



Yale-New Haven  
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1997 Volume V: The Blues Impulse

---

## The Blues Impulse—An Era and the Ambiguity of Adolescence

Guide for Curriculum Unit 97.05.06  
by Sequella H. Coleman

The Blues Impulse—An era and the Ambiguity of Adolescence is an interdisciplinary unit, approximately ten weeks in length, with a two-fold purpose: 1) to have students explore the writings, music, and art of Harlem during the 1920s and 30s; and 2) to have students explore their own “blues” in relation to their physical and social development. The students become instruments of adolescent blues representing their segment and perspective of a cultural blues. They are encouraged by creative lessons to explore their feelings through written, artistic, and musical expression.

The concept of blues music and the historical migration occurring in that time period are to be covered first. Second is a concentration on the blues women and their contribution to the era, musically and through their lyrics. Thirdly, a literary introduction to blues language in literature is done with the study of *Maud Martha* and “Karintha,” a story from *Cane*. The ultimate goal of the unit is to have students do a comparative analysis of the blues influence of the 20s and the “blues” impulse of adolescent years.

(Recommended for Social Studies, English and Reading, grades 6-8)

---

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University  
For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>