

# ***Estoy Aquí: Music of the Chicano Movement:***

*A Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathway for students in Grades 6–8.*

## ***Teacher's Guide***

*Lesson Hub 3:  
Corridos: Music as Storytelling  
and Historical Record*



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### **Lesson Overview**

*Corridos* (“koh-RREE-dohs”) are narrative ballads that have been sung in Mexico and along the US-Mexico border for over 150 years. Historically, corridos have functioned as a powerful means of storytelling, personal expression, and historical record. They often tell the stories of ordinary men (sometimes women) who became heroes because they were viewed as brave, strong, and willing to stand up to oppressors. Most often, corridos are based upon true stories of people and events. During the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s, some composers used corridos as a means of “exposing evils and injustices and relaying the truth about things as they were actually happening” (Zettler, 2009).

Corridos are usually sung in Spanish and felt in 3/4 time. Most corridos are written in strophic form (AAA), have two vocal parts (melody and harmony), and only two (sometimes three) chords. Corridos are primarily an oral/aural tradition: most musicians learn this type of music “by ear.”

The learning experiences in this lesson will prompt students to engage with music from the Smithsonian Folkways collection, while learning about the ways in which corridos served as an important form of storytelling and historical record during the Chicano movement.

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## Lesson Paths and Student Objectives\*



1. **Cultural/Historical Context of the Corrido** (20+ minutes)
  - Students will identify common purposes and defining characteristics of corridos, especially within the context of the Chicano movement.









2. **Corridos: Exploring Instrumentation and Musical Elements** (20+ minutes)
  - Students will identify the ways in which composers (during the time of the Chicano movement) used musical elements (e.g., time, harmony, timbre, and structure) to create music (corridos) that conveyed expressive intent and served a purpose.



3. **Composing Corridos** (25+ minutes)
  - Students will document their personal musical ideas by composing song lyrics in the style of a corrido.

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\*Note: The learning icons used above signify the type of learning used in each Path. Keep in mind that these Paths are not intended to be sequential; rather, teachers or students may choose which Paths they'd like to use from each Lesson. The time estimate given for each Path indicates "in class" time. The + indicates there are optional extension activities and/or a suggested homework assignment.

While all learning types ( History and Culture,  Music Listening,  Music Making and Creation, and  Creative Connections) fulfill 2014 National Music Standards, non-music teachers will be able to use  History and Culture and  Creative Connections Paths without specific musical knowledge.

## Teaching Plan

### Path 1: The Historical and Cultural Context of the Corrido

#### **To prepare:**

- Preview Path 1 of the **Lesson Hub 3 Slideshow**.



**Process:** Guide student learning while facilitating the student slideshow.

- Open the “Launch Slideshow” link on the righthand menu of the Lesson landing page. If you are able to use a different screen than the students, have them open the “Student Slideshow” link just below that, which will not show the notes.

#### **1. Listening Activity:**

A. Listen to an excerpt from “El corrido de Reies Lopez Tijerina.”

- Discuss: *What is the purpose of this song?*
  - **Corridos are narrative ballads: Their main purpose is to tell a story.**
    - Corridos have been sung in Mexico and along the US-Mexico border for over 150 years.
    - Most often, corridos are sung in Spanish.

B. Listen to an excerpt from another corrido (“Corrido de Rio Arriba”).

- *Identify similarities* between “El corrido de Reies Lopez Tijerina” and “Corrido de Rio Arriba.”
  - **Both songs have guitar accompaniment.**
  - **Both songs are felt in 3/4 time.**
  - **Both songs are sung in Spanish.**
  - **Both songs have one harmony part (in addition to the melody).**
  - **Both songs were written during the period we now call the Chicano movement (1965–1975).**

#### **2. Share Information:**

Use the information embedded in the slideshow to provide additional context about:

- Corridos in general
- The composers of these songs
- The man about whom these corridos were written (Chicano movement leader Reies López Tijerina)

#### **3. Listening Activity:**

Listen to excerpts of each song again, while following along with the lyrics (embedded in slideshow or in Worksheets section below).

- *What are the differences in perspectives between these songs?*

- Lead a short discussion based on student responses to the listening exercise.

**4. Corrido Discovery Activity** (*optional*):

Within the slideshow, click on an image of an important historical figure, read a short synopsis of his story, and listen to an excerpt from a related corrido.

## **Path 2: Corridos: Exploring Instrumentation and Musical Elements**



### **To Prepare:**

- Preview Path 2 of the **Lesson Hub 3 Slideshow**.
- Optional: Print the listening log template for each student ([find below](#)).

**Process:** Guide student learning while facilitating the student slideshow.

- Open the “Launch Slideshow” link on the righthand menu of the Lesson landing page. If you are able to use a different screen than the students, have them open the “Student Slideshow” link just below that, which will not show the notes.
  - Scroll to the Path Menu slide (slide 3) and click on Path 2
1. **Attentive Listening** (“El corrido de Reies Lopez Tijerina”):  
Play several 30–45-second clips of this recording, asking students to think about a new guiding question each time:
    - *Which instruments do you hear? (one male voice, one female voice, classical and requinto guitar)*
    - *What do you notice about the “beat/time/meter” of this song? (3/4 time)*
  2. **Engaged Listening:**  
Prompt students to actively pat (or step, or clap, etc.) the distinct groups of three beats (strong, weak, weak) along with the recording.
  3. **Attentive Listening:**  
Play several 30–45 second clips of the same recording, asking students to think about a new guiding question each time:
    - *What do you notice about the form (structure) of this song? (strophic – AAA)*
    - *Can you identify the harmonic (chordal) structure? (I and V)*
    - *How do you think musicians usually learn this type of music? (It is an aural tradition)*
  4. **Attentive Listening** (“Corrido de Rio Arriba”):
    - In which ways is this musical example different than the last example? (discussion points are provided within the slideshow)
  5. **Listening Log Activity**

Students will complete a written listening log for “El corrido de Reies Lopez Tijerina.”

- This activity will prompt students to reflect on: *meaning, use, transmission, instruments, time, pitch, and structure.*
- Find the listening log template and an associated rubric below.

## **Path 3: Composing Corridos**



### **To Prepare:**

- Preview Path 3 of the **Lesson Hub 3 Slideshow**.
- Print the corrido composing worksheet for each student ([find below](#)).

**Process:** Guide student learning while facilitating the student slideshow.

- Open the “Launch Slideshow” link on the righthand menu of the Lesson landing page. If you are able to use a different screen than the students, have them open the “Student Slideshow” link just below that, which will not show the notes.
- Scroll to the Path Menu slide (slide 3) and click on Path 3.

### **1. Discussion:**

Prompt students to think about a potential topic for their corrido/song lyrics by considering the following question:

- Can you think of a recent event (or person) that had a direct impact on your life?

### **2. Share Information:**

Unpack the following structural characteristics to help your students prepare for the composition activity (and review examples embedded in slideshow):

- Stanzas: A corrido is structured in stanzas—very much like a poem.
  - Each stanza has either 4 or 6 lines.
  - Each line usually contains 7-10 syllables.
- Rhyming:
  - Many corridos have an ABCB rhyming scheme.

### **3. Watch Video (Optional):**

The short, linked video presents steps for structuring 8 stanzas in the style of a traditional corrido. These steps are also outlined in the slideshow and composing worksheet below.

### **4. Composing Activity:**

Hand out the composing worksheet and provide time for the students to compose their lyrics (or assign as homework).

- Students will complete the “8 Steps” detailed in previous activity to write lyrics for an 8-stanza corrido.
  - Each stanza should have four lines, and each line should have 7-10 syllables.
- Find the composing worksheet (which includes specific instructions for this activity) and an associated rubric below.

## **Integrated Standards Connections**

### **2014 National Core Music Standards:**

***MU:Cr2.1.a Select, organize, construct, and document personal musical ideas for arrangements and compositions that demonstrate an effective beginning, middle, and ending, and convey expressive intent.***

- Can I organize, construct, and document personal musical ideas in a way that reflects the typical structure and purpose associated with the corrido tradition?

***MU:Re7.1.a Demonstrate and explain, citing evidence, how selected music connects to, and is influenced by specific interests, experiences, purposes, or contexts.***

- Can I explain what corridos are and how they were used during the Chicano movement?

***MU:Re7.2.a Describe how the elements of music and expressive qualities relate to the structure of the pieces.***

- Can I identify and describe how musical elements and expressive qualities were used in the corridos featured in this lesson?

***MU:Re7.2.b Identify the context of music from a variety of genres, cultures, and historical periods.***

- Can I explain the cultural and historical context/purpose of the corrido as a musical form?
- Can I explain who Reies Lopez Tijerina was and why corridos were written about him?

***MU:Re8.1.a Describe a personal interpretation of contrasting works and explain how creators' and performers' application of the elements of music and expressive qualities, within genres, cultures, and historical periods, convey expressive intent.***

- Can I explain how singer-songwriters Rumel Fuentes and Roberto Martinez used musical elements and expressive qualities to tell stories during the time of the Chicano movement (1960s–1970s)?

***MU:Cn10.0.a Demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.***

- Can I explain how singer-songwriters Rumel Fuentes and Roberto Martinez's interests, knowledge, skills, and personal experiences influenced the music they wrote and performed during the time of the Chicano movement?
- Can I identify an important event or person in my life to write a corrido about?

***MU:Cn11.0.a Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.***

- Can I explain how corridos were used and why they were important during the time of the Chicano movement (1960s–1970s)?

## College, Career, and Civic Life (C3 Standards):

*D2.His.9.6-8. Classify the kinds of historical sources used in a secondary interpretation.*

- Can I explain why corridos are considered primary sources that can be used to interpret historical events?

*D2.His.10.6-8. Detect possible limitations in the historical record based on evidence collected from different kinds of historical sources.*

- After studying the lyrics of two corridos written about the same person/event and reading an informational text on the same topic, can I discuss the possible limitations of corridos as a form of historical record?

## Common Core State Standards:

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.*

- After studying song lyrics, can I accurately summarize Rumel Fuentes's and Roberto Martinez's interpretations of events that transpired during the Tierra Amarilla Courthouse Raid?

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.5. Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).*

- Can I identify eight sequential steps that are often used to write corridos?

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.9. Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.*

- Can I compare the perspectives of songwriters Rumel Fuentes and Roberto Martinez (primary source) with a secondary source (informational text) that summarizes events that transpired during the Tierra Amarilla Courthouse Raid?

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.*

- Can I write my own clear and coherent song lyrics/story using the typical structural characteristics of a corrido?

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.4.3. Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelevant evidence is introduced.*

- Can I describe differences between two songwriters' accounts (primary sources) of the same historical event, evaluating the soundness of each argument/claim?

## **Additional Reading and Resources**

Gonzalez, H. (2010, September 29). A Decade of Young Corridistas. *Arizona Public Media*.

<https://news.azpm.org/p/news-topical-arts/2010/9/29/1538-corridos-at-the-poetry-center/>

Hernández, G. E. (1996). *The Mexican Revolution: Corridos about the Heroes and Events 1910–1920 and Beyond!* [Liner notes]. Arhoolie Records. [https://folkways-](https://folkways-media.si.edu/docs/folkways/artwork/ARH07041.pdf)

[media.si.edu/docs/folkways/artwork/ARH07041.pdf](https://folkways-media.si.edu/docs/folkways/artwork/ARH07041.pdf).

Lamadrid, E. (2010). Roberto Martínez and his New Mexican Mariachi: A Transnational

Legacy. *Smithsonian Folkways Magazine*. [https://folkways.si.edu/magazine-winter-2010-](https://folkways.si.edu/magazine-winter-2010-rey-albuquerque-roberto-martinez/latin-world/music/article/smithsonian)  
[rey-albuquerque-roberto-martinez/latin-world/music/article/smithsonian](https://folkways.si.edu/magazine-winter-2010-rey-albuquerque-roberto-martinez/latin-world/music/article/smithsonian)

Leger, J. (1993). *Lo Mejor de Los Reyes de Albuquerque* [Liner notes]. Minority Owned Record Enterprises. <https://folkways-media.si.edu/docs/folkways/artwork/MORE00822.pdf>.

Montoya, M. (2016). *The Chicano Movement for Beginners*. For Beginner Books.

Rosales, F. A. (1996). *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*. Arte Público Press.

Strachwitz, C. (1994). *Corridos & tragedias de la frontera* [Liner notes]. Arhoolie Records. <https://folkways-media.si.edu/docs/folkways/artwork/ARH07019.pdf>.

Zettler, J. (2009). *Corridos of the Chicano Movement*, by Rumel Fuentes [Liner notes]. Arhoolie Records. <https://folkways-media.si.edu/docs/folkways/artwork/ARH00507.pdf>.

**Worksheets**

# **“El corrido de Reies Lopez Tijerina” (excerpt)**

Written and performed by Rumel Fuentes

Aquí vivía la gente  
La tierra los mantenía  
Pero el tiempo les robó  
Las tierras que ellos tenían  
Solo queda una cuchilla  
Llamada Tierra Amarilla

Iba un hombre muy violento  
Las tierras a recobrar  
A las cortes más supremas  
Subió solo a declarar  
Solo una barda de fierro  
Fue lo que pudo encontrar

Reies López Tijerina  
Como Zapata buscaba  
Que de esta tierra robada  
Hacer lo que Dios mandaba  
La justicia se negó  
Nunca pudo el lograr nada

Our people lived here  
Provided for by the land  
But time stole  
The lands that they owned  
Only a strip is left  
Called Tierra Amarilla (Yellow Land)

A very violent man went  
To recover the lands  
To the most supreme of courts  
He went alone to testify  
But only an iron fence  
Was he able to find

Reies López Tijerina  
Like Zapata, sought  
To make of this stolen land  
What God wills  
Justice was denied  
He did not succeed

## “Corrido de Rio Arriba” (excerpt)

Written by Roberto Martínez; Performed by Los Reyes de Albuquerque

Un grupo de nuestra raza  
Muy descontentos bajaron  
Y en oficiales de estado  
Su venganza ellos tomaron.

Su jefe les suplicaba,  
"No debería haber violencia."  
Pero no los controlaba  
Pues perdieron la paciencia.

Un diputado en el suelo  
Se queja con agonía  
Con una bala en el pecho  
Allá por Tierra Amarilla

A group of our people  
Made their way in great discontent  
And upon state officials  
Took their vengeance.

Their leader begged them,  
"Violence mustn't ensue."  
But he couldn't control them  
Because they had lost their patience.

A deputy on the ground  
Groans in agony  
A bullet lodged in his chest  
Over there in Tierra Amarilla.

## Listening Log Template

Musical Selection (Title): \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Music/Time Period: \_\_\_\_\_

Composer/Music Makers: \_\_\_\_\_

<i>People</i>			<i>Sound</i>			
Meaning	Use	Transmission	Instruments	Time	Pitch	Structure

## Listening Log Rubric

Musical Selection (Title): “El corrido de Reies Lopez Tijerina”

Type of Music/Time Period: Corrido/Chicano Movement (1965-1975)

Composer/Music Makers: Rumel Fuentes

<i>People</i>			<i>Sound</i>			
Meaning	Use	Transmission	Instruments	Time	Pitch	Structure
<p>Tells a story/provides a historical account.</p> <p>This particular corrido tells the story of a famous leader during the Chicano Movement: Reies López Tijerina (told from Rumel Fuente’s point of view)</p>	<p>Bringing awareness to an important social issue: Land Reclamation</p> <p>Community unity/solidarity</p> <p>Rumel’s personal expression of his views</p> <p>Exposing injustice/speaking the truth</p> <p>Expression of collective cultural identity</p>	<p>Oral/Aural... Passed down through listening</p>	<p>Classical Guitar</p> <p>Requinto Guitar</p> <p>Button accordion</p> <p>Two voices (duet); one male and one female</p>	<p>Triple Meter (felt in distinct groups of three)</p> <p>Moderate, relaxed tempo</p>	<p>Relatively simple, repetitive melody</p> <p>Vocal melody line</p> <p>Vocal harmony line</p>	<p>Strophic (AAA)</p> <p>Text in stanzas (groups of four lines)</p> <p>Narrative ballad</p>

2014 National Music Standards Documentation (5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade):

MU:Re7.1.a Demonstrate and explain, citing evidence, how selected music connects to, and is influenced by specific interests, experiences, purposes, or contexts.

MU:Re7.2.a Demonstrate and explain, citing evidence, how responses to music are informed by the structure, the use of the elements of music, and context (such as social, cultural, and historical).

MU:Re7.2.b Identify the context of music from a variety of genres, cultures, and historical periods.

MU:Cn11.0.a Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

Suggested Rubric for Standards Documentation:

<b>4 = Exceeds Standard</b>	<b>3 = Meets Standard</b>	<b>2 = Approaching Standard</b>	<b>1 = Does Not Meet Standard</b>
Student includes most or all of the information listed in the chart above (or possibly more details about the musical selection).	Student includes most of the information listed in the chart above.	Student includes some of the information listed in the chart above but misses several key elements.	Student includes very little (or none) of the information listed in the chart above.

## Composing Corridos Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Corridos are usually written about important events or the actions of brave people. However, you can write a corrido about anything that is relevant to your life. What did you choose for your topic?

For this activity, you will be using “8 Steps” to write an 8-stanza corrido (inspired by the YouTube video we watched in class). Each stanza will have four lines, and each line should have 7-10 syllables. You can consider making the last word in lines 2 and 4 rhyme (but this is not required). Have fun!

1. Ask for Permission (for example: “Dear audience...I’d like to tell you a little story about...”)

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2. Introduce the characters (for example: “Meet our beloved hero/villain...”)

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3. Present a warning (“but wait! – there is danger ahead!”)

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4. Describe the challenge

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5. Build the confrontation

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6. Unfold the tragedy

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7. Define the moral (“now we know kids . . . don’t do that or you will end up like our hero”)

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8. Bid farewell (“Thanks for listening...until next time”)

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## **Composing Corridos: Standards Connections and Rubric**

2014 National Music Standards Connection (5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade):

**MU:Cr2.1.a: Select, organize, construct, and document personal musical ideas for arrangements and compositions that demonstrate an effective beginning, middle, and ending, and convey expressive intent.**

Teachers may also choose to include the following lesson extensions:

- Ask students to share their lyrics in small groups or read them aloud for the whole class.
- Create a two-chord backing track and have students speak their corridos in rhythm or compose a simple melody line that follows the syllabic structure of their lyrics.
- If students play a chordal instrument (e.g., guitar or ukulele), they can strum along!
- Organize a “Corrido Concert.”

By incorporating these lesson extensions, teachers can help students meet the following additional national music standards:

MU:Cr1.1.a Generate rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic phrases and variations over harmonic accompaniments that convey expressive intent.

MU:Cr1.1.b Generate musical ideas (such as rhythms, melodies, and accompaniment patterns) within specific related tonalities, meters, and simple chord changes.

MU:Cr2.1.b Use standard and/or iconic notation and/or audio/ video recording to document personal simple rhythmic phrases, melodic phrases, and two chord harmonic musical ideas.

MU:Cr3.1.a Evaluate their own work, applying teacher-provided criteria such as application of selected elements of music, and use of sound sources.

MU:Cr3.1.b Describe the rationale for making revisions to the music based on evaluation criteria and feedback from their teacher.

MU:Cr3.2.a Present the final version of their documented personal composition or arrangement, using craftsmanship and originality to demonstrate an effective beginning, middle, and ending, and convey expressive intent.

Suggested Rubric for National Music Standard **MU:Cr2.1.a:**

	<b>4 = Exceeds Standard</b>	<b>3 = Meets Standard</b>	<b>2 = Approaching Standard</b>	<b>1 = Does Not Meet Standard</b>
<b>Effective crafting of musical ideas</b>	Musical ideas were effectively organized to <i>creatively and innovatively</i> reflect the structure and expressive intent associated with the “corrido” tradition. The student’s corrido had a clearly defined theme, and a clear beginning, middle, and end. The student’s corrido consisted of at least 8 stanzas of 4 lines each/7-10 syllable per line.	Musical ideas were effectively organized to reflect the structure and expressive intent associated with the “corrido” tradition. The student’s corrido had a clearly defined theme, and a clear beginning, middle, and end. The student’s corrido consisted of 8 stanzas of 4 lines each/7-10 syllable per line.	Musical ideas were present, but were somewhat unclear, and did not always reflect the structure and expressive intent associated with the “corrido” tradition. The student’s corrido had a theme, but did not have a clear and logical beginning, middle, and end. The student completed at least 6-7 stanzas of 4 lines each, and in some cases adhered to the syllabic guidelines.	The way in which the musical ideas were organized <i>did not</i> reflect the structure and expressive intent associated with the “corrido” tradition. The student’s corrido <i>did not</i> have a clearly defined theme or a clear beginning, middle, and end. The student <i>did not</i> complete 8 stanzas of 4 lines each.