



## WS15 MIDDLE SCHOOL Lesson Plan

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**WoodSongs Classroom**

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**Curriculum Design/Project Coordinator**

**Title: John Jacob Niles; Originality, Folk Music & Opera**

**Subject: Music, Language Arts, Art, History,**

**Length of Lesson: Three Class Periods (May vary depending on class times)**

**Grade Level: 7th & 8th Grade**

### **Introduction:**

This episode of WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour is dedicated entirely to **John Jacob Niles**. Niles is a Louisville, Kentucky native with an incredibly unique sound. He had an opera style as well as folk. This is an incredibly unique combination. Many people are not familiar with him, but he was a major influence on folk artists such as Bob Dylan. His vocal style might be perceived as odd or funny by some students.

Within this episode of WoodSongs, Dr. Ron Pen reflects upon the book he has written which is titled, "I Wonder As I Wander", which is an academic biography about John Jacob Niles. He was one of the leaders of the great folk boom of the 1950's and 60's. Dr. Ron Pen is a Professor and Director of The John Jacob Niles Center for American Music at the University of Kentucky. Dr. Ron Pen reads from his book within this episode and discusses the unique artistry and history of Niles. Niles began traveling around as a young man transcribing songs. This means that he actually write down the songs and kept record of them in sketch-books and preserving them for all time. In fact, much of Nile's transcribing work makes it possible for us to know many historic Appalachian folk songs. The nature of folk music is to be handed down from community to community. This episode features several artists. The Real World String Band performs the song in which Dr. Pen titled his book, "I Wonder As I Wander". They perform the song with Appalachian flavor. John Jacob Niles heard a young girl singing a couple of lines of the song, one small fragment, and wrote the song based upon those lines. He created his own songs and brought so much creativity and uniqueness to each. Niles also heard the dulcimer and created his own instrument based upon the sound of it. He was also a woodworker and so he designed and actually made larger instruments that resembled the dulcimer. The message of originality is very strong and to remain creative and true to one's artistry. John Jacob Niles certainly did so. Dr. Ron Pen portrays this in his book and also on stage while discussing the book and all of the encounters and research he conducted during the process of writing the book. Dr. Pen references that he had to learn a great deal about the history and life at the time in order to place Niles in it and really be able to write about his life.

### **Description of Lesson/Activities:**

**Activity 1:** Within this episode of WoodSongs, Monica Dewey, an opera singer from the University of Kentucky, performs Nile's song, "Go Away From My Window". Encourage students to think of one song that has particular and significant meaning to them and explore what it may sound like performed in a different style and genre. Would the song

still evoke the same emotions? Have students write a brief one page reflection paper exploring this idea.

**Activity 2:** Students will research Appalachian poetry and ballads and write a brief one page description to demonstrate their understanding and practice citing reliable sources correctly as well.

**Activity 3:** At the end of this episode, Michael Johnathon recites the quote by Henry Ward Beecher, “ Every artist dips his brush in his own soul, and paints his own nature into his pictures.” Encourage students to write an Appalachian style poem and strongly encourage creativity and originality.

### **Connection to English/Language Arts Standards:**

- > Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes (informational text and creative writing)
- > Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information)
- > Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text (music in this lesson) How does music encourage a sense of community as demonstrated within this episode?
- > Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text (when researching information text)
- > Cite resources that support analysis of a text
- > Identify accurate, credible sources
- > Write an informative/explanatory text to: examine a topic, convey ideas, concepts and information through: text selection, organization and analysis of relevant content (when researching Appalachian poetry and ballads)

### **Connection to Arts & Humanities Standards:**

- > Communicate a unifying theme or point of view through the production of works in the arts
- > Analyze musical forms
- > Compare and explain purposes for which music is created to fulfill (ceremonial, recreational, artistic expression)
- > Students make sense of ideas and communicate ideas with music

### **Connection to Language Arts Standards:**

- Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text (music in this lesson)
- Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in a different context, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening
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<b>Total</b>	<u>    </u> / <b>100</b>