

## Stevie Ray Vaughan

Stephen "Stevie" Ray Vaughan was an American musician, singer, songwriter, and record producer. In spite of a short-lived mainstream career spanning seven years, he is widely considered one of the most influential electric guitarists in the history of music, and one of the most important figures in the revival of blues in the 1980s. AllMusic describes him as "a rocking powerhouse of a guitarist who gave blues a burst of momentum in the '80s, with influence still felt long after his tragic death."

### Learning Outcomes

- Have a better understanding of popular culture.
- Educate students in ways that encourage and enrich their musical appreciation and expression.
- Create an enhanced exploratory experience for students.

### Standards

#### Visual and Performing Arts (Music)

Goal 3: Students should understand the roles and functions of music and musicians in cultures, times, traditions, and places. Content Strand: History/Culture (HC)

Goal 4: Students will perceive, understand, and appreciate the diverse meanings and value of music. Content Strand: Aesthetics (A)

Goal 5: Students should make valid connections among the arts, other subject areas, and everyday life. Content Strand: Connections (C)

#### Social Studies

##### Elementary

Students will use social studies tools to describe the connections among people, places, and environment of Mississippi and the southeastern region. (Global affairs)

Students will identify the Mississippi artists, musicians and writers who have an impact on the state, nation and world. (Culture)

##### Middle/High School

Students will examine cultural artifacts (including but not limited to visual art, literature, music, theatre, sports) to contextualize historical developments. (Culture)

#### Science

Students will identify vibration as the source of sound and categorize different types of media (e.g., wood, plastic, water, air, metal, glass) according to how easily vibrations travel. (Physical science)

Show students the Hall of Fame video

Austin City Limits Hall of Fame 2014: Stevie Ray Vaughan 2:39

<http://www.pbs.org/video/2365240133/>

Stephen "Stevie" Ray Vaughan  
(1954 – 1990)

With his astonishingly accomplished guitar playing, Stevie Ray Vaughan ignited the blues revival of the 1980s. Vaughan drew equally from bluesmen like Albert King, Buddy Guy, and Albert Collins and rock & roll players like Jimi Hendrix and Lonnie Mack, as well as jazz guitarists like Kenny Burrell and Wes Montgomery, developing a uniquely eclectic and fiery style that sounded like no other guitarist, regardless of genre. Vaughan bridged the gap between blues and rock like no other artist had since the late 1960s. From 1983 to 1990, Stevie Ray was the leading light in American blues.

Born on October 3, 1954 in Dallas, Texas, Stevie Ray Vaughan played guitar as a child and became lead singer for the Texas band Double Trouble. Inspired by his older brother Jimmie's guitar playing, Stevie picked up his first guitar at the age of 10, a plastic Sears toy that he loved to strum. With an exceptional ear, (Stevie never learned to read sheet music) Stevie taught himself to play the blues by the time he'd reached high school, testing his stage skills at a Dallas club any chance he could.

Eventually Double Trouble's popularity spread outside the Lone Star State. In 1982, the group caught the attention of Mick Jagger, who invited them to play at a private party in New York City. Vaughan's musical abilities impressed David Bowie, who asked the musician to play on his upcoming album, *Let's Dance*. Vaughan and his band then signed a record deal with Epic. The resulting record, *Texas Flood*, did not disappoint, reaching No. 38 on the charts and catching the notice of rock stations across the country. For his part, Stevie was voted Best New Talent and Best Electric Blues Guitarist in a 1983 reader's poll by *Guitar Player Magazine*.

Vaughan was as much a fan of blues history as he was a part of it. He was inspired by Blues greats B.B. King, Muddy Waters, Otis Rush, Willie Dixon, Albert King, Freddie King, Howlin' Wolf, Otis Rush, and Guitar Slim. He owned Jimi Hendrix's "wah-wah," as well as a small army of classic Stratocaster electric guitars that had colorful names like Red, Yellow and National Steel. His favorite—and the one he used more than any other—was a 59 Strat he called "Number One."

More records (the live album, *Live Alive* and then another studio collection, *Soul to Soul*) and more success followed. There were Grammy nominations and, in 1984, the unprecedented recognition of Stevie by the National Blues Foundation Awards, which named him Entertainer of the Year and Blues Instrumentalist of the Year. He became the first white musician ever to receive both honors.

In the spring of 1990, Vaughan and his brother stepped into the studio to begin work on an

album that was scheduled to be released that autumn. The record, *Family Style*, made its debut that October, but Stevie never lived to see it. His tragic death in 1990 at age 35 cut short a brilliant career in blues and American rock & roll.

## Awards

### Blues Music Awards (formally known as the W. C. Handy Awards)

1984

Best Contemporary Blues Male Artist	Nominated
Entertainer of the Year	Won
Instrumentalist of the Year	Won

1985

Instrumentalist of the Year	Won
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2000

In Session	Blues Album of the Year	Won
In Session	Contemporary Blues Album of the Year	Won

### Grammy Awards

1983

"Texas Flood"	Best Traditional Blues Performance	Nominated
"Rude Mood"	Best Rock Instrumental Performance	Nominated

1984

"Voodoo Chile (Slight Return)"	Best Rock Instrumental Performance	Nominated
Blues Explosion	Best Traditional Blues Performance	Won

1985

"Say What!"	Best Rock Instrumental Performance (Orchestra Group or Soloist)	Nominated
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1987

"Pipeline"	Best Rock Instrumental Performance (Orchestra Group or Soloist)	Nominated
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1987

"Say What!"	Best Rock Instrumental Performance (Orchestra Group or Soloist)	Nominated
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1989

"Travis Walk"	Best Rock Instrumental Performance	Nominated
"In Step"	Best Contemporary Blues Performance	Won

1990

"Family Style"	Best Contemporary Blues Performance	Won
"D/FW"	Best Rock Instrumental Performance	Won
1992		
"The Sky Is Crying"	Best Contemporary Blues Album	Won
"Little Wing"	Best Rock Instrumental Performance	Won

## Activities

### Elementary

- Use any or all of the following activities to teach the phonemic soft sound of the letter “Gg.”  
“**G** is for **G**uitar.”
- Watch (all or part) of youtube.com “Teach Your Children: A Kid’s Introduction to a Guitar by Eric Rubenstein. (22 min.) This video shows the very basic parts of a guitar, two basic types of guitars, and explains how the guitar produces sound.
- Have a guitar(s) available for students to observe, touch, and hear.
- Have a guitarist to engage the children in an interactive activity. “Heartwoodguitar.com provides “Easy Guitar Songs for Kids.”
- Watch youtube.com “North Korea children playing the guitar.” (3:28). This video shows five young children playing guitar. It shows up close playing technique, including their body language. I found it motivating and encouraging. (You may possibly access more than one performance by these children.)
- Show pictures of Stevie Ray Vaughn, and give children a brief history of him beginning to play guitar at a very young age and being influenced by his brother Jimmy, as well as other notable guitarists.
- Show youtube.com video(s) of Stevie Ray Vaughn performing with others. Have children make comments, in turn, from their observations.
- Allow children to move around, role play, etc., while listening and/or watching music.
- Print an activity sheet for children to label the basic parts of the guitar. There are many online freebies, with different levels of difficulty.
- Have the children make a cereal box guitar and use basic terminology of a guitar. [www.myteachingstation.com](http://www.myteachingstation.com); Search “Cereal Box Guitar.” Adaptations may be made to add more individual art or creative skills.

### Secondary

Have students view “Texas Flood,” “The Thrill is Gone,” and “Burr Clover Farm Blues.”

Divide students into small groups.

Have each group write down the instrumentation they see and hear in each song, and, a list of adjectives that describe the song and performance.

Ask them to consider differences in vocal style, in the sounds of the instruments, in the performance styles of the singers, and in the overall moods of the songs.

Ask each group to have a representative read their results

Discussion questions:

What do you know about the Blues?

What Mississippi performers do you associate with the Blues?

What instruments are featured?

What common themes are present in the songs?

Show the video “The Electric Guitar”

This video will present the development of the solid body electric guitar, including when and why guitar effects were first used and how these effects are made through the manipulation of sound.

<https://www.rockhall.com/learn/education/digital-classroom>

Divide students into pairs. Using the prompts, “one of the greatest guitar players of all time” and “his eclectic” style, have the students conduct a short research project on Stevie Ray Vaughan. Students may present a multimedia presentation or a written document. Include information acquired through classroom discussion, review of literature and observations at the exhibit.

## Videos

Austin City Limits Hall of Fame 2014: Stevie Ray Vaughan 2:39

<http://www.pbs.org/video/2365240133/>

"Texas Flood"

Stevie Ray Vaughan on Austin City Limits (1983)

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Stevie+Ray+Vaughan+Austin+City+Limits+YouTube&&view=detail&mid=41591D13AC2F80F00D1941591D13AC2F80F00D19&FORM=VRDGAR>

"Crossfire" Performed during his final appearance on Austin City Limits in 1989. 4:22

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=stevie+ray+vaughan+texas+flood&qpvt=stevie+ray+vaughan+texas+flood&view=detail&mid=C11A474EC8D6882890FAC11A474EC8D6882890FA&rvmid=41591D13AC2F80F00D1941591D13AC2F80F00D19&fsscr=0&FORM=VDFSRV>

“Pride and Joy” 5:08

[https://www.bing.com/search?q=stevie+ray+vaughan+pride+and+joy&filters=ufn%3a%22stevie+ray+vaughan+pride+and+joy%22+sid%3a%22dd029155-f018-cf05-411b-df85070b5081%22+catguid%3a%2270c7813b-57b4-4fdf-851e-a9276fce1483\\_498707c2%22+segment%3a%22generic.carousel%22+secq%3a%22stevie+ray+vaughan+pride+and+joy%22+psid%3a%2270c7813b-57b4-4fdf-851e-a9276fce1483%22+supwlc%3a%220%22+segtype%3a%22U29uZw%3d%3d%22&FORM=SN1CR&crslsl=0](https://www.bing.com/search?q=stevie+ray+vaughan+pride+and+joy&filters=ufn%3a%22stevie+ray+vaughan+pride+and+joy%22+sid%3a%22dd029155-f018-cf05-411b-df85070b5081%22+catguid%3a%2270c7813b-57b4-4fdf-851e-a9276fce1483_498707c2%22+segment%3a%22generic.carousel%22+secq%3a%22stevie+ray+vaughan+pride+and+joy%22+psid%3a%2270c7813b-57b4-4fdf-851e-a9276fce1483%22+supwlc%3a%220%22+segtype%3a%22U29uZw%3d%3d%22&FORM=SN1CR&crslsl=0)

Muddy Waters, “Burr Clover Farm Blues,” 1942, 3:10

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=muddy+waters+Burr+Clover+Farm+Blues&&view=detail&mid=35882F66B27C08F9F1E135882F66B27C08F9F1E1&FORM=VRDGAR>

Muddy Waters, “I Feel Like Going Home,” 1958, 4:25

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Muddy+Waters+Feel+Like+Going+Home&&view=detail&mid=9C36A284D9B8C40E39A09C36A284D9B8C40E39A0&FORM=VRDGAR>

Riviera Paradise 9:23

<https://www.bing.com/search?q=stevie+ray+vaughan+riviera+paradise&qs=SC&pg=stevie+ray+vaughn%2c+revi&sc=8-23&sp=1&cvid=6EF04E20C8E94323B4BDF192919E586A&FORM=QBRE>

“The Thrill is Gone” 3:15

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=BB+King&view=detail&mid=E1ECA2119D949C34CCB9E1ECA2119D949C34CCB9&FORM=VIRE>

"Why I Sing the Blues" 5:39

BB King, Albert King, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Gladys Knight, Eric Clapton Etta James, Phil Collins, Chaka Khan, Billy Ocean, Paul Butterfield, Dr. John.

<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Stevie+Ray+Vaughan+Death&&view=detail&mid=23BBAF133B31A87E19CF23BBAF133B31A87E19CF&FORM=VRDGAR>

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## References/Resources

Delta State University Delta Center for Culture and Learning  
<http://deltacenterforcultureandlearning.com/>

Mississippi Blues Trail  
<http://msbluestrail.org/>

Music Mississippi  
<https://www.facebook.com/musicmississippi/timeline>

Rock and Roll Hall of Fame  
<http://rockhall.com>

Stevie Ray Vaughn Facebook  
<https://www.facebook.com/stevierayvaughan>

Stevie Ray Vaughn, Official Site  
<http://www.srvofficial.com/>

The Biography.com website  
<http://www.biography.com/people/stevie-ray-vaughn-9516459>

The Blues Foundation  
<http://blues.org/2016/02/2016-blues-hall-of-fame-inductees/>

Visit Mississippi. Music and Arts section: Blues Music  
<http://visitmississippi.org/sitepages/music-and-arts#blues-music>