCABULARY

**Rhythm** – A collection of beats

**Syncopated** – Rhythms that are off beat

**Ostinato** – A repeated pattern

**Pulse** – A steady beat within a piece

**Accented** – An emphasised beat

**Upright Piano** – A percussion instrument

**Chord** – More than one note played at the same time

**Improvisation** – When you make it up without preparation

**Melody** – The main tune within a piece

**Bassline** – The lowest part which accompanies the main piece

**Swing** – When the rhythm is long then short in a repeated pattern.

**Ragged rhythm** - The right hand plays a syncopated melody

**Tempo** – How fast or slow piece

**Pitch** – How high or low notes are

**Instrumentation** – What instruments have been used.



Sir Charles Spencer Chaplin KBE



## SILENT MOVIE

The first commercial movie theatres showing projected pictures started to open in 1902 in the United States.

Sometimes either the theatre owner or somebody hired by him might stand behind the screen providing dialogue and sound effects.

Thomas Edison and his counterparts experimented with synchronized discs but they did not always synchronize properly.

The most obvious and low cost answer to creating a film sound track that would convey some of what was happening on the screen was to provide music.

Theatre owners sought out pianists of either gender to provide entertainment between reels and accompany the action during.

Many premieres and some of the higher-end theatres used orchestras of varying size with pre-composed scores written specifically for a certain film.

In an effort to provide versatility and variety, special mechanical pianos and organs were installed in theatres that threw in a variety of sound effects and timbres not available on the standard upright piano.

1910 – 1929 - American culture and society underwent a period of great change between 1910 and 1929 due to the popularity of the cinema, silent films, talkies and the impact of jazz music.

Scott Joplin (c. 1868 – April 1, 1917) was an African-American composer and pianist. Dubbed the "King of Ragtime."

Sir Charles Spencer Chaplin KBE (16 April 1889 – 25 December 1977) was an English comic actor, filmmaker, and composer who rose to fame in the era of silent

Example of a Silent Movie: [ArchiTV, Buster Keaton - One Week - YouTube](#)