

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*



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, 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.









2. **Exploring Instrumentation and Musical Elements** (20+ minutes)
 - Students will identify the ways in which composers use musical elements (e.g., time, harmony, timbre, and structure) to create music (corridos) that conveys expressive intent and serves a purpose.



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

*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 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 (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: Exploring Instrumentation and Musical Elements



To Prepare:

- Preview Path 2 of the **Lesson 2 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 3 Slideshow**.
- Print the 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 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.

2014 National Music Standards Connections

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 my 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 how corridos 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 describe how musical elements and expressive qualities were applied in the selected corridos?

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?

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 Rumel Fuentes and Roberto Martinez use the musical elements and expressive qualities to tell the story of important leaders and events during the Chicano movement?

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 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?

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

- Can I explain why corridos were important during the Chicano movement?

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)

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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

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)

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

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

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 (5th-8th 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:

4 = Exceeds Standard	3 = Meets Standard	2 = Approaching Standard	1 = Does Not Meet Standard
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...”)

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

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

4. Describe the challenge

5. Build the confrontation

6. Unfold the tragedy

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

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

Composing Corridos: Standards Connections and Rubric

2014 National Music Standards Connection (5th-8th 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:*

	4 = Exceeds Standard	3 = Meets Standard	2 = Approaching Standard	1 = Does Not Meet Standard
Effective crafting of musical ideas	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.