

# III. Jazz Is Form

We have explored two elements of jazz that distinguish it from classical and folk music: the syncopated rhythm of swing and the notes of the blues scale often used in melody. The third element of jazz that makes it unique is the forms used to build compositions and songs. The most common form used in jazz is the 12-bar blues.

## 12-Bar Blues

The 12-bar blues is one of the most recognizable forms in jazz. It is also used in many rock and roll and pop songs. Have you ever heard “Jailhouse Rock,” “Blue Suede Shoes,” “Rock Around the Clock,” “Great Balls of Fire,” or “Shake, Rattle and Roll”? These songs are all based on the 12-bar blues form.

Within the 12 measures of a blues song, there are three phrases. The first and second phrases are usually the same and the third phrase is different. Sing and play the following example for your students. See if they can identify the three phrases.

### Playin' the Blues

Swing 



Play-in' the blues all day and night. We're gon-na stay un-til we get it right.

5  
Play-in' the blues all day and night. We're gon-na stay un-til we get it right.

9  
We are get-tin' so much bet-ter, we might get home while it's light.

Ask students, “Did you notice how the melody and lyrics of the third phrase related to the first two phrases?” In the blues, the last phrase usually answers or comments on the first two phrases. Two more examples of how the third phrase of the blues relates to the first two follow, as does the reproducible activity “Write your own blues lyrics” (found on page 35).

## Mountain Bike

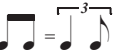
Swing 

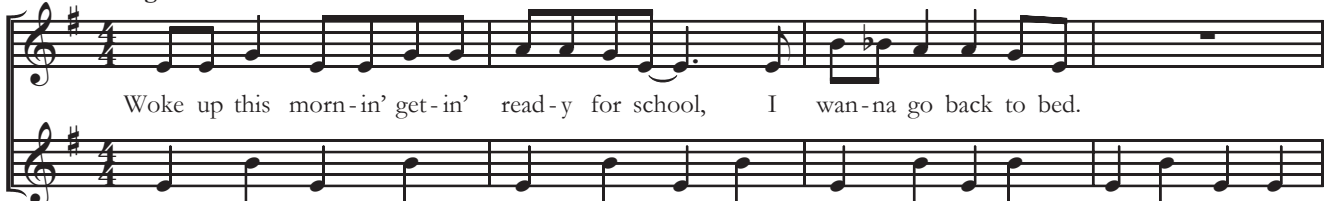
BX   
Washed my moun-tain bike at my friend's to - day, — I cleaned all of the mud a - way.

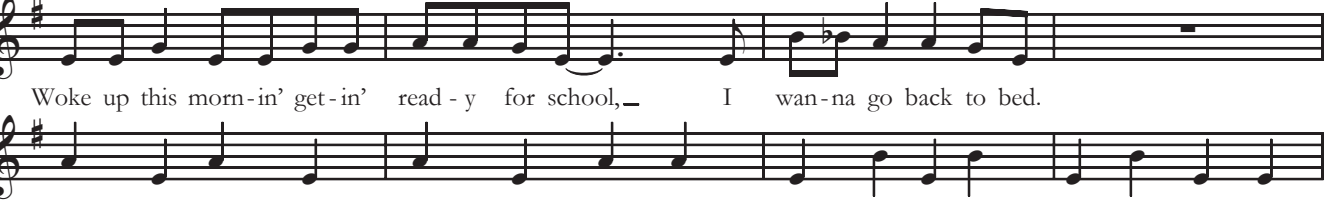
BX   
Washed my moun-tain bike at my friend's to - day, I cleaned all of the mud a - way.


BX   
Oh, no! I rode through a pud - dle, I should have come a dif - fer - ent way.

## Snow Day!

Swing 

BX   
Woke up this morn-in' get-in' read-y for school, I wan-na go back to bed.

BX   
Woke up this morn-in' get-in' read-y for school, — I wan-na go back to bed.

BX   
Snow day I heard from my mom, so I ran out-side and hopped on my sled.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Write your own blues lyrics!

You have learned that a common form used in jazz music is 12-bar blues. Within the 12 measures of a blues song, there are three phrases. The first and second phrases are the same and the third phrase is different.

Now it is time for you to write your own blues lyrics to the melody of *Playin' the Blues*. Write your new lyrics under the melody line. When you are finished, you can sing your song for your teacher and your class.

\_\_\_\_\_

Title

Phrase 1



Phrase 2



Phrase 3



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