

STUDENT HANDOUTS

Comprehending Informational Texts

Historical Biography of NC Music Great

Doc Watson



A 4th Grade Unit Integrating
Language Arts and Social Studies

This unit accompanies the school show

CAROLINA LIVE!
OUR MUSICAL HISTORY

Created by Carolina Music Ways & the
Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools



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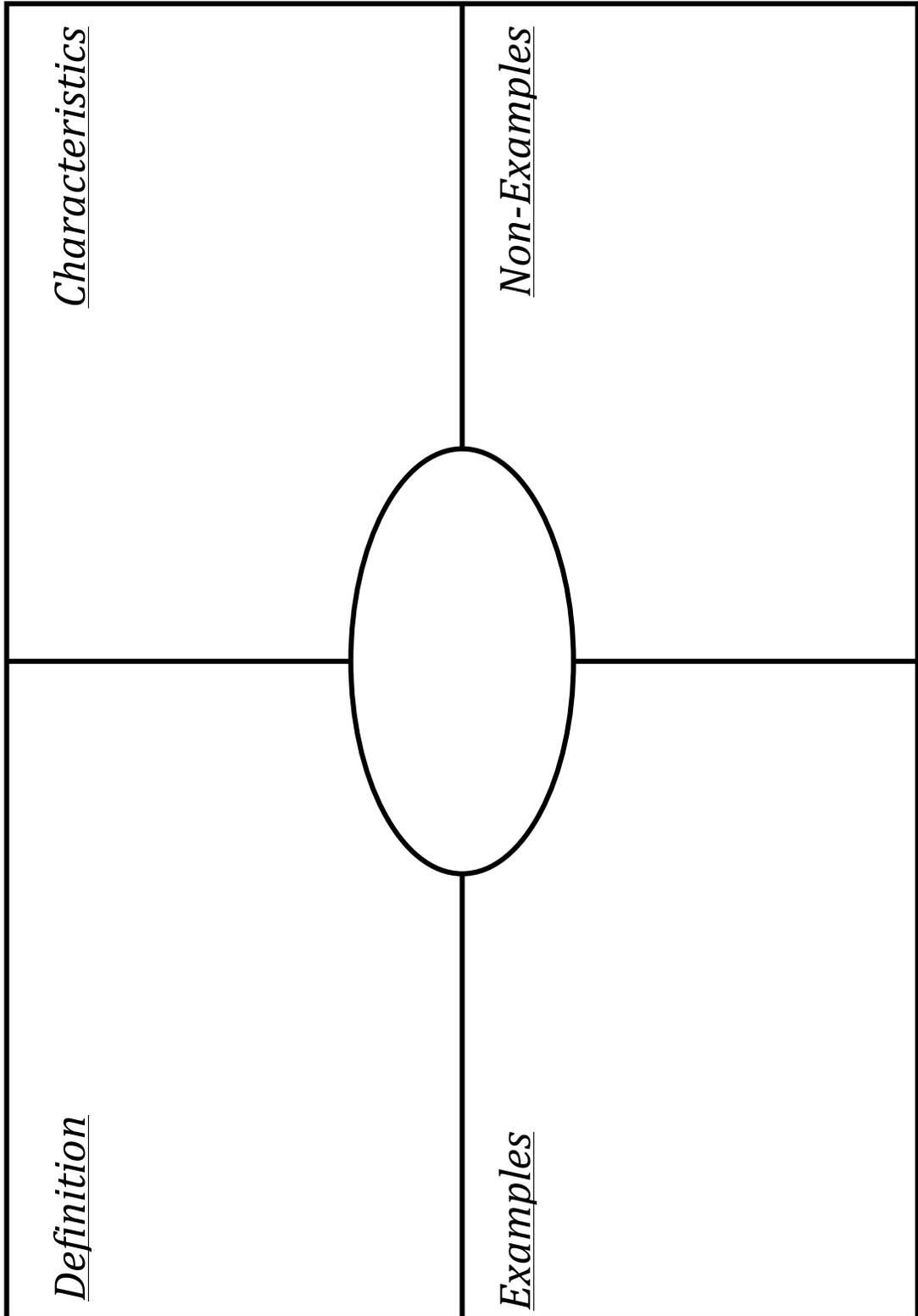
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<u>Definition</u>	<u>Sentence</u>
<u>I think</u>	<u>Draw</u>

Lesson 1 - Doc Watson: An Introduction
Vocabulary List

virtuoso: (noun) – a person who possesses exceptional musical ability

technique: (noun) – the manner and ability with which an artist or performer displays his skills

Appalachian folk music: Appalachian (adjective) refers to the region of the Appalachian Mountains, its people, and its culture. *Folk music* (noun) – music, usually simple in style, handed down through generations by oral tradition

universal: (adjective) – used or understood by everyone

acclaim(ed): (verb) – to applaud or praise

tour(ing): (noun) – traveling around from place to place

record(s): (noun) – a thin disc of vinyl plastic material with spiral grooves on both sides, upon which sound has been imbedded

impressive: (adjective) – admirable, remarkable

perseverance: (noun) – steady persistence in a course of action, especially in the face of difficulty

fingerstyle: (adjective) – describes a method of playing a stringed instrument using individual fingers.

flat pick: (adjective) – describes a method of playing a stringed instrument using a small piece of plastic or wood (a “flat pick”) designed for that purpose. Typically, the musician holds the flatpick between his thumb and index fingers.

chord(s): (noun) – a combination of three or more musical notes sounded at the same time

innovation(s): (noun) – something new or different

tone: (noun) quality or character of sound

scenic: (adjective) – having beautiful scenery

Blue Ridge Mountains: (noun) – a mountain range which extends from northern Virginia to northern Georgia; a part of the Appalachian Mountains

passion: (noun) – any strongly felt emotion, such as love or hate

(continued)

Lesson 1 - Doc Watson: An Introduction
Vocabulary List- continued

Scots-Irish: (adjective) – descendants of people from the lowlands of Scotland, who moved to Ireland in the 17th century. Many of these Scots-Irish later settled in the southern Appalachian region.

rockabilly: (adjective) – a style of popular music combining rock and roll with hillbilly music, usually played by white musicians in the southern part of the United States. Typically intense and rhythm-driven music, like that made popular by Elvis Presley

acoustic: (adjective) – of or related to a musical instrument which produces sound without being electrified

Folk Revival: (noun) – a period of time, beginning in the late 1950s and continuing through the 1970s, in which there was a renewed interest in the ballads of the British Isles as well as of the songs of the working class. Some music historians date the beginning of this revival with the release of the song “Tom Dooley” by The Kingston Trio.

legend: (noun) – a person who is famous

musicologist: (noun) – a person who studies the history, theory, or nature of music

baritone: (adjective) – referring to the second lowest male singing voice, between tenor and bass

gig(s): (noun) – a job, especially for a musician or other performer

rural: (adjective) – related to country life

repertoire: (noun) – the list of songs or pieces that a musician or other entertainer is prepared to perform

humble: (adjective) – not proud or arrogant; modest

sincere: (adjective) – truthful and open

pedestal: (noun) – a base that supports something like a statue. The expression “to be put on a pedestal” means to be lifted up above the ordinary people.

humility: (noun) – down-to-earthness, humbleness, modesty

Lesson 1 – Doc Watson (1923- 2012): An Introduction

Reading Selection (2 pages total)

Do you know the name of the North Carolina musician who brought the music of the North Carolina mountains to people around the country and world? He was a *virtuoso* guitarist who wowed audiences with his *technique* and speed. He was a talented storyteller who enchanted people with his tales of his home in the mountains. He performed a variety of musical styles. Most known for *Appalachian folk music* and bluegrass, he also played country, gospel, and blues. He thought of music as a *universal* language that brought people together. If you guessed Doc Watson, you are right!

- 2 Some people consider Arthel “Doc” Watson to be one of the finest guitarists America ever produced. During the course of his *touring* career, which was over fifty years, he produced more than sixty *records*. An eight-time Grammy Award winner, Watson also received the National Medal of Arts (1997), a National Heritage Fellowship (1988), and the North Carolina Heritage Award (1996). A life-size statue of Doc Watson was unveiled in Boone, North Carolina, in 2011. Highway 421 near Deep Gap, North Carolina, is marked the “Doc and Merle Watson Highway,” named after him and his son.

What makes his accomplishments especially *impressive* is that Watson became blind before he was one year old as the result of an eye infection. This handicap did not stop him, though. He was filled with courage, *perseverance*, and the desire to work hard to provide for his family, values he learned from his parents when he was a boy.

Watson was an outstanding *fingerstyle* and *flatpick* guitarist. He is often called the “father of the flat pick guitar.” When he played in this style, he used a flat pick to play the strings instead of using his fingers. Watson could play extremely quickly with a flat pick and make it seem effortless. This was a result of his natural musical talent and interest, combined with a lot of hard work and practice.

Watson is most famous for taking mountain fiddle tunes he heard growing up in the mountains and playing the same notes and *chords* on the guitar. Playing fiddle tunes on guitar was largely unknown when Watson began experimenting with it. Over time, his *innovations* in this style influenced and inspired many guitarists. However, no one could match Doc Watson’s speed and *tone*.

Watson first heard mountain fiddle tunes growing up in the *scenic Blue Ridge Mountains* of North Carolina. Watson lived his entire life in Deep Gap, a tiny town eleven miles from Boone. He spent his childhood there, and raised his own family there, too. Deep Gap was always the place Watson returned to after his musical tours. He loved his hometown, with its familiarity and sense of belonging.

Throughout his life, Watson had a deep *passion* for making music. As a boy, he and his family sang the traditional songs of their *Scots-Irish* and English ancestors. He learned to play the harmonica, banjo and his favorite, the guitar. As a young man, he played guitar for tips on the streets of Boone. In 1953, Watson joined a local *rockabilly* dance band and played electric guitar. In 1960, Watson returned to *acoustic* guitar and began his career as one of the most beloved musicians of the national *Folk Revival*. After the folk music craze ended, Watson’s performance career continued until his death at age 89.

Lesson 1 – Doc Watson (1923- 2012): An Introduction
Reading Selection (continued)

How did Watson go from being a poor musician in the North Carolina mountains to a world famous musical *legend*? The answer is Ralph Rinzler, a *musicologist* from New York. In 1960, Rinzler was visiting North Carolina to record mountain musicians and by chance, met Watson. Rinzler fell in love with Watson’s outstanding guitar technique, rich *baritone* voice, and down-to-earth, warm personality.

Before long, Rinzler was booking *gigs* for Watson in music clubs, on college campuses, and at festivals around the country. Watson became a star of the 1960s Folk Revival and was a big influence on young musicians such as Bob Dylan and Joan Baez. Audiences in cities like New York and Los Angeles could not get enough of Watson’s guitar wizardry, authentic mountain songs, and folksy stories of life in the *rural* mountain south. Watson was thrilled to be finally earning enough money to support his family back home.

- 10 In 1965, Watson’s son Merle joined him on his musical tours. Merle was fifteen years old and a talented guitar player. For over fifteen years, father and son performed around the country and world, including in Japan, Europe, and Africa. They typically did three hundred shows a year. Merle encouraged Doc to add different music styles to his *repertoire*, which Doc Watson was eager to do, as he loved all kinds of music. Doc considered Merle his best friend, musical partner, and guide. Sadly, in 1985, Merle died in a tractor accident at age thirty-six near his home in Lenoir, North Carolina.

In 1988, Doc Watson started MerleFest, a music festival in his son’s honor. The first year, the festival attracted a few thousand music lovers to the event at Wilkes Community College in Wilkesboro, North Carolina, not far from Watson’s home in Deep Gap. Now, around 80,000 people of all ages attend it annually, including many young people. MerleFest is one of the largest and most popular music festivals in the United States. People come from all over North Carolina, the country, and world. Festival attendees can hear bluegrass music, as well as blues, rock, and other styles. Doc Watson performed at MerleFest each year, including in 2012, just months before he died.

Doc Watson’s music and spirit will live on in the hearts of the millions of people who love him and his music. Fans love him not only because he was a one-of-a-kind musician, but also a kind, *humble*, and honest person. He treated everyone with respect, whether they were rich, poor, black, white, educated, uneducated, from the country, or from the city. Music was the common bond. When he spoke to audiences, whether of forty or four thousand, people felt they were in the presence of a *sincere*, loving, down-to-earth friend.

Watson did not want people to put him on a *pedestal* when he died. He wanted to be remembered as “just one of the people,” the words inscribed on his statue in Boone. North Carolinians of all ages can thank Doc Watson for his gift of *humility*. Watson overcame significant hardships to become a music legend loved around the world. Yet he wanted to be remembered as no different from other people. His message to us is that we are all capable of achieving extraordinary things. His life inspires us to be the best we can be.

Lesson 1 – Doc Watson: An Introduction
Multiple Choice Questions

Directions: Select the *best* answer from the choices given. Be prepared to share evidence from the reading selection about why you think your answer is the best one.

- 1 What is the main idea of this selection?
 - A North Carolinian Doc Watson is a great American musician.
 - B Doc Watson grew up in Deep Gap, North Carolina, near Boone.
 - C Doc Watson had a big influence on the 1960s Folk Revival.
 - D Doc Watson influenced the history of classical music in our country.

- 2 In the 2nd paragraph, what is the most likely reason the author writes about Doc’s Watson’s awards and honors?
 - A She wants the reader to watch the Grammy Awards on television.
 - B She wants people to know that Watson earned a lot of money.
 - C She wants the reader to know that Watson was important and famous.
 - D She wants the reader to think of Doc Watson as a great jazz musician.

- 3 Why were Watson’s accomplishments especially impressive?
 - A because he was blind before the age of one
 - B because he played a variety of musical styles
 - C because he could play flat pick guitar
 - D because he performed around the country

- 4 What was Doc Watson most famous for musically?
 - A playing fiddle tunes with a flatpick on the guitar
 - B entertaining his audience with stories between songs
 - C performing his music around the country and the world
 - D always returning to his home and family in Deep Gap

- 5 Why do you think Folk Revival audiences loved Watson?
 - A They enjoyed learning that Watson preferred their city life to his country home.
 - B They loved his authentic mountain music and his down-to-earth personality.
 - C They loved his piano playing and his singing of popular Broadway show tunes.
 - D They enjoyed hearing fiddle tunes played by a fiddler from the Blue Ridge region.

- 6 According to paragraph 10, Doc Watson considered his son Merle his “best friend, musical partner, and guide?” What does “guide” mean in this context?
 - A Merle provided his father with a seeing eye dog to lead him.
 - B Merle encouraged his father to play different styles of music.
 - C Merle helped his blind father get from place to place.
 - D Merle provided friendship to his father while they traveled.

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Lesson 1 – Doc Watson: An Introduction
Multiple Choice Questions (continued)

- 7 Why do you think the author provides information on MerleFest in the third to last paragraph?
- A She wants readers to learn more about the 1960s Folk Revival.
 - B She wants readers to learn to play Watson’s flat pick guitar style.
 - C She wants readers to learn about and attend the festival if they can.
 - D She wants readers to see the statue of Doc Watson on the stage at the festival.
- 8 Watson wanted to be remembered as, “just one of the people.” What does that tell you about him?
- A He felt he had risen above his humble background in the mountains.
 - B He didn’t care what people thought about the styles of music he played.
 - C He felt that people should think of him as someone special and different
 - D He didn’t let fame make him feel more important than regular people.

Lesson 1 – Doc Watson: An Introduction

“Ground Hog”

Shoulder up your gun and whistle up your dog, (repeat)
Off to the woods for to catch a groundhog.
Oh, groundhog.

Run here Sally with a ten foot pole, (repeat)
To twist this whistle-pig out of his hole.
Oh, groundhog.

Here comes Sal with a snicker and a grin, (repeat)
Groundhog gravy all over her chin.
Oh, groundhog.

Look at them fellers, they’re a-goin' wild, (repeat)
Eat that hog before he’s cooked or biled.
Oh, groundhog.

I dug down but I didn’t dig deep, (repeat)
There laid a whistle-pig fast asleep.
Oh, groundhog.

Now, the meat’s in the cupboard and the butter’s in the churn,
(repeat)
If that ain’t groundhog, I’ll be derved.
Oh, groundhog.

Well, you eat up the meat and save the hide, (repeat)
Make the best shoestring that ever was tied.
Oh, groundhog.

Look at them fellers, they’re about to fall, (repeat)
Eat till their britches won’t button at all.
Oh, groundhog.

Little piece of cornbread a-layin' on the shelf, (repeat)
If you want anymore you can sing it yerself.
Oh, groundhog.

Lesson 2 – Doc Watson’s Childhood
Vocabulary List

Depression: (noun) – a severe economic crisis in the United States which began in 1929. Usually called The Great Depression.

sibling(s): (noun) – brother and/or sister

corncrib: (noun) - a small ventilated structure (with slats in it) for the storage of unhusked corn

remote: (adjective) – out-of-the way, secluded, far distant

rugged: (adjective) – having a rocky, jagged, hilly, or broken surface

century(ies): (noun) – a period of 100 years. Using the plural form shows that Doc’s family had lived on the same land for several hundred years.

preserves: (noun) - food which is prepared in a way that keeps it edible, even after long storage. Usually refers to fruits or vegetables which are cooked and put in sterile jars.

sorghum molasses: (noun) – a thick, sweet syrup produced from sorghum, a grasslike plant with a thick stem

shuck(ing): (verb) – to remove and discard, as when removing the outer husk (shuck) from an ear of corn

lumber: (noun) – timber(trees) which is sawed into boards or planks

WPA: (noun) – Works Progress Administration – the former government agency (1935-1943) which began and carried out public projects, such as road-building, as a way to provide jobs for unemployed people

Christian Harmony: (noun) – a shape note and tune book compiled by William Walker and released in 1866 or 1867. Used widely throughout western North Carolina as part of a singing tradition.

jug(s): (noun) – a large container, usually made of earthenware, glass, or metal, with a handle, a narrow neck, and sometimes a cap or a cork

moonshine: (noun) - illegally produced liquor, usually corn liquor, as was common in the rural areas of the southern United States

(continued)

Lesson 2 – Doc Watson’s Childhood
Vocabulary List (continued)

elective(s): (noun) – something, such as a subject in school, that is not required; an option

matron(s): (noun) - in this case, a woman with special responsibilities in running a hospital, school, or other institution

hillbilly: (noun) – a term often used negatively to describe someone from a remote, backwoods area, particularly the southern mountains of the United States

logging industry: (noun) – the work of cutting down trees and taking them to sawmills

handicapped: (adjective) – physically or mentally disabled

crosscut saw: (noun) – a saw used for cutting wood perpendicular (across) the grain. This saw, which requires two people to operate, has a handle on each end of the blade.

Lesson 2 – Doc Watson’s Childhood
Reading Selection

DOC WATSON’S CHILDHOOD

Family:

Doc Watson was born in 1923 and grew up in Deep Gap, North Carolina, in a large family during the *Depression*. He lived with his parents and eight *siblings* in a mountain log cabin with a tin roof. The family did not have much money, but there was plenty of love. His parents were devoted to Doc and his brothers and sisters. Doc’s siblings were his best friends. Together they roamed around the countryside, fields, and woods. Though he was blind, Doc played like they did. They sledded down mountains, splashed in the creek, climbed trees, jumped on corn in the *corncrib*, and played in the barn.

Home:

It was *remote* and *rugged* in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina where Doc and his family lived on land that had been in the Watson family for *centuries*. Doc and his siblings enjoyed a simple life together in the log cabin his father built from trees from nearby hillsides. The cabin had no running water or electricity. The mud between the logs did not keep the cold out in the winter. Often, Doc and his siblings awoke to frost on their pillows. Behind the cabin were the barn, garden, and fields of wheat and other crops. A cellar cut into the hillside kept *preserves* for the winter.

Work:

- 3 The Watson family’s strong work habits ensured that they never went to bed hungry during the Depression. The family grew most of what they ate, including corn and buckwheat; and they made their own *sorghum molasses*. Doc’s mother and sisters cooked and cleaned, did laundry, sewed clothes, tended the garden, canned fruits and vegetables for the winter, and churned butter from the milk from the family’s two cows. Doc also helped by *shucking* corn, shelling peas, picking potatoes in the field, and feeding the animals. Doc’s father and brothers farmed their land and hunted for food. They also cut down trees from nearby hillsides for firewood and to sell to local *lumber* companies. In addition, Doc’s father worked on *WPA* construction jobs when they were available. Although Doc and his siblings wore patched overalls, there was always food on the table and enough of their mother’s molasses biscuits and cornbread to enjoy.

Faith:

- 4 Doc’s family was very religious. The Watsons were Baptists, as were most of their neighbors. Every Sunday, rain or shine, Doc and his family walked three miles to their small country church. His father was the leader of their church choir. Doc regularly sang along to his father’s favorite hymn, “The Lonesome Pilgrim.” Religion did not end on Sunday for the Watsons. Every evening of the week, Doc’s father led the family in daily devotional readings from the Bible, as well as in prayers and in hymn singing from the *Christian Harmony* songbook. Due to their religious beliefs, Doc’s parents avoided community events where *jugs of moonshine* were passed around, including barn raisings, square dances, log rollings, ground clearings, and quilt-making parties. *(continued)*

Lesson 2 – Doc Watson’s Childhood (**continued**)
Reading Selection

Blind School:

When Doc was ten years old, he left his family and travelled by bus to the Raleigh School for the Blind. It was located two hundred miles east of Deep Gap. He did not have enough money to come home often. Doc felt homesick and lonely.

Although he was unhappy at the Raleigh School for the Blind, Doc received a good education there. When he arrived, he did not know how to read and write because he had not attended school at home in Deep Gap. A good learner, he moved up to grade level quickly. Doc studied math, spelling, reading, penmanship, geography, history, and science. He also took *electives* such as orchestra, chorus, shop, and library. The school had an excellent music department. Doc took piano lessons and studied piano tuning.

Many of the children and some of the teachers made fun of Doc’s country ways. One year at a student talent show, Doc volunteered to play the banjo and sing. He happily performed “I Like Mountain Music” and other songs. After the show, one of the *matrons* told him he was too conceited and slapped him on the face. She felt embarrassed that he played “*hillbilly*” music and not classical music, which she considered more respectable. Doc felt deeply hurt. When he was thirteen, he left the school and refused to return.

Crosscut Saw:

- 8 Back home in Deep Gap, Doc felt depressed. He sat at home and felt useless while his brothers and father worked outdoors all day. His father observed Doc’s sad state of mind. Doc needed something to do. Determined to help his son, he made a decision that would change Doc’s view of himself forever.

Doc’s father and brothers worked in the *logging industry*. In 1937, it was the biggest industry in the state. Like other farmers in the mountains, Doc’s father and brothers chopped down large trees to make extra money. They sold the trees to logging companies for cash and kept some of the *lumber* to burn in their stove at home. But their job of chopping down huge trees was too dangerous for Doc.

Doc’s father had a safer job in mind for his fourteen-year-old *handicapped* son: working a *crosscut saw*. This job would keep Doc out of the way of falling trees. Doc held the handle on one end of the saw while his father held the handle on the other end. With the blade in between them, they cut into lumber the huge trees their brothers had chopped down. It was tiring work, but what a sense of accomplishment for Doc! He was happy and proud that he could help his father cut the winter’s firewood for their family.

Doc appreciated that his father did not overprotect him because of his blindness. Learning to work a crosscut saw gave him confidence that he was a useful person who could do what he set his mind to do. Years later, Doc looked back at that life-changing experience with these words: “That one thing, [my father] putting me to work, realizing I was worth something, might have been the thing that gave me the nerve to tackle music as a profession and get out there and face the world.” (Gustavson, p.53)

Lesson 2 – Doc Watson’s Childhood
Multiple Choice Questions

Directions: Select the best answer from the choices given. Be prepared to share evidence from the reading selection about why you think your answer is the best one.

- 1 What *best* describes Watson’s childhood growing up with his family in the Blue Ridge Mountains?
 - A high income and sad
 - B high income and happy
 - C low income and sad
 - D low income and happy

- 2 The setting where Watson grew up can be described as:
 - A urban
 - B suburban
 - C rural
 - D industrial

- 3 According to paragraph 3, what work do you think the Watson family did *not* do?
 - A grow their own food to eat
 - B churn butter from family cows
 - C make pottery to sell at local markets
 - D cut trees to sell to lumber companies

- 4 What evidence *best* supports the first sentence in paragraph 4, “Doc’s family was very religious?”
 - A Doc’s father’s favorite hymn was “The Lonesome Pilgrim.”
 - B Doc’s father led the family in daily evening devotionals.
 - C Doc’s parents enjoyed going to parties with moonshine served.
 - D The Watson’s were Baptists, as were most of their neighbors.

- 5 What *best* describes Doc’s experience at the Raleigh School for the Blind?
 - A enjoyable and educationally enriching
 - B lonely and educationally lacking
 - C lonely and educationally enriching
 - D enjoyable and educationally lacking

(continued)

Lesson 2 – Doc Watson’s Childhood
Multiple Choice Questions
(continued)

- 6 In the first sentence in paragraph 8, what does “depressed” mean?
- A sad
 - B curious
 - C imaginative
 - D bored
- 7 What is the *most important* information we learn about Doc in the section entitled “Cross Cut Saw”?
- A His fathers and brothers worked in the logging industry.
 - B Learning how to use a cross-cut saw built his confidence.
 - C He held one handle of the saw while his father held the other.
 - D Farmers in the mountains chopped down trees for extra money.
- 8 From the last paragraph, we learn that
- A Doc felt angry at his father for putting him in the way of falling trees.
 - B Doc felt like that was a useful person because he was not allowed to work.
 - C Doc appreciated that his father put him to work with a cross-cut saw.
 - D Doc gained confidence to tackle music because his father overprotected him.

Lesson 2 – Doc Watson’s Childhood
“Shady Grove” Lyrics

Cheeks as red a blooming rose
And eyes are the prettiest brown
She's the darling of my heart
Sweetest little girl in town

Wish I had a glass of wine
And bread and meat for two
I'd set it out on a golden plate
And give it all to you

CHORUS

Shady Grove, my little love
Shady Grove I say
Shady Grove, my little love
I'm bound to go away

And when I was a little boy
I wanted a Barlow knife
Now I want little Shady Grove
To say she'll be my wife

A kiss from pretty little Shady Grove
Is sweet as brandy wine
Ain't no girl in this old world
That's prettier than mine

CHORUS

I went to see my Shady Grove
She was standing in the door
Her shoes and stockins' in her hand
And her little bare feet on the floor

I wish I had a big old horse
And the grain to feed him on
Little Shady Grove to stay at the house
And feed him when I'm gone

CHORUS

Peaches in the summertime
Apples in the fall
If I can't have little Shady Grove
I don't want no gal at all

If I had a needle and thread
As fine as I could sew
I'd sew my pretty girl to my side
And down the road we'd go

CHORUS

Lesson 3 – Musical Beginnings

Vocabulary List

traditional: (adjective) – related to the handing down of stories, ideas, songs, etc. by word of mouth or practice

Appalachian folk music: *Appalachian* (adjective) refers to the region of the Appalachian Mountains, its people, and its culture. *Folk music* (noun) – music, usually simple in style, handed down through generations by oral tradition

ancestor(s): (noun) – a person from whom one is descended, such as a grandparent

Blue Ridge Mountains: (noun) – a mountain range which extends from northern Virginia to northern Georgia; a part of the Appalachian Mountains

British Isles: (noun) – a group of islands in western Europe, including Great Britain, Ireland, and others. (The country of Scotland is in the British Isles.)

ballad(s): (noun) – a simple song of folk origin, often sentimental or romantic

fiddle: (noun used as an adjective) – a musical instrument, a violin

generation: (noun) – a group of people who were born and lived their lives about the same time

descendant(s): (noun) – offspring; someone who comes from a particular family line

forebear(s): (noun) – ancestors, people who lived earlier in time

isolated: (adjective) – alone, separated from other people

remote: (adjective) – far apart, located at a distance, out-of-the-way

devotionals: (noun) – a short religious service, often observed in a home

Scots-Irish: (adjective) – descendants of people from the lowlands of Scotland, who moved to Ireland in the 17th century. Many of these Scots-Irish later settled in the southern Appalachian region.

harmonica: (noun) – also called a mouth organ, a small musical instrument consisting of a rectangular case containing a set of metal reeds connected to a row of holes. Inhaling and exhaling over these holes makes the musical tones.

Victrola: (noun) – the name of a particular brand of phonograph from the Victor Talking Machine Company

(continued)

Lesson 3 – Musical Beginnings
Vocabulary List (continued)

phonograph: (noun) – also called a record player, a device for reproducing sounds stored on a record

commercial: (adjective) – suitable for a wide audience, prepared with an intention to sell

rural: (adjective) - related to country life

handy: (adjective) – skillful with the hands

granary: (noun) – a storehouse for grain

Big Band music: (noun) – a danceable style of music associated with jazz music which was popular in the US in the 1930's and 1940's, played by a large (12-25) ensemble of percussion, woodwind, and brass instruments

Dixieland jazz: (noun) - a style of jazz music which developed in New Orleans at the start of the 20th century. This early jazz style combined brass band marches, ragtime music, and blues. A well known Dixieland jazz song is “When the Saints Go Marching In.”

Lesson 3 – Musical Beginnings
Reading Selection
MUSICAL BEGINNINGS

Appalachian Folk Music

Doc Watson grew up in the 1920s and 1930s surrounded by the music and lyrics of *traditional Appalachian folk* songs. In the mid 1700s, Doc’s *ancestors* and other settlers in the *Blue Ridge Mountains* of North Carolina brought many of these songs with them across the ocean from the *British Isles*. These early settlers performed traditional *ballads* and *fiddle* tunes on front porches and at square dances. They taught their children how to play the songs, who years later taught their children. This was how the old songs were passed down from one *generation* to the next in the mountains. When Doc was growing up, he heard *descendants* of the early settlers playing and singing the same tunes in the same types of settings as their *forebears* had done over a century earlier. *Isolated* in the *remote* mountains, young Doc lived in a world where in many ways, time stood still.

Not all the traditional folk songs that Doc heard were old dance songs and ballads from the British Isles, however. Over the years in the Blue Ridge Mountains, musicians had created their own songs, too. These uniquely American songs were a mix of musical influences from the British Isles and from Africa. The first main instruments in traditional Appalachian music were the fiddle and the banjo. Growing up in the mountains, Doc heard the sounds of the fiddle, an instrument that originated in Europe, as well as the sounds of the banjo, an instrument that originated in Africa.

Appalachian children such as Doc Watson learned traditional Appalachian folk songs from family members and neighbors. Doc sang traditional hymns led by his father at church and at the family’s evening *devotionals*. Doc heard his mother sing traditional hymns and folk songs around the house when she was cleaning and cooking. She knew these songs by heart, including ballads such as “The House Carpenter” that her *Scots-Irish* ancestors had brought to the North Carolina mountains more than a century earlier.

Harmonica

The first instrument Doc Watson learned to play was the *harmonica*. When he was five years old, his father gave him one for Christmas. This gift became a yearly tradition. Doc loved to play the harmonica. His father taught him traditional Appalachian folk songs, such as “Sally Gooden” and “Molly Hare.” Young Doc practiced these songs around the house and yard and, before long, he played the harmonica very well.

First Record Player

When Doc was six, his parents bought a used *Victrola* record player from a relative. It was a windup *phonograph* that came with fifty 78 rpm records. Doc and his family loved sitting around the phonograph and listening to records that opened up a new world of music for them. They enjoyed listening to popular songs of the 1920s, including country, blues, and gospel songs. Some of the songs were similar to the Appalachian folk music Doc and his family grew up with, but the songs on the records had a more polished, *commercial* sound. The collection included records by *rural* white performers, such as the Carter Family, as well as by black blues guitarists, such as Mississippi John Hurt. Doc loved them all and especially soaked up the guitar playing styles. (*continued*)

Lesson 2 – Musical Beginnings
Reading Selection
Musical Beginnings (continued)

Homemade Wire Instrument

A few years later at age ten, *handy* Doc created a homemade stringed instrument to accompany his harmonica playing. Years later, he described his invention: “After I had learned to play the harmonica a little bit, my dad built a big new woodshed and *granary*...I got me a piece of steel wire...and I strung it from the door...I sure had a lot of fun picking on the wire and playing the harmonica along with it.” (Gustavson, p. 61)

First Banjo

In 1934, when Doc was eleven and home on vacation from the Raleigh School for the Blind, his father surprised him with a special gift. Doc’s father had made him a banjo, carving the neck out of maple and the hoop out of hickory. Doc was thrilled to receive his first real stringed instrument. His father taught him his first banjo songs, including “Rambling Hobo,” and the blues tune “Georgie Buck.” Doc took his banjo back with him to school. He played it for fun and to make himself feel less homesick.

First Guitar

At thirteen, Doc got his first guitar. One day while home on vacation from school, his Dad heard him practicing some guitar chords he learned from a friend at school. Doc was using a guitar he borrowed from a cousin who lived nearby. Doc’s father made a deal. If Doc could play a complete song by the time he got home from work, he would help his son buy his own guitar. After work, Doc played “When Roses Bloom in Dixieland” by the Carter Family. Doc’s father took Doc to a store in Wilksboro to help him buy a guitar, a \$12 Stella. Doc paid for some of it from money he saved. His father paid for the rest, contributing his hard-earned money to encourage Doc’s musical talent.

First Radio

About three years later in 1939, when Doc was around fifteen, the Watson family bought their first radio. Now an even bigger world of music was open to Doc. He listened to local stations, as well as to stations from states as distant as Texas and Minnesota. He soaked up the music of popular country musicians of the day, such as Jimmy Rogers, his favorite. He and his family enjoyed listening to the Grand Ole Opry out of Nashville, Tennessee, on Saturday nights. Doc listened to more than country music, however. He also enjoyed listening to blues and jazz, including *Big Band music* and *Dixieland jazz*.

Street Performer

By age sixteen, Doc was so good at guitar playing that he was ready to perform on the streets of Boone for money. Since buying his first guitar, he had practiced for three or four hours every day, sometimes sitting on the porch swing of his mountain home. Ninety percent of what he knew he taught himself from listening to records. The remaining ten percent he learned from other musicians. In Boone, Doc played his guitar for tips at places people met, like fruit stands, taxi stands, and in front of the barber shop. Before long, Doc gained the reputation of being an excellent singer and guitar picker who entertained listeners with his delightful jokes and mountain folktales between songs.

Lesson 3 – Musical Beginnings
Multiple Choice Questions

Directions: Select the best answer from the choices given. Be prepared to share evidence from the reading selection about why you think your answer is the best one.

- 1 Many of the traditional Appalachian folk songs Doc Watson grew up singing originally came from
 - A China
 - B the British Isles
 - C the Blue Ridge Mountains
 - D North Carolina

- 2 What *best* describes what the author meant when she says at the end of the first paragraph, “Doc lived in a world where, in many ways, time stood still” ?
 - A Life in the mountains changed faster than it did in cities.
 - B Life in the mountains was becoming more difficult.
 - C Life in the mountains changed very little over time.
 - D Life in the mountains was constantly changing every day.

- 3 What is the *best* evidence that the author’s purpose is to *inform* the reader?
 - A The author described Doc Watson by using facts and quotes.
 - B The author used sub titles to help the reader read faster.
 - C The author included a vocabulary list to assist the reader.
 - D The author described how she felt about Doc Watson.

- 4 The songs that Doc heard growing up in the mountains were a mixture of musical influences originally from
 - A North Carolina and Virginia
 - B the Blue Ridge Mountains
 - C Africa and the British Isles
 - D Deep Gap and Winston-Salem

- 5 What instruments, *in order*, did Doc learn to play as a boy?
 - A harmonica, banjo, and guitar
 - B guitar, banjo, and harmonica
 - C guitar, harmonic and banjo
 - D guitar, trumpet, and recorder

- 6 How did getting a phonograph and records “open up a whole new world of music” for Doc and his family?
 - A The new technology inspired them to want to learn to play the piano.
 - B The new technology gave them a better opinion of classical music.
 - C The new technology allowed them to hear more musicians and styles.
 - D The new technology allowed them to listen to good music together.

(continued)

Lesson 3 – Musical Beginnings
Multiple Choice Questions (continued)

- 7 What evidence suggests that Doc Watson listened to many music styles on the radio?
- A He listened to country music, as well as to Big Band and Dixieland jazz.
 - B His favorite country musician was Jimmy Rogers, a popular performer.
 - C He did not want to listen to the Grand Ole Opry on Saturday evenings.
 - D He listened to stations from many places, including Minnesota and Texas.
- 8 From the last paragraph, what can we learn about Doc Watson as a teenager?
- A He learned most of his songs from other musicians.
 - B Listening to records did not influence him very much.
 - C Hours of daily practice helped him improve his playing.
 - D When he entertained people, he never spoke between songs.

Lesson 2 – Musical Beginnings
Interview Activity

Directions:

- 1) You will need the reading selection for this lesson, “Musical Beginnings.”
- 2) With your small group, reread the paragraph assigned to your group. (See below.)
- 3) Write 3 -5 questions based on your paragraph for a pretend interview with Doc Watson. (Doc Watson will be an adult in the interview, and you will ask him about his childhood musical experiences.)
- 4) Practice the interview. (One of the group members will be the interviewer, and another will be Doc Watson.)
- 5) After you have practiced with your group, you will present your interview to the whole class.

Group 1: “Appalachian Folk Music”- 1st paragraph

Group 2: “Appalachian Folk Music” 2nd paragraph

Group 3: “Appalachian Folk Music” 3rd paragraph

Group 4: “Harmonica”

Group 5: “First Record Player”

Group 6: “Homemade Wire Instrument”

Group 7: “First Banjo”

Group 8: “First Guitar”

Group 9: “First Radio”

Group 10: “Street Performer”

Lesson 3 – Musical Beginnings
“Froggie West A- Courtin’”

Froggie went a-courtin' and he did ride, uh-huh
Froggie went a-courtin' and he did ride, uh-huh
Froggie went a-courtin' and he did ride
A sword and pistol by his side, uh-huh

He rode right up to Miss Mousie's door, uh-huh
He rode right up to Miss Mousie's door, uh-huh
He rode right up to Miss Mousie's door
And he hit it so hard that he made it roar, uh-huh

Then Miss Moussie let him in, uh-huh
Then Miss Moussie let him in, uh-huh
Then Miss Moussie let him in
And away they courted, it was a sin, uh-huh

He took Miss Moussie right on his knee, uh-huh
Took Miss Moussie right on his knee, uh-huh
Took Miss Moussie right on his knee
And he says “Miss Moussie, “Will you marry me?” uh-huh

Miss Moussie says, “I don't know about that.” uh-huh
Miss Moussie says, “I don't know about that.” uh-huh
Miss Moussie says, “I don't know about that
But I believe to my soul you have to ask Uncle Rat.” uh-huh

The old rat laughed as he give away the bride, uh-huh
The old rat laughed as he give away the bride, uh-huh
The old rat laughed as he give away the bride
He laughed and he laughed and he shook his fat sides, uh-huh

Where will the wedding supper be? uh-huh
Where will the wedding supper be? uh-huh
Where will the wedding supper be?
Away down yonder in a holler tree, uh-huh

(Continued)

“Froggie West A- Courtin’”
(continued)

What did he get for the weddin' gown? uh-huh
What did he get for the weddin' gown? uh-huh
What did he get for the weddin' gown?
The piece of hide of an old white hound, uh-huh

What will the weddin' supper be, mm-hmm, uh-huh
What will the weddin' supper be, uh-huh
What will the weddin' supper be
Two butter beans and a black-eyed pea, uh-huh

The first come in was a big June bug, uh-huh
The first come in was a big June bug, uh-huh
The first come in was a big June bug
A-dancin' around with a half a pint jug, uh-huh

Second come in was a bumble bee, uh-huh
Second come in was a bumble bee, uh-huh
Second come in was a bumble bee
A-dancin' around with a fiddle on his knee, uh-huh

The third man in was a little gray mouse, uh-huh
The third man in was a little gray mouse, uh-huh
The third come in was a little gray mouse
And he says, “Mr Froggie, can I rent you a house?” uh-huh

Froggie went a travelin' across the lake, uh-huh
Froggie went a travelin' across the lake, uh-huh
Froggie went a travelin' across the lake
And he got swallowed up by a big black snake, uh-huh



Dear Parents,

Your child recently completed a Language Arts and Social Studies unit on the late music legend from Deep Gap, **Doc Watson**. The unit taught your child about Doc Watson's childhood and career. Aligned with state and national standards, the unit included activities in vocabulary, comprehension, and writing.

The unit complemented the school show your child saw or will see, ***Carolina Live!—Our Musical History***. This school show presented by some of our state's best musicians features songs first made famous by historic music greats from our state, including Doc Watson.

Carolina Music Ways, a nonprofit group, created this show and this related unit. We hope that both the unit and the show have encouraged your child to learn more about North Carolina's great music. We also hope that your child feels inspired to pursue music. As a North Carolinian, he/she will be following in the footsteps of some of the world's best musicians.

For more information about North Carolina's diverse musical heritage and living traditions, please visit **www.carolinamusicways.org**. Visit the "Explore" section to dig deeper into North Carolina musical history, styles, and greats. This section also includes information on current-day events and festivals where you and your child can enjoy terrific North Carolina music.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Carlson, Ed.M.
Education Director
Carolina Music Ways
Winston-Salem