

Country Western Music

Many of the characteristic sounds that we hear in today's country western music can be directly attributed to folk music. Indeed, the original term for country western music was country music, or folk music. It had to do with the music of the Appalachian Mountains and the regions in that part of America, as well as many of the southern regions of America.

Some of the names that have been used to describe early country music are *hillbilly*, *mountain*, *hill country music*, *old time*, and *bluegrass*. The direct roots of these different styles of country music may be seen in the music of the British Isles and Europe. Later, the word *western* was added, creating *country and western* or *country western* music. The term *western* was used to describe songs with themes such as cowboys and the taming of the West, the building of the railroad across America, and the gold rush of the 1840s.

Country western music began to gain popularity in America through the extensive use of radio broadcasting and commercials using country music as part of the ads. These commercials were specifically designed to appeal to a larger base of people in more rural communities throughout the United States. This approach was very successful. Later, when singing-cowboy movie stars such as Gene Autry and Roy Rogers made country music popular on the television screen, an even larger base of Americans was able to hear and participate in country western music.

Before long, country western music established itself firmly in the city of Nashville, Tennessee. The original radio program known as the "Barn Dance Program" became what is now the "Grand Ole Opry" and has continued to show off the best talent in country music via radio and television. Some of the most famous country musicians are Willie Nelson, Patsy Cline, Hank Williams, Sr., Loretta Lynn, and Johnny Cash. They and others helped to not only establish country western music as an American tradition and art form, but also to spread it to European countries and to other parts of the world.

While country western music lagged behind rock-and-roll in listenership through the 1970s and early '80s, artists such as Dolly Parton, Hank Williams, Jr., and the group Alabama began to incorporate rock elements into their music. Although this "crossing over" appealed to many listeners who had not been fans of country music (as it is again called) before, some traditionalists felt it was a corruption of the country style.

In the late '80s country music experienced a rapid growth in popularity, with artists such as Reba McEntire, Randy Travis, the Judds, and George Strait leading the way. These and other veteran musicians continue to perform and record today. But as in all music genres, a new generation of artists have come forward to continue the traditions of country music while striving to create their own styles. Today's country music artists include Garth Brooks, Vince Gill, Wynona Judd, Pam Tillis, Brooks and Dunn, and Little Texas.

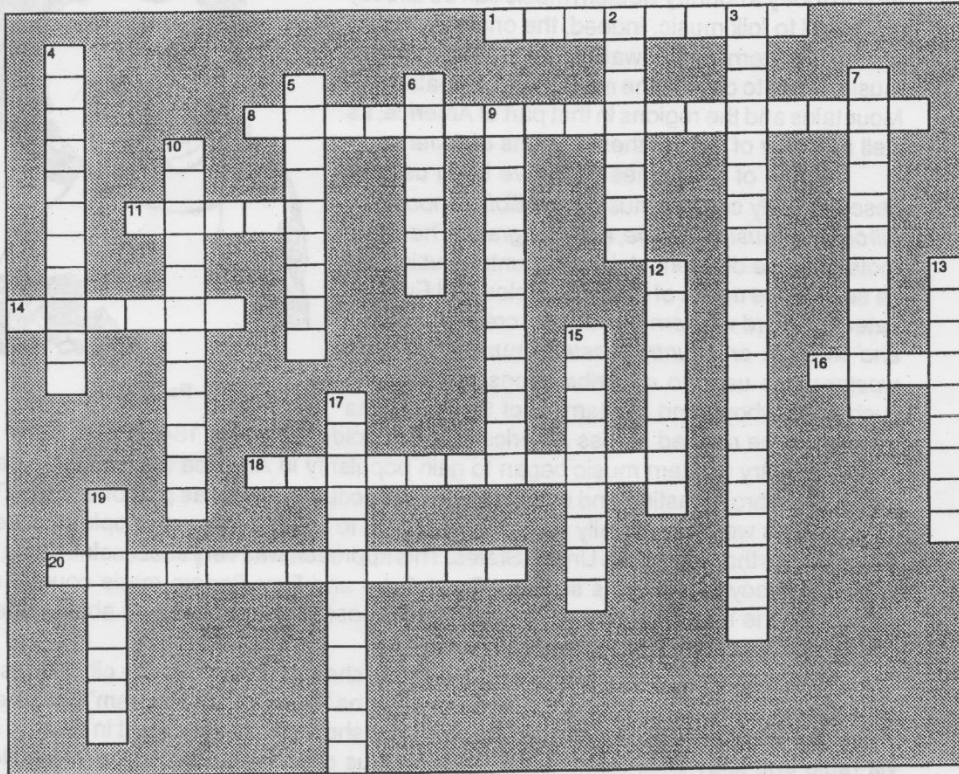


Patsy Cline

Name _____ Date _____

Those Puzzling Facts

Use the clues below to complete the crossword puzzle. The answers may be found in the narrative about country western music.



ACROSS

- 1. Country music is not only an _____ tradition.
- 8. Because of _____, many musicians and singers achieved financial success.
- 11. The extensive use of this form of broadcasting helped country music gain popularity.
- 14. The term *western* describes the _____ themes.
- 16. Elements of this style began to be incorporated into country music in the 1970s and '80s.
- 18. Male singer who was one of the leaders in country music in the late '80s (two words).
- 20. The direct roots of the different country styles may be seen in the music of the _____.

DOWN

- 2. This was built across America.
- 3. American folk music originated in these (two words).
- 4. One of the most famous male country singers of the 1990s (two words).

- 5. This singer/actor made country western music popular on the television screen (two words).
- 6. This word was later added to the phrase *country music*.
- 7. One of the innovative artists popular in the '70s and early '80s (two words).
- 9. This broadened the audience for country music (two words).
- 10. The new title of the Barn Dance Program (three words).
- 12. _____ songs were created in the 1840s.
- 13. Country western music can be directly attributed to this (two words).
- 15. This city in Tennessee became the center for country music.
- 17. Both father and son were important figures in country music (two words).
- 19. Country music has spread to these countries as well as to other parts of the world.

MUSIC IN THE MIDDLE AGES (A.D. 450–1450)

The period of history known as the Middle Ages began around the year A.D. 450 with the decline of the Roman Empire and spans 1000 years to around A.D. 1450. This was a time in history marked by barbaric wars, feudal disputes, and religious crusades. It was also a period of great faith. Christianity had been adopted by the Roman Empire as the church of state, and therefore, it had also been adopted by many of the countries in Europe as the major religion. Toward the end of the Middle Ages, there was a period of great cultural growth. Romanesque-style churches and monasteries and Gothic cathedrals were built, universities were founded, and cities and towns grew.



A medieval church choir

The Middle Ages also was a period in time when there was a sharp division among the social classes: the nobility, the clergy, and the peasantry. The peasants were very poor and were usually feudal subjects to the noble class. Peasants farmed the land for the nobles, and they raised their herds for them. They were very much like indentured servants. The nobility lived in fortified castles and lived lives of great ease. The clergy, or leaders of the church, were very influential in guiding the affairs of the nobility and the peasantry.

The church had a virtual monopoly on learning. Both peasants and nobles alike were generally illiterate. Cathedrals and monasteries were the centers of religious, educational, and musical life. All of the important musicians during the Middle Ages were priests and worked for the church. The only music education available during the Middle Ages was in church schools, and only boys were allowed to attend. One of the most important occupations in monasteries was liturgical singing, or the singing of chants for the services that were held throughout the day.

Almost all of the music from the Middle Ages was vocal music. Instruments were not allowed in churches or monasteries for the majority of the Middle Ages. Not until about 1100 were instruments used to accompany voices. Of all the instruments used, the organ was the most prominent.

Activities:

1. Try to imagine what it would be like to be a priest in a monastery. Describe what your daily activities might be.
2. If you had written music for the Crusades, what would have been some of the things you might have included in your songs?

PETER ILICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky was born on May 7, 1840, in Votkinsk. This village is in the Ural Mountains area, 600 miles east of Moscow. As a child he was sensitive to music but was also precocious in other things. At the age of six, he could read French and German. However, he was twenty-one years old before he started the serious study of music.

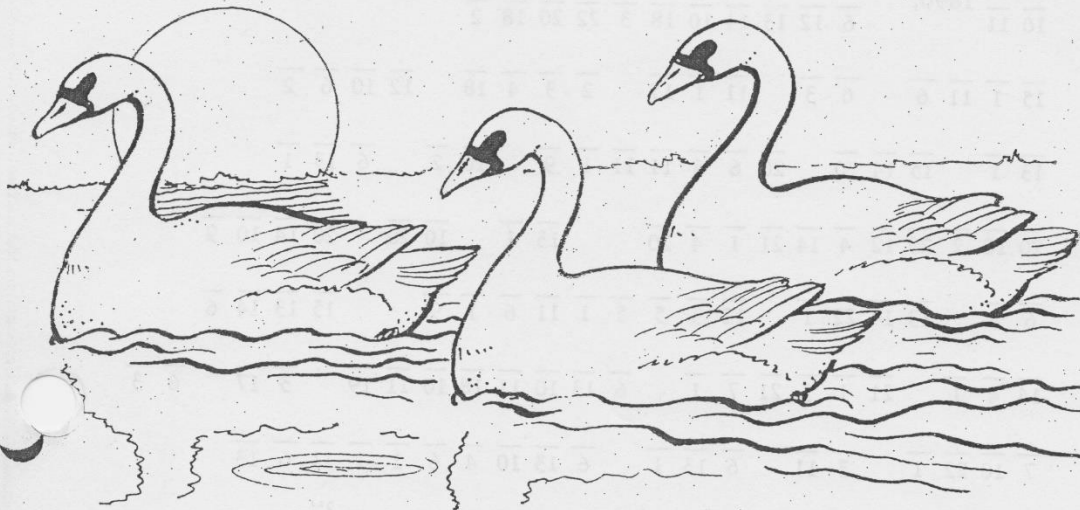
In composing, he had the gift of melody . . . and what hauntingly beautiful melodies he has given us. *Romeo and Juliet* contains romantically flowing and dramatic music; the music for the ballet *The Nutcracker* is always enchanting.

He is in the period of music classified as Romantic. In this musical period, emotions were dramatically depicted. They were expressed in great extremes of dynamics (loud and soft), sweeping use of the string section, sudden crescendos and diminuendos (gradually getting louder and gradually growing softer), as well as the liberal use of accents. In his *Symphony, No. 6* (sometimes called the *Pathétique*) he placed the dynamic markings of *pppppp* in one place. The Italian word for soft is *piano* (*p*), very soft is *pianissimo* (*pp*). Use your imagination for the interpretation of *pppppp!*

In the late fall of 1893, a cholera epidemic swept through St. Petersburg (now Leningrad). Orders were issued to boil all drinking water. One day, he drank a glassful of water coming right from the water tap; cholera developed. He died a few days later on November 6, 1893. This seemed especially tragic, for almost two weeks earlier his *Symphony No. 6* had a very successful premiere.

NOTABLE TRIVIA

Every night he would like to play the card game of Whist. If nobody would play with him, he would play Solitaire. Cards were a favorite.



NUMBER WORD GAME

Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky

Refer to the story section for answers. Place the letters of your answers on the blanks after the clues. Transfer the letters to the same numbered blanks throughout the paragraph below. A story will result.

1. Who is the composer of the *Nutcracker Suite*?

21 1 6 1 4 10 7 10 12 13

6 12 13 14 10 18 3 22 20 18 2

2. What is his *Symphony No. 6* sometimes called?

21 14 6 13 1 6 10 23 8 1

3. What languages did he speak when he was very young?

17 4 1 11 12 13 19 1 4 5 14 11

4. Name the month when he died.

11 3 22 1 5 16 1 4



10 11 1890,

6 12 13 14 10 18 3 22 20 18 2

15 1 11 6 6 3 11 1 15 2 3 4 18 12 10 6 2

13 1 15 14 20 20 6 8 11 11 1 9 16 2 6 13 1

20 18 2 20 12 4 14 21 1 4 20 13 1 10 20 20 14 10 9

6 3 13 14 22 1 12 3 5 5 1 11 6 1 9 15 13 14 6

14 4 1 21 1 3 21 7 1 6 13 10 11 18 10 11 19 3 17 6 3

7 10 22 1 3 11 6 13 1 6 13 10 4 6 1 1 11 6 13

17 7 3 3 4 3 17 14 16 8 10 7 9 10 11 19

There's No Town Like Motown

Already by the end of the 1950s, the hard-driving rock-and-roll style was evolving into a gentler style known as *soft rock*. This style was represented by such singers as Frankie Avalon, Paul Anka, Neil Sedaka, and Bobby Vinton. Because popular music was moving in this direction, a record producer named Barry Gordy, Jr., created a new record company called Motown Records. It was given this name because it was located in Detroit, the motor capital of the United States.

Barry Gordy, Jr., was a chrome trimmer at the Ford assembly plant who wrote songs on the side. He was convinced by friends to start his own record company. Out of this first company came another company that he called Motown. It was the first and largest recording company owned and operated entirely by African-Americans. It became the most important recording label for black artists for many years.

The particular style of music that Motown Records developed and produced was a combination of gospel music prevalent in predominantly black churches and the earlier style of rhythm and blues. These two styles combined with some of the smoother vocal styles of the soft rock singers mentioned above, thus creating a new style of singing that was made popular by such performers as The Supremes, The Temptations, Gladys Knight and the Pips, and Stevie Wonder. Groups such as Gladys Knight and the Pips and The Supremes incorporated elements of choreography (planned dance steps and movements) in their live performances, which have remained notable characteristics of the Motown style. In the late '60s and early '70s, a family of musicians known as the Jackson Five was promoted by Motown Records and became famous. When the family group broke up, Michael Jackson went solo, becoming a renowned performer in the '80s and '90s.

Motown Records and many other record producing companies like it continue to be influential forces in the development of the music we hear today. They are constantly in search of the next star and newer and fresher styles. This is how singers like Ray Charles and the Jackson Five got started. These groups and many others would not have achieved the popularity and level of success that they did had it not been for the forward-thinking producer Barry Gordy and his establishment of Motown Records.



The Supremes

Name _____ Date _____

Questions for Consideration

1. By the end of the 1950s, what was the hard-driving rock-and-roll style evolving into?

2. What singers represented this new style?

3. What was the name of the record producer who set up a record company in Detroit?

4. What was the name of the new record company he created?

5. What styles were combined to create the new Motown style?

6. Who were some of the performers of this new style?

7. What was an important element in their live performances?

8. What was the name of the family of musicians that was promoted by Motown Records and became very popular?

9. What continue to be influential forces in the development of music?

10. What are record producing companies constantly in search of?

Singing the Blues

Have you ever felt sad or lonely? Have you ever felt like singing about your troubles when you were sad? A lot of early Americans, particularly slaves, often felt this way because of the bad situations they found themselves in. They believed an important part of dealing with those feelings was sharing them. They did so through songs that can be traced directly to their African musical heritage. Music in African culture is an extremely important part of life. In African tribes, people sing songs as they do their work throughout the day. They learn songs about different aspects of life. They learn specific songs about family life, their family history, the traditions of their tribe, and even songs for specific daily chores. They also created songs and music for special events. When Africans were brought to America and forced into slavery, they brought this heritage with them.

While they worked in the fields, slaves would sing songs to help them do the work and to help them feel better about their situations. When they were not working, they would sing melancholy songs in their homes or in religious gatherings. These songs were about the hardships of being a slave, the difficulties of losing their family, and the sadness of being separated from the ones they loved. Often they would petition God to help them in these difficult times in their lives. This, therefore, is the origin of what we now call the *blues*. The slaves continued to create these songs until they were freed at the end of the Civil War. Even after they were freed, the songs and the style remained popular.

By about 1900 the blues had developed into a standard musical form of about 12 measures that would be repeated for all the words in the song. There were basically two periods of this more organized form of the blues. One began toward the end of the nineteenth century and ran to approximately 1930, and the other began in 1930 and continues to the present time. The earlier period is usually divided into two basic styles: one is country or rural blues, and the other is city or urban blues. The main difference between the two styles is that the city blues was more rhythmic and often faster than the country blues. Also, the city blues performers were often accompanied by a complete jazz combo or rhythm section, consisting of a piano, bass, and drums, with other instruments such as trumpet, clarinet, and trombone. The country blues singers usually accompanied themselves on the guitar. Some of the best-known country blues singers of the early period were Big Bill Broonzy, Robert Johnson, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Teddy Ledbetter (also known as Ledbelly), and Lightnin' Hopkins. The most famous urban blues singers were women. The most important names from that era were Ma Rainey, Mamie Smith, and the most famous of all, Bessie Smith.

The second period, beginning in 1930, is divided between singers and instrumentalists. The singers include artists such as Joe Turner, Jimmy Rushing, Joe Williams, and Jimmy Witherspoon. The instrumentalists, many of whom also sang, were the great Louis Armstrong, Jack Teagarden, and Ray Charles.

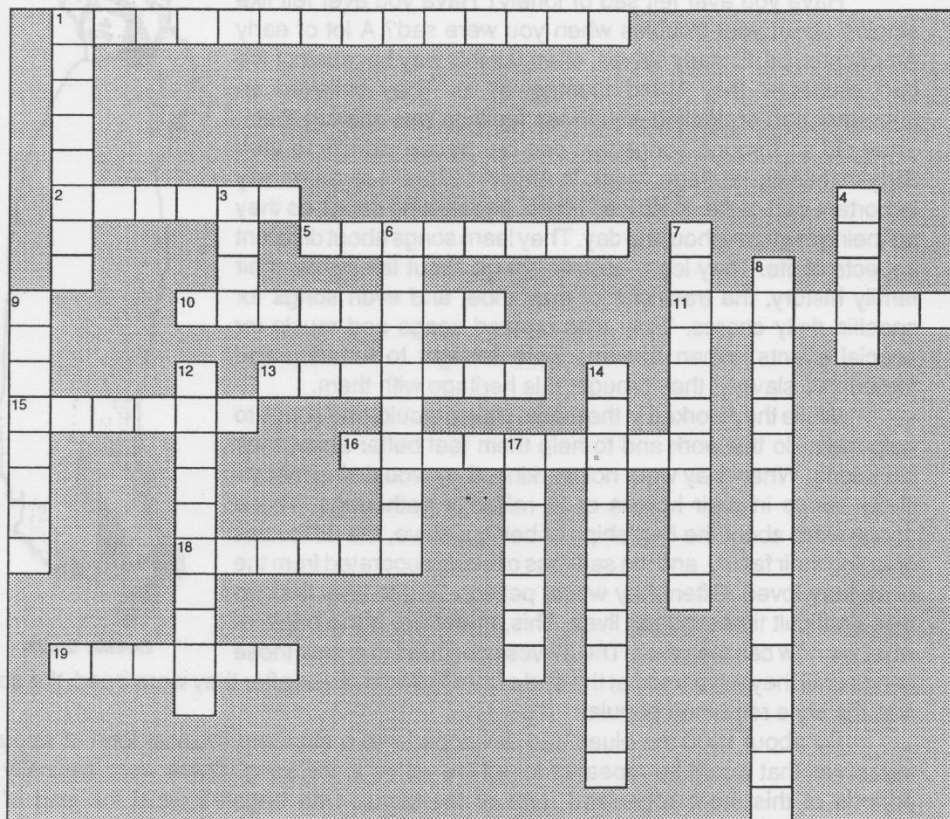


Bessie Smith

Name _____ Date _____

Those Puzzling Facts

Use the clues below to complete the crossword puzzle. Answers may be found in the narrative on the blues.



ACROSS

- 1. One of the great blues instrumentalists (two words)
- 2. What you sometimes feel when you are all by yourself
- 5. Another word for *ask*
- 10. The Africans who were brought to America brought this with them.
- 11. What you may feel like doing when you are sad
- 13. The more organized form of the blues had two of these.
- 15. The earlier period of blues is divided into two basic _____.
- 16. These were more rhythmic (two words).
- 18. Tribal members learn songs about specific daily _____.
- 19. The slaves would sing songs while working in these.

DOWN

- 1. Teddy Ledbetter's nickname
- 3. Songs teach members of African tribes about the different aspects of this.
- 4. This is extremely important in African culture.
- 6. Africans learn specific songs about the _____ of their tribe.
- 7. The most famous urban or city blues singer (two words).
- 8. People who play instruments are called _____.
- 9. The blues developed into a standard musical form consisting of 12 of these.
- 12. This type of song was sung in homes or at religious gatherings.
- 14. The singers of this style accompanied themselves on guitar (two words).
- 17. Big Bill _____.