

Compare and Contrast Worksheet (answer guide*)

*This is not an exhaustive list of all the answers. You may have more to share with your students!

	“Session Blues”	“Freight Train”	Comparison: how are they similar or different?
Instruments / Timbre (Which instrumental timbres do you hear? Acoustic instruments? Electric instruments? Vocal timbre, range of singer?)	Electric instruments: electric guitar, electric bass. Also: piano, drums, harmonica, voice (see slide 26.3)	Acoustic guitar, voice (see slide 26.3)	Electric vs. acoustic instruments
Structure / Form (chord structure; lyrical structure; overall form of song)	• Lyrical form: AAB (see slide 26.2) • Harmony: 12-bar blues progression (see slide 26.4)	• Lyrical form: AAB (see slide 26.2) • Harmony: 8-bar blues progression with a repeat of the last 4 bars (see slide 26.4)	Similar lyrical form, and same number of lines, but “Freight Train” repeats the second chord pattern twice.
Style (How do the musicians express the sounds? Do they interact? Is there improvisation? Guitar picking/stumming patterns; blue notes? Yells?)	• Big Mama sings in a powerful and raw (unrefined) manner, and uses “blue notes.” • Call and response interaction between Big Mama and other musicians—especially the musician playing the harmonica	• Elizabeth sings with a pensive, soft voice. • Guitar picking (Cotten picking)	• Vocal qualities differ in power and emotional expression. • Buddy Guy (Big Mama Thornton) plays a lyrical melody on the guitar, while Elizabeth picks an ostinato pattern.
Texture (Many instruments? Only a few instruments? Do they play at the same time? Take turns?)	At least 5 instruments, interacting with each other, taking “improvisational breaks”	Only guitar and voice	The band has more instruments interacting, but both songs alternate between the voice and the instruments.
Meaning (what is the song about? How do you know?)	Big Mama is singing about playing music and touring with the members of her band. A “session” is a term used to describe a group of people who gather to play music together.	Elizabeth herself has said that she wrote this song during her teenage years (sometime between 1906 and 1912), inspired by the trains that rattled through her hometown in North Carolina.	• “Session Blues” is celebrating being together with talented musicians. • “Freight Train” is more nostalgic and dreamy, imagining a journey.
Time / Rhythm (beat, are there repeated rhythmic patterns, simple?, complex?, strumming patterns, syncopation)	There is a “swing,” or “shuffle” to the beat, which can be heard as 4 groups of 3 beats per measure.	Straight beat, grouped in 2s	The tempo is about the same with both songs, “Session Blues” has a swing, which makes it sound faster.