

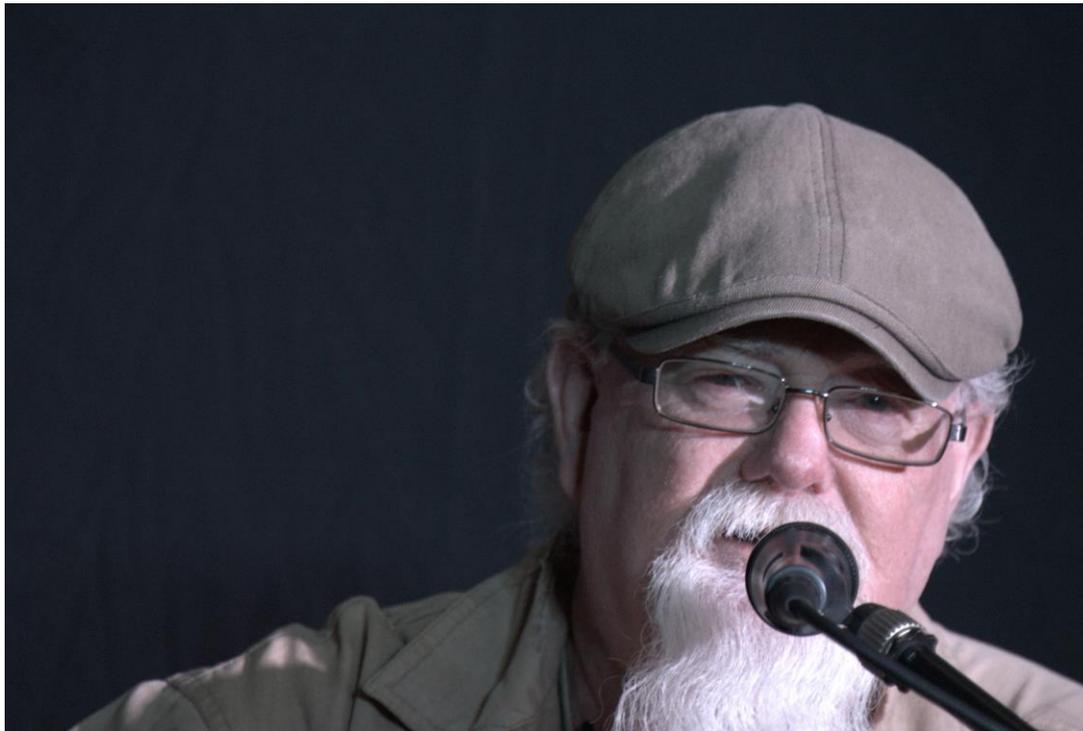
## Study Guide

**Russell Gulley**

***Intro: FROM TRADITIONAL MUSIC TO AMERICAN POP***

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Artistic Genre: Music

Performing Artist:  
**Russell Gulley**

# Alabama Touring Artist Program

presented by the Alabama State Council on the Arts

This Study Guide has been prepared for you by the Alabama State Council on the Arts in collaboration with the performing artist. All vocabulary that is arts related is taken directly from the Alabama Course of Study, Arts Education. With an understanding that each teacher is limited to the amount of time that may be delegated to new ideas and subjects, this guide is both brief and designed in a way that we hope supports your school curriculum. We welcome feedback and questions, and will offer additional consulting on possible curriculum connections and unit designs should you desire this support. Please feel free to request further assistance and offer your questions and feedback. Hearing from educators helps to improve our programs for other schools and educators in the future.

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## Set up:

Artists typically arrive 60 minutes before their scheduled performance in order to set up. Please have the space available to the artist as soon as she arrives.

All artists will need some kind of setup prior to arrival. Please communicate with the artist to discuss needs. Before arrival, please make sure floors are clean, and any electrical hook ups are in place for the artist. If she has asked to use your amplification system, please have it ready for a sound test as soon as the artist arrives. Please provide a staff person to assist the artist with set up.

## Role of the Audience:

Although many students may not choose to pursue professional careers in the arts, many will choose to remain lifelong participants in, and learners of, the arts. A role that all students may play is that of an appreciative, responsive audience member. This role is one that has lifelong value to the learner as well as to the performer. Learning appropriate audience behavior is an integral component of all of the arts education areas. Positive audience qualities are part of the overall goal of *Achieving Excellence Through Arts Literacy*.

- Alabama Course of Study: Arts Education;  
2006

Appropriate audience behavior includes sitting still and being very quiet during the performance. Audiences clap at the end of particular sections of the performance, or when they see something amazing that they want to tell the performer they really like. If a performer takes a bow, that is always a time to clap. You should not clap to music unless the performer asks you to. It is never appropriate to talk during a performance, unless in this instance the artist asks a question. We ask teachers and students to practice these rules of performance etiquette during the Alabama Touring Program productions.

### **What to expect**

*Intro: FROM TRADITIONAL MUSIC TO AMERICAN POP* is a 45-60 minute interactive musical presentation. Muscle Shoals musician, Russell Gulley, will perform traditional music, folk music and the blues, showcasing how each played a role in creating today's AMERICAN POPULAR MUSIC. During the performance, Mr. Gulley will focus on how the Muscle Shoals music tradition greatly influenced what we know today as American Pop. The students will be seated during the performance, but will be invited to participate by singing, clapping and creating and performing other verbal responses.

### **Historical Background:**

Folk songs are traditional in nature and Russell often refers to them as “people songs.” They are songs about everyday life and the activities we all participate in. They are songs about people. Russell performs blues as a form of folk music, and relates that there are many variations and styles of music that are really “folk” or “people” songs. There are cowboy songs, train songs, religious songs, party songs, and children’s songs. Almost every song that one can imagine may be considered folk music.

Often these “folk” songs are related to historical events, or social events, and are the forerunners of the music heard today on the radio, television, and in the movies. In fact, often today’s “pop” music draws heavily on folk traditions as its source.

For example, the blues as a “folk tradition” has its roots in West African culture. African melodic and rhythmic influences found in spiritual and work songs, along with call and response patterns, are elements of BLUES that greatly influenced the creation of the contemporary American pop, rock, and country music. Alabama’s rich music heritage, from blues to sacred harp and gospel music, and from rock and roll to country, is evidenced in examples of American pop music across the country. And the recording studio in Muscle Shoals is famed for playing a major role in the development of modern American music.

The **Muscle Shoals Sound Studio** was formed in *Sheffield, Alabama*, in 1969 when a group of four session musicians called *The Swampers* decided to leave the nearby *FAME Studios in Muscle Shoals* to create their own recording set-up. The four, *Barry Beckett* (keyboards), *Roger Hawkins* (drums), *Jimmy Johnson* (guitar) and *David Hood* (bass), then became known as *The Muscle Shoals Sound Rhythm Section* and were the first rhythm section to own a studio and eventually run their own publishing and production companies. Their backing and arrangements have been heard on many recordings, including major hits from *Wilson Pickett*, *Aretha Franklin*, and the *Staple Singers*, but a wide range of artists in popular music recorded hit songs and complete albums at the studio. They are referred to as "the Swampers" in the lyrics of "*Sweet Home Alabama*" by *Lynyrd Skynyrd*.

The group first came together in 1967 and initially played sessions in New York and Nashville, as well as on recordings made at *Rick Hall's FAME facility*. The initial successes in soul and R&B led to the arrival at the Muscle Shoals Sound studios of more mainstream rock and pop performers, including *The Rolling Stones*, *Traffic*, *Elton John*, *Boz Scaggs*, *Willie Nelson*, *Paul Simon*, *Bob Dylan*, *Dr. Hook*, *Elkie Brooks*, *Millie Jackson*, *Julian Lennon* and *Glenn Frey*.

- Wikipedia

#### **Websites you might visit:**

1. [www.pbs.org/theblues/classroom.html](http://www.pbs.org/theblues/classroom.html) : blues-oriented teaching materials, including background history, lesson plans and more.
2. [www.allmusic.com/album/big-blues-blues-music-for-kids-mw0000074788](http://www.allmusic.com/album/big-blues-blues-music-for-kids-mw0000074788) : child-friendly blues songs from
3. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxoGvBQtjpM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxoGvBQtjpM) : Big Mama Thornton (from Alabama) singing "Hound Dog" - a big hit for her 4 years before Elvis Presley's version
4. [www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyid=143716](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyid=143716) :The Legendary Muscle Shoals Sound
5. [www.traditionalmusic.co.uk](http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk) A Traditional Music Library
6. [www.al.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2015/09](http://www.al.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2015/09) 50 Years of Muscle Shoals Music in 15 Songs
7. [www.traditionalmusic.org/traditionalmusicdefinition.shtml](http://www.traditionalmusic.org/traditionalmusicdefinition.shtml) What is Traditional Music, a broad definition

### **Curriculum Connections:**

1. Music Education: correlate music in relation to history and culture
2. Music Education: understanding and performing rhythm patterns
3. Social Studies: Describe examples of conflict, cooperation, interdependence of groups, societies, and nations-using past and current events.
4. Social Studies: describe the culture of African slaves in America

### **Vocabulary:**

1. **folk music:** Any traditionally based music, songs passed down from one generation to the other, often performed acoustically although not always.
2. **The Blues** - A style of music that originated in African American communities in the South of the United States around the start of the 20th century. It evolved as a fusion of African music and European folk music, incorporating spirituals, work songs and ballads.
3. **Americana music:** Any music based on American “roots” styles, such as blues, country, gospel, jazz, etc.
4. **call and response** - A style of singing in which a melody is sung and responded to by one or more singers or players.
5. **beat** - pulse of the music.
6. **rhythm** - Term that denotes the organization of sound in time; the temporal quality of sound creates a “feel”.
7. **measure or bar** - Group of beats containing a primary accent and one or more secondary accents, indicated by the placement of bar lines on the staff.
8. **syncopation** - shifting of the accent, by stressing normally unaccented beat or beats.
9. **tempo** - the speed of music, such as slow or fast.
10. **song lyrics:** The words of a song
11. **melody:** The exact notes or pattern of a song that are sung

### **Suggested Activities to do before the performance:**

1. Research W. C. Handy, the “Father of the Blues” who was born in Florence, AL. Discuss why W. C. Handy was named the Father of the Blues.
2. Research Hank Williams, a major country music musician from Alabama. Where did he learn his style of music? How does it compare with blues?
3. Research “Pap” Baxter, major gospel music publisher, songwriter, and singing school teacher from Alabama.
4. Research Muscle Shoals and the music industry there. Name a major artist that recorded there. Who are “The Swampers”?
5. Ask students to find out from their parents or grandparents what music they enjoyed. Find out how they became aware of that music. Did their parents “pass the music down” to them?
6. Ask students to listen to one of their favorite songs and to decide for themselves which musical tradition influenced the singer or performer.

### **Suggested activities to do after the performance:**

1. Conduct group listening sessions where students select a traditional form of music (blues, country, gospel, “folk”, etc.)
  - Find and discuss a contemporary song that is influenced by that form of music.
  - Analyze the characteristics of the song. Beat, Rhythm, Lyric
  - Write a short essay about how the music makes you feel
2. Interview a local Musician
  - How did he or she get started?
  - Did his or her family have a musical tradition?
  - What tradition of “folk” music influenced this musician’s style?
  - Does he or she tour or travel to perform? Where? What is life on the road like?

3. Watch the Muscle Shoals Documentary on DVD in the classroom.  
(Teachers - preview content for age appropriate determination)
  - Compare and contrast Muscle Shoals to the student's home town. Consider population, economy, culture, etc.
  - Ask students to describe their personal "dream" and how they will make their dream a reality. Compare and contrast that dream to the dreams of musicians they have studied.
4. Create Visual Art:
  - Create an abstract work of art that reflects the "feel" or rhythm of a traditional song.

**Reflective Questions to explore with students:**

1. Does your family have a "tradition"? What does that tradition mean to you and how important is it?
2. What music do you like to listen to? What is it about that music that makes you want to listen to it? Can you describe the beat, the melody, or the words that interest you?
3. How did today's performance make you feel? Did you feel connected to a tradition? Why?
4. When you listen to "your" music, after today's performance, where do you think your music fits traditionally? What is the "root" or traditional music that has influenced it and why do you think so?
5. How do you think our times are different from earlier times when traditional music was first created? Are current events or situations reflected in today's music? How?

**Finally:** If you are looking for a writing assignment we artists enjoy getting letters from students, especially those that answer some of these questions.