

## EDUCATOR GUIDE

Story Theme: Steppin' Out  
Subject: Crooked Jades  
Discipline: Music

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Still image from SPARK story, 2006.

## SECTION I - OVERVIEW

### EPISODE THEME

Steppin' Out

### SUBJECT

Crooked Jades

### GRADE RANGES

K-12 & Post-secondary

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Music & Language Arts

### OBJECTIVE

Understand the development of personal works of art and their relationship to broader social themes and ideas, abstract concepts, and the history of music.

Develop visual, written, listening and speaking skills through looking at, creating and talking about music.

Develop an expressive musical vocabulary with which to address personal and/or social themes and ideas.

### STORY SYNOPSIS

Bay Area band the Crooked Jades are on a mission to revive some of the oldest music America has to offer. Spark catches up with the band as they perform at Berkeley's Starry Plough before heading out on a European tour.

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Group oral discussion, review and analysis, including peer review and aesthetic valuing as a group.

Teacher-guided instruction, including demonstration and guidance.

Hands-on individual projects in which students work independently.

Hands-on group projects in which students assist and support one another.

Critical reflection on personal expressions and how they are seen and received by others.

### INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

- To introduce students to the music of Crooked Jades
- To provide context for the understanding of the origins of old-time music
- To inspire students to learn more about roots music

### EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- TV & VCR with SPARK story "Old-time is Not a Crime" about Crooked Jades
- Computer with Internet access, navigation software, speakers and a sounds card, printer
- Cassette player, CD player, or computer audio program

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Access to libraries with up-to-date collections of periodicals, books, and research papers
- Pencils, pens, and paper

### INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED

Bodily-Kinesthetic - control of one's own body, control in handling objects

Interpersonal - awareness of others' feelings, emotions, goals, motivations

Intrapersonal - awareness of one's own feelings, emotions, goals, motivations

Spatial - ability to manipulate and create mental images in order to solve problems

Logical-Mathematical - ability to detect patterns, reason deductively, think logically



## SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT

### CONTENT OVERVIEW

The Crooked Jades are on a mission to revive some of America's oldest music. Aficionados of "old-time music," the members of the Crooked Jades perform their own take on rural folk music from the days before radio. Spark catches up with the band as they prepare to leave on their European tour.

Old-time music is a branch of American roots music that originated in the South mostly around Kentucky and Georgia, and extended as far north as New England. It is based in a mixture of folk songs and instrumentation that go back to the country's earliest settlers. Old-time music was instrumental to the folk revival of the 1960s, and currently is enjoying a renewed interest among audiences both young and old. The Crooked Jades are amongst a number of old-time bands that have sprung up across the country in recent years in an effort to revitalize this rich heritage.

For Crooked Jades bandleader Jeff Kazor, old-time music offers a way to connect today's world with the country's earliest days, as the songs evocatively conjure common feelings of alienation and suffering. As the chief songwriter of the band, Kazor finds his inspiration by listening to old recordings, selecting songs to rediscover and reinterpret. The band then convenes to practice the new tunes in the Kazor's kitchen.

Kazor is fond of the impromptu nature of old-time music's instrumentation, which was often determined more by availability than musical considerations. At a time when instruments were scarce and expensive, an old-time band made do with jugs, washboards, washtub base, and spoons.

The Crooked Jades are Jeff Kazor (guitar/ukulele) Jennie Benford of Jim & Jennie & The Pinetops

(mandolin/guitar), Adam Tanner (fiddle/mandolin), Megan Adie (bass), and Seth Folsom (banjo/slide guitar). The band has toured across the United States and Europe and play regularly in California. The Crooked Jades' releases can be found on independent label Copper Creek Records, and on their own label Jade Note Music.

### THE BIG PICTURE

The term "old-time music" was first coined by the Okeh record label in 1923 to describe Fiddlin' John Carson's "The Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane" backed with "The Old Hen Cackled and the Rooster's Going to Crow." Though the label had had some success with American roots music, marketing "race records" aimed at African-Americans in the Southern states, Carson's hit was the first the company had ever released by a rural White. Though Carson was from Georgia, his folksy, primitive music drew on musical precedents dating all the way back to the first European settlers.

Old-time music combines traditional folk forms from England, Scotland, and Ireland, mixed with styles and some instrumentation that originated in Africa. Old-time songs rarely can be traced back to a particular song writer, but rather are the living results of ongoing interpretations of and variations on traditional tunes from these areas.

The genre's typical instrumentation is eclectic and varied, as traditionally it used whatever instruments were available at the time. Yet despite this pragmatic approach to music making, from its earliest days the fiddle held a central position. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the banjo, introduced to the genre through African-American music, became an essential component alongside the fiddle. Later on other stringed instruments were added, including the

guitar, the dulcimer, the mandolin, and the washtub bass, as well as non stringed instruments, such as the jug, the jaw harp, the harmonica, the concertina, the washboard, the accordion and the spoons.

Old-time music is sometimes distinguished from bluegrass, which emerged as an independent genre in the 1940s, pioneered by Bill Monroe. Where bluegrass was designed as music suitable for concerts and featured extended solos, old-time is rooted in square dancing. It is usually characterized by a steady beat and repeated musical phrases, and notoriously refrains from showiness.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, as America began to feel itself in the grips of modernization and widespread mass media a new interest in native forms of roots music began to emerge. Record labels such as the Smithsonian Institution's Folkways, Arhoolie, as well as non-specialty labels like Columbia began collecting and reissuing 78 recordings onto LPs, as well as adopting the 1930s practice of sending "songcatchers" out to make field recordings of roots music. Accompanied by recording crews equipped with elaborate mobile recording systems, songcatchers set out to commit these rapidly vanishing traditions to vinyl for wide distribution, which is how these songs have been passed down to later generations. In recent years, these records have sparked a renewed interest in American folk traditions that has spawned acts like Crooked Jades, who have striven to keep these forms alive.

## SECTION III – Resources

### RESOURCES – TEXTS

Bealle, John. *Old-Time Music and Dance: Community and Folk Revival*. Quarry Books, 2005.

Cauthen, Joyce. *With Fiddle and Well-Rosined Bow: A History of Old Time Fiddling in Alabama*. University of Alabama Press, 2001.

Chase, Richard. *American Folk Tales and Songs*. Dover Publications, 1971.

Cole, William, ed. *Folk Songs of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales*. Warner Brothers Publications, 1999.

Lornell, Kip and Linda Ronstadt. *The NPR Curious Listener's Guide to American Folk Music*. Perigree Trade, 2004.

Ritchie, Jean, et al. *Folk Songs of the Southern Appalachians*. University Press of Kentucky, 1997.

Scarborough, Dorothy. *A Song Catcher in Southern Mountains: American Folk Songs of British Ancestry*. Columbia University Press, 1937.

### RESOURCES – WEBSITES

American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress--  
<http://www.loc.gov/folklife/>

Archives of Appalachia Music ---  
<http://cass.etsu.edu/archives/music.htm>

Clawhammer.com: a website dedicated to banjo picking -- <http://www.clawhammer.com/>

Crooked Jades' official website  
<http://www.crookedjades.com/>

Fiddler Magazine  
<http://www.fiddle.com/>

Folkmusic.org: a comprehensive source for folk and acoustic music resources on the web  
<http://www.folkmusic.org/>

Oldtimemusic.com, a website with old-time resources, events and information  
<http://www.oldtimemusic.com>

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings  
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/index.html>

Wikipedia page on old-time music  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old\\_time\\_music](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_time_music)

### VIDEO RESOURCES

*Appalachian Journey*, Dir. Alan Lomax, 1990.

*Songcatcher*, Dir. Maggie Greenwald, 2000.

*Sprout Wings and Fly*, Dir. Les Blank, 1983.

### AUDIO RESOURCES

Dock Boggs, *Country Blues: The Complete Early Recordings (1927-29)*, Revenant, 1997.

The Carter Family, *Can the Circle Be Unbroken? Country Music's First Family*, Columbia, 2000.

Tommy Jarrell, *Legacy of Tommy Jarrell, Vol. 1: Sail Aways Ladies*. County, 1999.

Various Artists, *American Primitive, Vols. 1-2*. Revenant, 1997.

## **BAY AREA FIELD TRIPS**

Freight and Salvage Coffee House  
1111 Addison Street  
Berkeley, CA 94702  
510.548.1761  
<http://www.thefreight.org>

Ashkenaz Music and Dance Community Center  
1317 San Pablo Avenue  
Berkeley, CA  
510.525.5054  
<http://www.ashkenaz.com>

Down Home Music  
10341 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA  
510.525.2129. A unique store specializing in American country, bluegrass and old time music, as well as Latin and world music sections. They often carry hard-to-find recordings and have a very knowledgeable staff.  
<http://www.downhomemusic.com>

## SECTION III – VOCABULARY

### DISCIPLINE-BASED VOCABULARY AND WORDS AND CONCEPTS IN THE SPARK STORY

#### **American Roots Music**

American folk music, also known as Americana, is a broad category of music including country music, gospel, old time music, jug bands, Appalachian folk, blues, Tejano and Cajun and Native American music. The music is considered "American" because it is either native to the United States or there varied enough from its origins that it struck musicologists as something distinctly new; it is considered "roots music" because it served as the basis of music later developed in the United States, including rock and roll, rhythm and blues, and jazz.

#### **Amoeba Music Store**

Born in 1990 in Berkeley, California, Amoeba Music is a widely popular independent music store. They stock everything from the most popular artists to the most obscure in all genres. Amoeba's staff is a knowledgeable team of record store veterans, and many are musicians themselves. Amoeba started at a time when huge chain stores were drowning out smaller chains and independent stores. Amoeba serves customers seeking a personal connection with their music, and local and touring musicians often stop by for in-store appearances and performances. Amoeba donates a portion of their proceeds to rainforest preservation.

#### **Bluegrass Music**

Bluegrass music is considered a form of American roots music with its own roots in the English, Irish and Scottish traditional music of immigrants from the British Isles (particularly the Scots-Irish immigrants of Appalachia), as well as the music of rural African-Americans, jazz, and blues. Like jazz, bluegrass is played with each melody instrument switching off, playing improvised solos in turn while the others revert to backing; this is in contrast to old-time music, in which all instruments play the melody together or It is played on acoustic instruments, generally centering on a combination of fiddle and banjo.

one instrument carried the lead throughout while the others provide accompaniment.

#### **Bootleg**

The illegal sale of many consumer products other than alcohol is often termed Bootlegging. Goods such as compact discs, DVDs and other Intellectual Property are considered to be "bootleg" if they are replicated without permission of the copyright holder.

#### **Melting Pot**

The melting pot is a metaphor for the way in which homogenous societies develop, in which the ingredients in the pot (people of different cultures and religions) are combined so as to lose their discrete identities and yield a final product of uniform consistency and flavor, which is quite different from the original inputs. This process is also known as cultural assimilation. In the United States where the term is still commonly used, despite being largely disregarded by modern sociologists as outdated, the idea of pluralism has largely replaced the idea of assimilation. Today the idea of a salad bowl where immigrants retain their native cultures, rather than assimilation, is now seen as the goal for American society by the most prominent sociologists.

#### **Old-Time Music**

Old-time music is a form of North American folk music, with roots in the folk music of many countries, most notably: England, Scotland, Ireland, and the African continent. This musical form developed along with various North American folk dances, such as square dance. The genre also encompasses ballads and other types of folk songs.

#### **String Ensemble**

A group of musicians playing together using stringed instruments.

## SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

### STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

#### Searching for Roots

Invite students to bring in a sample of music that they would describe as “folk” or “roots” music and ask them to be prepared to play five minutes from their selection. They may need to ask their parents or friends for suggestions or call or visit one of the venues listed under the Bay Area Field Trips section above for ideas. For example, Down Home Music store specializes in American country, bluegrass and old time music at <http://www.downhomemusic.com>

Selections from David Grisman, the Bay Area bluegrass musician and performer would be helpful to frame the discussion since he has been performing his unique style of traditional American “roots” music for over 30 years. See SPARK Educator Guide on David Grisman at <http://www.kqed.org/arts/spark/education/lessonplans/311.pdf>

Begin an exploration of the musical folk genre by playing five or six songs selected by students.

Ask them to identify:

- where the music comes from
- the kind of song they are listening to e.g. love song, spiritual, work song etc.
- the instruments
- the role of each instrument, i.e. who creates the supporting rhythmic and harmonic structure and who has a more melodic function?
- the parts of each song, such as the introduction, or if it is in AB form, if there is any call and response

Play the SPARK episode on the Crooked Jades and invite students to work in pairs to respond to the same questions. To heighten the listening experience, cover the TV monitor and play part of the episode so that students focus on the music without the images. Can they identify each instrument and the role of each instrument?

Move on to discuss “roots” music with students. What do they understand by this term? What is “folk” or “old time” music? What purpose does it serve in a community? Ensure that students fully appreciate that the term “roots” signifies music and dance that originated within cultures – representing the traditions, dance, music and importantly cultural identity of a people and their community.

Ask students to apply these ideas to the Crooked Jades who use the term “roots” to describe their music. What is their mission? How do they describe their work in the episode? What is the appeal of this music to them and to diverse communities in America today. Why do they think there is a renewed interest in traditional music today?

The Crooked Jades bandleader Jeff Kazor explains that old-time music offers a way to connect today's world with the country's earliest days, as the songs evocatively conjure common feelings of alienation and suffering. Ask students if they agree with this sentiment and recognize these feelings in the music?

#### SPARKLER:

\* Encourage students to explore their family heritage through folk music they may have heard at home or in the homes of relatives. Students should share with the class what they learn from relatives and neighbors about musical traditions in own their family history. They may have recordings or samples of songs which have been popular with their family to play to illustrate their findings.

## RELATED STANDARDS - MUSIC

### Grade 1 – Artistic Perception

1.2 Identify simple musical forms (e.g. phrase, AB, echo)

1.3 Identify common instruments visually and aurally in a variety of music.

### Grade 5 – Historical and Cultural Context 3.1

Describe the social functions of a variety of musical forms from various cultures and time periods

### Grade 8 – Historical and Cultural Context

3.2 Identify and explain the influences of various cultures on music in early United States history.

## Researching Traditional Forms of Music

In the SPARK episode Jeff Kazor talks about the origins of old-time music as a fusion of traditional folk forms from England, Scotland, and Ireland, combined with styles and some instrumentation that originated in Africa. The songs are part of a rich oral tradition, passed on without written notes or scores, but rather the results of ongoing interpretation of traditional tunes from these areas.

Divide students into groups. Ask each group to research a different genre of American traditional music such as old time, bluegrass, blues and jazz. If possible support students by finding recording samples to use to assist them in their research.

Students should explore:

- the historical context of the genre they have selected
- the wider social factors that led to its development
- the role of the music in communities
- the instruments
- key musicians associated with this form
- the content of the songs (i.e., gospel, love, death, train songs, lullabies, work songs)
- the structure of the music – for example bluegrass was a more flamboyant form featuring extended solos and concert hall performances whereas, old-time is rooted in square dancing and usually characterized by a steady beat and repeated musical phrases.

Encourage each group to prepare a short oral presentation on the genre they have selected and to

illustrate it with musical selections as much as possible.

Finally ask students to write a 500 word essay describing the differences between styles in traditional folk musical genres within the United States.

## SPARKLERS:

\*Old-time bands used jugs, washboards, washtub bases, and spoons since musical instruments were rare and costly and these everyday items were more readily available. Invite students to assemble home made instruments of this sort. Have them listen to a Crooked Jades CD and accompany the band using their instruments.

\* Encourage students to jam with these instruments

\* Old-time is rooted in square dancing. Suggest that students research and learn a square dance. They may need to attend a square dance evening to learn the dance – for example at the Ashkenaz Music and Dance Community Center at

<http://www.ashkenaz.com>

Book a suitable space and encourage students to teach each other the dances.

\* Similarly ask students to find a folk song and sing and perform the piece. They can also be encouraged to improvise around the melody.

## RELATED STANDARDS - Music

### Grades 9-12 – Historical and Cultural Context

3.1 Identify the sources of musical genres of the United States, trace the evolution of those genres, and cite well-known musicians associated with them.

3.3 Describe the differences between styles in traditional folk genres within the United States

## Instrumentation

Work through the variety of instruments which are identified with the folk genre. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the banjo, introduced to the genre through African-American music, became an essential component alongside the fiddle. Later on other stringed instruments were added, including the guitar, the dulcimer, the mandolin, and the washtub bass, as well as non stringed instruments, such as the jug, the jaw harp, the harmonica, the concertina, the washboard, the accordion and the spoons.



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/jaw\\_harp](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/jaw_harp)

Also called a Jaw harp - from an American civil war camp in Virginia

Invite students to analyze the role of each of these instruments both in the Crooked Jades and in folk history. Ask students to describe:

- the distinctive sound of each instrument - for example how would they describe the sound of the mandolin or the jaw harp?
- what role does the instrument play in the ensemble?
- how does it contribute to the expressive effect – in what way does it evoke feelings and emotions?

Divide the class into pairs and ask one student in the pair to choose ONE instrument and trace its history. Try to span as widely as possible across the range of instruments used in old time music so that a wide variety of instruments are covered in this activity. Students can sketch the instrument or scan a photograph to illustrate their research.

The other student in each pair should research a musician, well known for playing the instrument being studied.

Compile a folder of the instruments and musicians for display in the classroom.

Finally, challenge students to find a venue in their locality where they could hear the instrument being played.

For more information about SPARK and its educational content, including the Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the Web site at <http://www.kqed.org/spark/education>.



For more information about the California Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the CA Dept. of Education at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/standards/vpa>.