

# Comprehending Informational Texts

An Historical Biography of  
North Carolina Music Great  
**DOC WATSON**

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4<sup>th</sup> Grade Unit Integrating  
Language Arts and Social Studies

Created by Carolina Music Ways



This unit accompanies the school assembly show  
***Carolina Live!-Our Musical History.***

*Individual donors, as well as the Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County in partnership with Wells Fargo provided funds for the school show.*

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Dear Teacher,

Your students will see the assembly show **Carolina Live!-Our Musical History** at your school. This three-lesson unit complements the show and can be used before or after the show. We hope you and your students enjoy the show and this unit.

This **rigorous** unit provides your students with high-interest, informational texts about a musical legend, **Doc Watson**, who grew up and lived in Deep Gap, North Carolina, near Boone. The unit is designed to fit into **three 45-minute periods**. The unit can also be divided into more days using shorter periods. You may **use some or all of the unit** as time allows.

This unit is aligned with 4<sup>th</sup> grade Common Core standards for Language Arts and with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study for Social Studies and Music. Each lesson includes **vocabulary** and **comprehension** activities. **Writing activities** are provided in lessons 2 and 3. You may want to extend the writing activities into writing periods to allow students more time.

There are **two comprehension activity options** in the second and third lessons. One option is a **multiple choice** activity designed to give your students practice with mastering skills that will be tested on the **End of Grade Test** in 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Language Arts. The other comprehension option is more **creative**. You can choose one comprehension activity to use, or you can use both by assigning the multiple choice questions as homework or extra credit.

When the unit is done, we recommend that students save and **take their work home**. Please see our "**Letter to Parents**" on page 43.

We appreciate your feedback and participation. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Carolina Music Ways at [carolinamusicways@gmail.com](mailto:carolinamusicways@gmail.com).

Sincerely,  
*Elizabeth Carlson*  
Education Director  
Carolina Music Ways

*Elizabeth Carlson, Ed.M., researched and wrote this unit for Carolina Music Ways Music Heritage Resource Group. Mrs. Carlson has taught in elementary classrooms and reading clinics in Massachusetts and California, as well as in the Title I Program in the Winston-Salem/ Forsyth County Schools. She holds a BA in English/American Studies from Princeton University and an ED.M. in Language and Literacy from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Annie Jenkins, Carolina Music Ways Board Member, created the vocabulary lists and edited this unit. Mary Seibert, Arts Director at the Arts Based School in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, provided guidance. Salem College intern Kristin Kinney assisted with research on Watson's musicianship. Salem College intern Sarah Goscinski wrote the bluegrass overview.*

**The Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County** in partnership with **Wells Fargo**, as well as **individual donors**, provided funding for this unit's accompanying school assembly show, "**Carolina Live!-Our Musical History**."

### **Getting Ready: Technology**

**1. Power Point:** It is important to show students the power point on Doc Watson at the beginning of the unit. You may want to refer back to the power point in lessons 2 and 3. You may want to practice accessing these power points in advance. (The power points are in this "Curriculum " section of [www.carolinamusicways.org](http://www.carolinamusicways.org).)

**2. You-Tube:** It is suggested that in advance of teaching this unit, you go to You-Tube. Here you will find the songs in this unit's Listening Selections and sing-along songs, which are at the beginning and the end of each unit. You will want to select which You-Tube video of the songs you will use with your students. Remember to always use a version that has Doc Watson performing the song.

#### **Songs in Unit:**

##### Lesson 1:

"Black Mountain Rag"

"Groundhog Song"

##### Lesson 2:

"Shady Grove"

##### Lesson 3

"Deep River Blues"

Froggie Went A-Courtin'

## **Preparing Students for the Unit**

**Purpose of this Activity:** To motivate students and get them thinking in big-picture terms about the subject matter. (Before you begin this unit, you may want to read the bluegrass overview on page 44. Doc Watson is also known as a folk musician, as well as a gospel and a country blues performer.

**Procedure:** The following questions are designed to activate students' prior knowledge:

### **Connections Between Today's Music and Music of the Past:**

*"What styles of music do you like? Who are some of your favorite performers?"*

*"What are some ways today's American popular music is similar to American popular music of fifty years ago? What are some ways today's music is different from the music of the past?"*

*"Do you ever talk to your grandparents or great-grandparents about the music they liked when they were young? What did they like?"*

### **Music as Part of History:**

*"People don't always think of music as part of history, but it is. Music is part of North Carolina history and part of American history. Musicians sometimes create songs that express their thoughts and feelings about the time period in which they live."*

### **Fans as Part of History:**

*"In the future, it is likely that historians will study today's fan magazines and web pages to learn about the history of our time. These historians will learn what songs teenagers of 2013 liked listening to and the important topics in the songs."*

*"Do any of you read fan magazines or go to web sites about your favorite musicians? Please explain."*

*"What do you think future historians will discover when they study these magazines and web sites?"*

### **Musical Importance of our Region:**

*"The area where we live is especially rich musically."*

*(If students have already seen the school assembly show, ask the following:)*

*"What are some of the famous musicians from this area that you learned about in the show?"*

*"Do you remember the name of the bluegrass musician? He also is known for performing folk, gospel, and country blues songs."*

**Lead-In to Unit:** "During the next five lessons, we will learn about learn about a famous musician from North Carolina, Doc Watson."

*(continued)*

**Preparing Students for the Unit (continued)**

**Please Note:** How Doc Watson Got his Nickname

Some of your students may ask you how Doc got his nickname. His given name was Arthel. At age eighteen, he was performing on a radio show being broadcast live from a furniture store in Lenoir, North Carolina. The announcer said to the studio audience that he needed a shorter, snappier name for performing on the radio. A young woman shouted from the audience, "Call him Doc!" The name stuck.

Lesson 1 – Doc Watson: An Introduction  
**Lesson Plan**

**Pre Reading:**

**I. Materials:** Each student should receive

1. today's reading selection, "Doc Watson: An Introduction"
2. corresponding vocabulary list  
(can be a handout or can be projected at the front of the classroom)
3. multiple choice questions
4. "Groundhog" lyrics. (For templates, see "Student handouts" section.)  
(You will access this song via the internet later in the lesson.)
5. unlined paper and pencils for the drawing activity

**II. Listening Selections: Important Note:**

**If you do not have a copy of the CD, "The Essential Doc Watson,"** you will access the listening selection from the internet on You-Tube or another site of your choosing. Just put "Doc Watson" and "**Black Mountain Rag.**" in the search engine. The song is an Appalachian fiddle tune that Watson played with a flat pick on the guitar. It is one of his best-known and most often imitated songs in this style, which Watson is famous for. (See paragraph 4 in this lesson's reading selection.)

**III. Power Point:** Show students the power point on Doc Watson. It is recommended that you access this information ahead of time and download it. (The power point is in this "Curriculum" section of [www.carolinamusicways.org](http://www.carolinamusicways.org).)

Before or during the power point, ask students questions such as these to activate their prior knowledge:

*"What do you know about Doc Watson?"*

*"What do you remember about him and/or his music from the school show?"*  
*(if applicable)*

*"Have you ever heard bluegrass or folk music? Where? What did you think about it?"*

*"Do you know someone who likes to listen to or play these styles of music?"*

*"Where is Deep Gap? Have you ever been there or to nearby Boone?"*

**IV. Essential Questions for Reading Selection:**

**Who is Doc Watson?** (Possible answers: Folk and bluegrass musician from Deep Gap, North Carolina.)

**What styles of music is he most famous for playing?** (Possible answers: folk, bluegrass, flat pick guitar, fiddle tunes on guitar)

(continued)

## Lesson 1 – Doc Watson: An Introduction

### Lesson Plan

#### **V. Vocabulary Preparation:**

Review the **vocabulary list** for this lesson. Templates and examples of the **Frayer graphic organizer** are provided on the following pages for your convenience. (See "Student handouts" section for templates.) The Frayer model lends itself well to this unit; however, other graphic organizers may be used.

Most vocabulary words can be taught informally through conversation. When going over vocabulary words, it is best to discuss the words in the context that will be relevant to the reading selection. The vocabulary words are *italicized* in the reading selections.

#### **Reading:**

**VI.** For the reading selection, silent reading is recommended for able students. However, you can structure the lessons to allow all students to comprehend the material. This can include read-alouds, paired reading, and group reading.

#### **After Reading:**

**VII. Multiple Choice Questions:** Have students answer the multiple choice questions. These are designed to be practice for standardized tests in Language Arts. Correct the answers as you like.

**VIII. Essential Questions:** After reading and answering the multiple choice questions, return to the Essential Questions.

**IX. Bibliography:** Point out to students that the reading selection they just read, and others they will read in this unit, were carefully researched. The unit's author used a variety of sources—books, magazines, and web sites—listed in the bibliography on page 45.

Also point out that in the reading selection students just read, and in others they will read, quotes are followed by information in parentheses. This information in parentheses gives the name of the author and the page number of the book from which the quote was taken.

**X. Drawing to Music:** Play "Ground Hog," the You-Tube, Smithsonian Folkways recording. Ask children to draw pictures that describe the song. The pictures can depict the lyrics or the feelings that the music elicits.

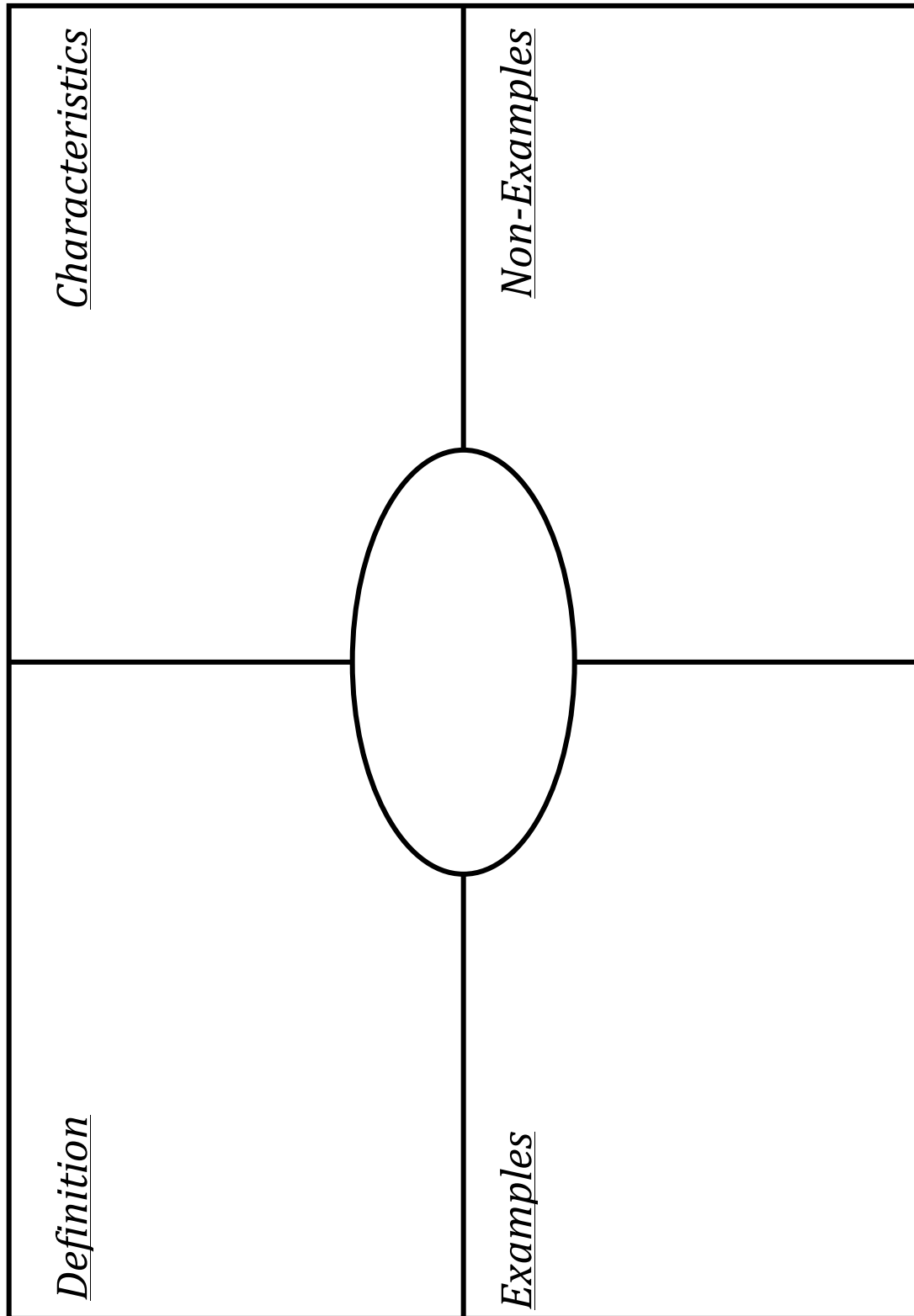
Before they begin, explain that Watson is playing the banjo on this recording. His father taught him to play the banjo when he was a boy. Though Watson was a very good banjo player, he was more famous for his guitar playing. Go over the meaning of the lyrics. (Lyrics are included in this guide and in the "Student handouts.") Explain how people in the mountains shot what they could to have enough food to eat. This was cheaper than going to a store and buying meat. The term "whistle-pig" in the song is another name for groundhog. The word "boiled" is pronounced "biled" in this song. *(continued)*



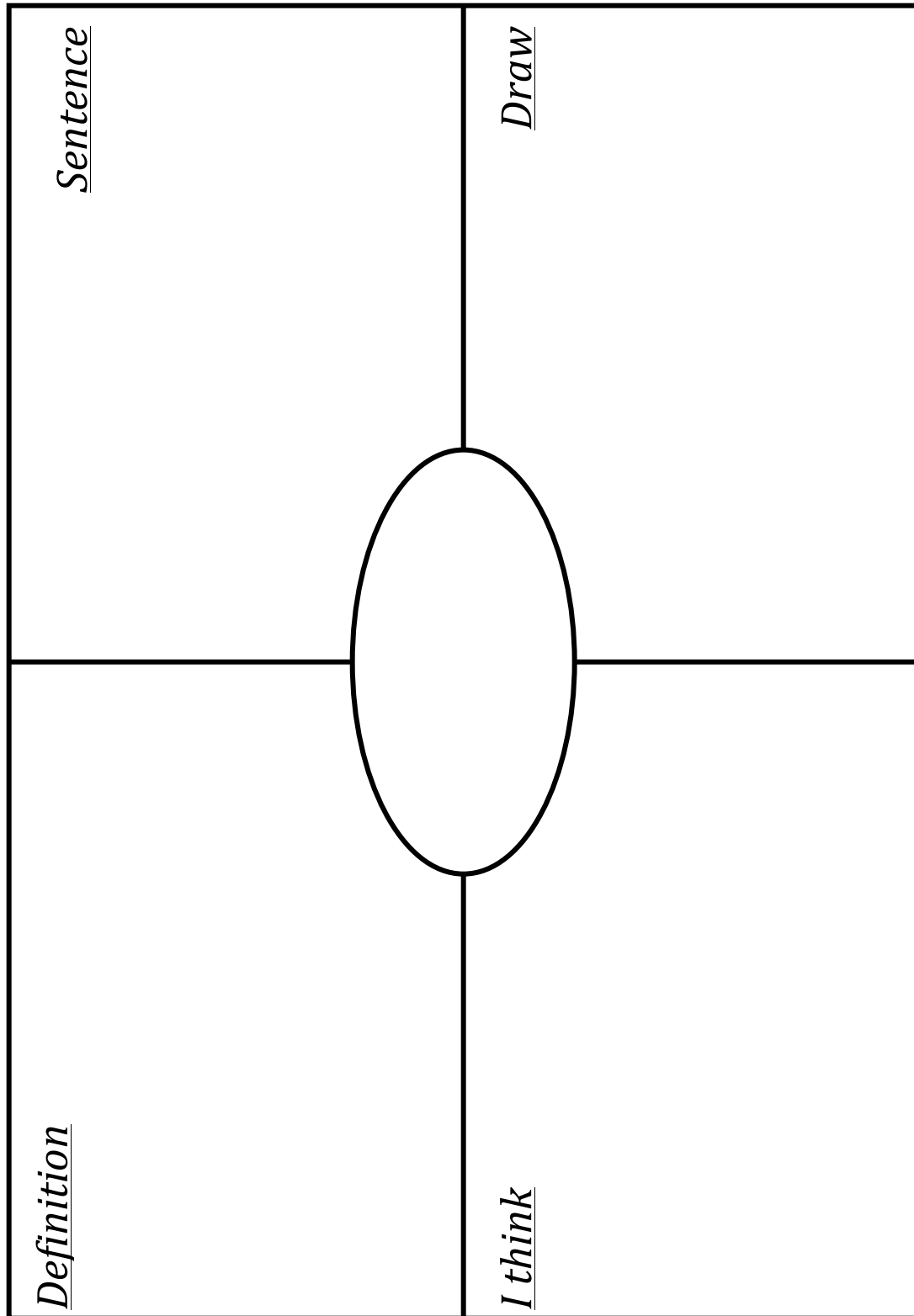
Lesson 1 – Doc Watson: An Introduction  
Lesson Plan- continued

- XI. “Groundhog” Sing-Along (optional):** Children can sing along to the You-Tube recording or to live music if you play. You can project the lyrics on the board or handout copies to each student. (See templates in the “Student handouts” section.)

# Frayer Diagram 1



Frayer Diagram 2



Lesson 1 - Doc Watson: An Introduction  
**Vocabulary List -Teacher's Copy**

*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) -Teacher's Copy**

*Scots-Irish*: (adjective) – descendants of people from the lowlands of Scotland, who moved to Ireland in the 17<sup>th</sup> 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 - Teacher's Copy** (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)- Teacher's Copy**

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- Teacher's Answer Key**

**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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

(continued)



Lesson 1 – Doc Watson: An Introduction  
**Multiple Choice Questions- Teacher's Answer Key**  
**(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” – Teacher’s Copy**

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

### Lesson Plan

#### Pre Reading:

**I. Materials:** Each student should receive a copy of

- 1) today's reading selection, "Doc Watson's Childhood"
- 2) vocabulary list (can be a handout or can be projected at the front of the classroom)
- 3) multiple choice questions (comprehension option 1)
- 4) Drama Activity sheet (comprehension option 2)
- 4) writing prompt (For templates, see "Student handouts" section .)
- 5) "Shady Grove" lyrics (optional)

**II. Listening Selection:** "Shady Grove" performed by Doc Watson. This is on YouTube. "Shady Grove" is a popular American folk song from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The melody likely is based on the old English ballad, "Matty Groves." Doc Watson learned this song growing up in the North Carolina mountains. He sang it when courting his wife, Rosa Lee, who loved the song. It is one of Watson's signature songs.

**III. Essential Questions** for Reading Selection:

**How did growing up in the North Carolina mountains influence Doc Watson?**

*(Possible answers: He knew what it was like to be poor; he knew the value of hard work; he learned self-reliance; he had a religious upbringing; he felt close to nature)*

**How would you describe Doc Watson's family?** *(Possible answers: large, close knit, loving, hard working)*

**IV. Vocabulary Preparation:** Review the **vocabulary list** for this lesson. (See "Student handouts" section for templates.) The Frayer model (provided to you on page 10) lends itself well to this unit, or you may prefer to use another graphic organizer.

Most vocabulary words can be taught informally through conversation. When going over vocabulary words with students, it is best to discuss the words in the context that will be relevant to the reading selection.

The vocabulary words are *italicized* in the reading selections.

#### Reading:

**V.** For the reading selection, silent reading is recommended for able students. However, you can structure the lesson to allow all students to comprehend the material. This can include read-alouds, paired reading, and group reading.

#### After Reading:

**VI. Multiple Choice Questions: Comprehension Option 1:**

Have students answer the multiple choice questions. These are designed to be practice for standardized tests in Language Arts. Correct the answers as you like.

Lesson 2 – Doc Watson's Childhood  
**Lesson Plan (continued)**

**VII. Dramatic Activity: Comprehension Option 2:**

Students act out events from Doc Watson's childhood that are described in the reading selection. Events are listed on page 27 on the "Drama Activity" sheet.

- 1) Before beginning this activity, discuss with students what it must have been like for Doc Watson to grow up blind. What did he have to overcome to do things that other kids took for granted? *Let students know that when they act out Doc Watson during this dramatic activity they should be respectful of Doc Watson's handicap and of other blind people.* Tolerance of people who are different is very important. Making fun of someone with a handicap is not acceptable behavior as part of this unit. Doc Watson was very tolerant and respectful of people different from him. (As an adult during his touring career, he made friends with people from different races, religions, geographic regions, educational levels, and political beliefs than his own.)

You give a student the event he/she is to act out on a slip of paper you have cut out, or you whisper the event into the student's ear. (Students can have copies of the reading selection in front of them during this activity.)

- 2) Student acts out the event from Watson's childhood, and the rest of the class guesses what it is.
- 3) After someone has guessed correctly, you can ask students questions that stimulate them to recall more from the reading selection and dig deeper into the material.

**VIII. Essential Questions:** After the reading and the multiple choice questions and/or charades activity, return to the Essential Questions for this lesson on the previous page.

**IX. Writing Prompt:** (You may prefer doing this activity during writing period.)

Hand out to each student the **writing prompt (p. 28 in this guide** and also found in "Student handouts"):

***How was Doc Watson's childhood different from the childhood of a typical child today?***

It is suggested that you do a whole-class brainstorming session before students begin writing. You may also want students to do individual graphic outlines before they begin writing.

This writing prompt falls under the category of *informative/explanatory writing*. It also includes *compare and contrast* writing.

Students should refer to the reading selection before and during their writing.

Lesson 2 – Doc Watson's Childhood  
**Vocabulary List- Teacher's Copy**

*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)- Teacher's Copy**

*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- Teacher's Copy**

**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 sledged 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- Teacher's Copy**

**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- Teacher's Answer Key**

**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- Teacher's Answer Key**  
**(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**  
**Drama Activity- Teacher's Copy**

Directions for Teacher: Below are events from the reading. You can cut them out in strips and hand them to students or you can whisper them in students ears. Allow each child to take a turn acting out the following events from Watson's childhood:

Doc Watson jumping on corn in the corncrib with his brothers and sisters

Doc Watson awaking to frost on his pillow

Doc's mother (or sisters) cooking

Doc's mother (or sisters) cleaning and sewing

Doc's mother (or sisters) growing a vegetable garden and canning vegetables

Doc shucking the corn

Doc feeding the farm animals

Doc's father (or brothers) hunting for food

Doc's father (or brothers) chopping trees for firewood and for local lumber companies

Doc Watson eating his mother's molasses biscuits and cornbread

Doc walking three miles to church every Sunday

Doc singing hymns in church on Sundays (or at home every day)

Doc's religious parents not going to events where moonshine was served

Doc waving goodbye to his family when he left to go to the Raleigh School for the Blind

Doc learning how to read and write at the Raleigh School for the Blind

Doc taking piano lessons at the Raleigh School for the Blind

The matron at the School for the Blind slapping Doc after he performed at a school show

Doc home in Deep Gap after leaving school and feeling depressed and useless

Doc working a crosscut saw with his father

Doc feeling proud about working a crosscut saw



Lesson 2 – Doc Watson's Childhood  
**"Shady Grove" Lyrics- Teacher's Copy**

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

### Lesson Plan

#### **Pre Reading:**

#### **I. Materials:** Each student should receive

1. today's reading selection "Early Musical Influences"
2. corresponding vocabulary list  
(can be a handout or can be projected at the front of the classroom)
3. multiple choice questions (comprehension option 1)
4. "Interview" handout (comprehension option 2)
5. "Froggie Went A-Courtin'" lyrics
6. poster board (optional)

(Templates for the handouts are in the "Student handouts" section.)

#### **II. Listening Selection:** Play "Deep River Blues" by Doc Watson on You-Tube. Let students know that it is considered to be one of Watson's signature songs. You can tell students that blues songs express people's troubles. Blues musicians felt that singing about their troubles made them feel better. Ask the kids if they think Doc Watson knew suffering and could relate to blues music. (Possible answers, much learned in lesson 2: *he was poor; he was handicapped; he was homesick at the blind school, he felt useless after he left the school.*)

Song Background Notes: Doc Watson learned "Deep River Blues" from a Delmore Brothers record. Blues songs were surprisingly popular in the mountain south. As a teenager and young man, Doc bought blues records from a music store in Boone. Before the advent of the phonograph and radio, white musicians in the mountains had learned blues music directly from black musicians. (The African American population in the mountain south, though small, influenced the region musically.) Later, white musicians like Watson also learned blues songs, like this one, from records and radio.

#### **III. Essential Questions** for Reading Selection:

**What instruments did Doc Watson learn to play as a child?** *Answers: harmonica, banjo, guitar.* You can ask the students to discuss Doc's early experiences with these instruments.

**How did getting a radio and phonograph as a child influence Doc Watson?**

*Possible answers:*

- *listening to the records on the phonograph and to the songs on the radio made him love music even more*
- *he heard many different kinds of music, including jazz, country, and blues*
- *he was inspired and influenced by the popular music stars of the day*
- *he taught himself to play the songs he heard on records and radio*

#### **IV. Vocabulary Preparation:** Review the **vocabulary list** for this lesson. (See "Student handouts" section for templates.) The Frayer model (provided to you on page 10) lends itself well to this unit, or you may prefer to use another graphic organizer.

(continued)

### Lesson 3 – Musical Beginnings

#### **Lesson Plan (continued)**

**Vocabulary (continued):** Most vocabulary words can be taught informally through conversation. When going over vocabulary words with students, it is best to discuss the words in the context that will be relevant to the reading selection. The vocabulary words on the lists are *italicized* in the reading selections.

#### **Reading:**

V. For the reading selection, silent reading is recommended for able students. However, you can structure the lesson to allow all students to comprehend the material. This can include read-alouds, paired reading, and group reading.

#### **After Reading:**

**VI. Discussion (Optional):** Music Technology- Then and Now:

- You may want to discuss with your students how technology influenced the way Watson listened to music as a kid and the way kids listen to music today.
- You may wish to discuss how the radio and the phonograph in the 1930s allowed listeners like Doc Watson to hear music from far away places. Previously he had just heard live music from family, friends and neighbors.

#### **VII. Multiple Choice Questions: Comprehension Option 1**

Have students answer the multiple choice questions. These are designed to be practice for standardized tests in Language Arts. Correct the answers as you like.

#### **VIII. Interview Activity: Comprehension Option 2**

- 1) Introduce students to the idea of a pretend interview. Tell them that famous musicians like Doc Watson often were interviewed on the radio or on television. Ask them if they've ever heard such an interview with a musician or other artist.
- 2) Divide students in groups of 2s and 3s. There should be 10 groups total.
- 3) Tell students they will need to refer to the reading selection handout for this lesson, "Musical Beginnings," and that they should have it out on their desks.
- 4) Give students the "Interview" handout, or project a copy on the board.
- 5) Ask students to reread the paragraph assigned to their group. (Paragraph assignments are on the "Interview" handout.)
- 6) Tell students to write 3 -5 questions based on their assigned paragraph. The questions should be for a pretend interview with Doc Watson.

*(continued)*

### Lesson 3 – Musical Beginnings

#### **Lesson Plan (continued)**

(Doc Watson will be an adult in the interview, and the student interviewer will ask him about his musical experiences as a child.)

7) Tell students to practice the interview. (One of the group members will be the interviewer, and another will be Doc Watson.)

8) After they have practiced with their group, they will conduct the interview for the whole class.

**IX. Essential Questions:** After reading and answering the multiple choice questions and/or doing the Interview Activity, return to the Essential Questions on p. 30.

#### **X. Writing Activity:**

Hand out to each student the "Informal Writing Activity" found on p. 40 in this guide and also found in "Student handouts":

You may wish to do a *whole-class brainstorming session* before students begin writing.

You may prefer doing this activity during writing period.

#### **XI. "Froggie Went A-Courtin' Sing-Along (optional):**

Children can sing along to the You-Tube recording or to live music if you play the guitar. You can project the lyrics on the board or hand out copies to each student. (Lyrics are on page 41 of this guide and in the "Student handouts" section.)

If you wish, you can allow students to move to the music in a controlled manner.

#### Song Background Notes:

"Froggie Went A-Courtin'" is an old folk ballad that originated in the British Isles and has been traced back to 1549 in Scotland. The basic storyline of the song is a frog asks a mouse to marry him. She must ask her uncle, a rat, who gives them permission. The frog and the mouse plan their wedding. Over time, there have been many versions of this folk song. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Burl Ives, Kermit the Frog, and others recorded it.

#### **XII. Closing Activity for Unit (optional)**

On the board or projected onto the board, draw a graphic organizer of Doc Watson. Put "Doc Watson" in a circle in the center. Go around the class asking each child to give you an adjective that describes Doc Watson. Children should not repeat ones already given. Write the adjective on the board as the child gives it to you. Later, you or a student volunteer, or volunteers, can copy the graphic organizer onto a poster board and hang it in the class or in the hallway. It will serve as a souvenir of the unit and will remind students of Doc's Watson's inspiring qualities.



Lesson 3 – Musical Beginnings  
**Vocabulary List- Teacher's Copy**

*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 17<sup>th</sup> 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) - Teacher's Copy**

*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 20<sup>th</sup> 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- Teacher's Copy**  
**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- Teacher's Copy**

**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- Teacher's Answer Key**

**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) - Teacher's Answer Key**

- 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- Teacher's Copy**

**Directions:**

- 1) You will need the reading selection for this lesson, "Musical Beginnings."
- 2) With your small group, read 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.

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**Group 1:** "Appalachian Folk Music"- 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph

**Group 2:** "Appalachian Folk Music" 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph

**Group 3:** "Appalachian Folk Music" 3<sup>rd</sup> 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'" – Teacher's Copy**

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'" – Teacher's Copy**  
**(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, North Carolina, **Doc Watson**. The unit taught your child about Doc Watson's childhood and career. Aligned with state and national standards, the unit included vocabulary, comprehension, writing, and music activities.

The unit complemented the school assembly show, ***Carolina Live!-Our Musical History***, which your child saw at school. This school assembly program presented by twelve professional musicians featured songs first made famous by historic music greats from our region, including Doc Watson.

Carolina Music Ways, a local nonprofit organization, created this show and the related unit. We hope that both the unit and the show has encouraged your child to learn more about North Carolina's great musical heritage. 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 most influential musicians.

For more information about North Carolina's diverse musical heritage and living traditions, please visit **[www.carolinamusicways.org](http://www.carolinamusicways.org)**. Visit the "Explore" section to dig deeper into North Carolina musical history, styles, and greats. This section also includes information on musical events and festivals where you and your child can experience great North Carolina music.

Sincerely,  
*Elizabeth Carlson, Ed.M.*, Director  
Education and Grants  
Carolina Music Ways

***The Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County in partnership with Wells Fargo, as well as individual donors, provided funding for the unit's accompanying school assembly show, "Carolina Live!-Our Musical History."***

## **Bluegrass Overview**

Bluegrass is a relatively new form of music originated by Kentuckian Bill Monroe and solidified by banjoist Earl Scruggs, a North Carolinian. In 1939, with Monroe's band, the Bluegrass Boys, the sound debuted on the Grand Ole Opry stage. Scruggs joined the band in 1945. The name "bluegrass" music comes from this iconic band.

### **Instruments and Styles**

Jazz-like improvisational moments, surging rhythms, and a "high lonesome sound" characterize bluegrass. Instruments include the guitar, banjo, mandolin, fiddle, upright bass, and dobro. Other instruments are also sometimes used, such as the autoharp, drums, and electric instruments.

### **Roots**

Bill Monroe toured the Appalachian region with his brother Charlie around the time of the Great Depression. They played traditional string band music on local radio shows in such places as Asheville and Charlotte. They also played front-porch concerts with a variety of blues, jazz, and old-time stringband musicians. These eclectic musical influences inspired Bill Monroe to create the bluegrass sound. In 1938, he broke off from his brother and created Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys.

### **Golden Age**

Although the genre began with Bill Monroe in 1939, the classic sound didn't gel until the addition of Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs in 1945. In 1948, these two men left Monroe's band and formed their own group. Other major names from this period include the Stanley Brothers and the Osborne Brothers.

### **Progressive Era**

In the mid- to late-1960s, bluegrass began a progressive era. Promoters created festivals. Bluegrass musicians began to mix other forms of music, such as folk and country. Records influenced fans worldwide. Musicians in Japan, the Czech Republic, Italy, and elsewhere recreated the sound, occasionally combining it with their own folk music. At home, big names from this period include the New Grass Revival and the Seldom Scene. Beginning in the 1970s, women such as Laurie Lewis became more involved and accepted as bluegrass performers.

### **Revival**

In the mid-1980s, bluegrass entered a revival period. While some bands were still incorporating other musical forms, others were recreating the original sound and bringing back the traditional songs. A major influential group from this period was the Johnson Mountain Boys.

### **Newgrass**

Beginning in the Progressive era and becoming increasingly popular in recent years, "newgrass" is a term for any mix of bluegrass and other form of music. Common mixes are with jazz, blues, rock, country, folk, gospel, and classical. A particularly interesting mix is "redgrass," which utilizes traditional Chinese instruments. Today, some younger musicians incorporate alternative rock music and punk music into bluegrass, bringing bluegrass to newer and younger audiences.

### **Bluegrass in Our Region**

North Carolina is one of the most active bluegrass regions in the country, with some major names on the national scene coming from here. Festivals and contests in towns such as Mount Airy, Denton, and Yadkinville annually attract performers of all ages. MerleFest in Wilkesboro, held in memory of Doc Watson's son Merle, features major acts in bluegrass and other music styles and draws thousands of fans each year from around the country and world.

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### **Bluegrass Overview**

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## Common Core Standards 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Language Arts

### FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

#### Phonics and Word Recognition

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF4.3

Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF4.3a

Use combined knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology (e.g., roots and affixes) to read accurately unfamiliar multisyllabic words in context and out of context.

#### Fluency

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF4.4

Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF4.4a

Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF4.4b

Read grade-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF4.4c

Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

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### INFORMATIONAL TEXTS:

#### Key Ideas and Details

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1

Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI4.2

Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI4.3

Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

#### Craft and Structure

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF4.4

Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text relevant to a *grade 4 topic or subject area*.

#### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF4.8

Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text.

*(Continued)*

## Common Core Standards 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Language Arts (continued)

### WRITING

#### Text Types and Purposes

##### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2

Write *informative/explanatory* texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

##### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2 b

Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.

##### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2 d

Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

##### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2e

Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.

##### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3

Write *narratives* to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

##### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3d

Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

#### Production and Distribution of Writing

##### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

### SPEAKING AND LISTENING

#### Comprehension and Collaboration

##### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 4 topics and texts*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

##### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1c

Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.

#### Presentation of Knowledge or Ideas

##### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.5

Add audio recordings and visual displays to presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.

## **North Carolina Standard Course of Study**

This unit of study addresses Social Studies and Music selected goals and objectives for 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

### **Social Studies: North Carolina Culture**

#### **Essential Standard 4.C.1**

Understand the impact of various cultural groups on North Carolina.

#### Clarifying Objectives:

**4.C.1.1** Explain how the settlement of people from various cultures affected the development of regions in North Carolina (languages, foods and traditions).

**4.C.1.2** Explain how the artistic expression of various groups represents the cultural heritage of North Carolina.

### **Music: Contextual Relevancy**

#### **Essential Standard 4.CR.1**

Understand global, interdisciplinary, and 21st century connections with music.

#### Clarifying Objective

**4.CR.1.1** Understand how music has affected, and is reflected in, the culture, traditions, and history of North Carolina.