



BACKGROUND INFORMATION, USEFUL TERMS, RELATED
RESOURCES, EXTENDED LEARNING ACTIVITIES



“THE RICHNESS OF AMERICAN MUSIC COMES FROM THE MIXING OF
CULTURES AND TRADITIONS OF PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD.”

- RHIANNON GIDDENS

ABOUT SEASON 2 OF *MY MUSIC* *WITH RHIANNON GIDDENS*

Season two uses the American Transcontinental Railroad as the metaphor of a route rich with cultural influences and cross-cultural conversations among workers and communities affected by the construction.



USEFUL TERMS - EPISODE 1

- Banjo – A stringed instrument brought by and developed by enslaved Africans in colonial North America and the Caribbean. The banjo and its early music blend African and European musical traditions, creating a uniquely American form.
- Chinese pentatonic – A musical scale of five notes consisting of C, D, E, G, A.
- Lute – An pear-shaped, wooden stringed instrument popularized in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. The instrument was influenced by Arab and Persian stringed instruments of similar shape and style.
- Oud – A pear-shaped wooden stringed instrument from the Middle East. The name comes from the Arabic word for “the wood.” This instrument is a forefather of the European lute and guitar.
- Pick – As a noun, a pick is a small piece of plastic or metal used to pluck or strum a stringed instrument. Traditionally, picks could be made of bone, shell, or similar material. As a verb, to pick or describes the action of plucking a string on an instrument.
- Pipa – A pear-shaped wooden stringed instrument from China. The pipa is derived from the Persian lute and was introduced to China through the Silk Road.
- Plectrum – A tool used to pluck the strings of an instrument, similar to a pick.

RELATED RESOURCES

- American Railroad curriculum: Lesson 6: Chinese Immigrants –The Search for Gold Mountain and Lesson 9: Rock Springs Massacre (available through Journeys in Film)
- [Wu Man](#)
- [Silk Road Home Sessions with Wu Man](#) (YouTube video)
- [Introduction to the Pipa with Wu Man](#) (YouTube video)
- [Persia - The Getty](#)
- [Banjoes - Smithsonian Institute](#)
- [History of the Banjo - Bitter Southerner](#)
- [Chinese pentatonic scale](#) (Youtube video)
- [The Lute - Britannica](#)
- [The Mandolin - Britannica](#)
- [Yueqin - Met Museum](#)
- [History of Railroads and the Transcontinental Railroad - Library of Congress](#)
- [Railroads and the Making of Modern America](#)



EXTENDED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

These hands-on activities can be completed individually or in groups and extend learner engagement. They can be used with ANY episode from the series.

- Explore world instruments as a class <https://www.youtube.com/globalmusicianworkshop>
- Silkroad – Make a Pipa (YouTube video)
- In groups, learners research various stringed instruments from around the world and map their evolution and journey. Consider making a bulletin board or display of the class's research. (Create a group Google Slides presentation of musical instruments. Assign students (or pairs of students) instruments to research. Their slide could include a clear image of the instrument, a historic image (from a tapestry, stone carving, painting, etc.), a brief history of the instrument, and a clip of the instrument being played.)
- Have learners complete the **Music Listening handout** from the Journeys in Film website for one of the songs from one of the episodes.
- Have learners analyze one of the songs in an episode using the **Analyze a Song handout** from the Journeys in Film website. They can share their analysis with the class or use the handout as a starting point for a presentation on the song they selected.
- Lead learners through a collaborative music session using only their voices and bodies (for percussive elements, which was seen in Pura Fé's performance). This works best if learners sit in a circle, facing out. In creating the music, learners can hum, whistle, clap, stomp, snap, sing, click, etc. Have the "performance" start with one student making a sound and then have others add on to that with an emphasis on using their best listening skills. After this activity is complete, learners can do a journal response related to the activity, reflecting on how the music changed, what they contributed, and what the collaborative process was like.
- Lead students through an active listening/slow looking experience. Have learners re-watch one of the musical performances from one of these episodes. This time, as they listen and watch, ask learners to take notes about what they hear in the performance and encourage them to pay close attention to the body language of the musicians. An alternative is to have learners draw, sketch, and color as they listen to the music and share their creations with the class.
- Replay the section in episode 2 where Maeve Gilchrist speaks about the "thin place." Have learners brainstorm "thin places" they have visited, know about, or can imagine. Write a journal entry, letter, poem, song lyrics, or short story (flash fiction) inspired by "the thin place."
- Collaborate with the music department at your school, if possible, so that students can engage in an exploratory experience of different instruments.

EXTENDED LEARNING ACTIVITIES CONT.

These hands-on activities can be completed individually or in groups and extend learner engagement. They can be used with ANY episode from the series.

- Have learners write a music review of one of the songs or create a podcast about one of the songs. The **Music Analysis handout** or **Music Listening handout** can be used as a prewriting activity for the music review. Stress that their review should mention musical style, techniques, performance qualities, as well as the historical and/or cultural relevance of the song. (Both handouts are available on the Journeys in Film website)
- Explore rhythm as a class. Listen to Wynton Marsalis playing The Flight of the Bumblebee, which predominantly uses short rhythms. Then, listen to this B.B. King guitar solo, which contains many long rhythms.
- If you have learners in your classroom who are part of any musical performance groups (orchestra, jazz band, marching band, chorus, church choir, a rock band, etc.), organize them into groups of four. (Try to arrange each group with musicians from various types of musical experiences.) Conduct a panel discussion and Q&A session with each group of four, fielding questions about their music experiences from their peers.
- If your learners watched all four episodes, have them (in discussion or journal writing) reflect on the influence of family and environment on the musicians. Encourage them to compare and contrast the different upbringings and backgrounds of the featured musicians from each episode.
- Invite local traditional musicians to share their instruments and music with the class.
- Create a class playlist of traditional music to listen to during focused work time.



ABOUT JOURNEYS IN FILM

Journeys in Film is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the use of film to promote a richer understanding of our diverse and complex world.

JOURNEYS IN FILM RESOURCES AND SERVICES

We create educational resources that spark community discussions and/or promote proactive learning for youth, parents, educators in K-12 and higher education, homeschoolers, and other learning communities. We also **create impact materials for libraries and community organizations.**

We leverage our established educational relationships to **promote materials in active outreach** to these audiences. We **extend the reach of a film and its lifespan** in the educational marketplace and beyond.

We work with a wide array of partners (non-profit organizations, educational institutions, educators, museums, teacher training institutes) to **develop resources tailored to the individuals and communities we work with and the audiences they seek to reach.**

Our resources focus on cultivating human empathy and compassion, developing a deeper knowledge of global issues and current challenges, and encouraging civic engagement.



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educating for global understanding

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