



# MUSIC PATHWAYS

USER GUIDE

*A new approach to engaging young learners with music and cultures from around the world.*



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# CONTENTS

**04**

What are Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathways?

**06**

How to use Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathways

**08**

Student Learning Outcomes

**09**

Music Pathways and Lesson Plans

**10**

Examples of using Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathways in the classroom





# WHAT ARE SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS MUSIC PATHWAYS?

Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathways are the latest initiative in a long line of Folkways educational resources, designed to facilitate learning music and “learning through” music in the 21st century. While music has been relegated to the edges of the education system in most of the US, there are many inspiring examples of how learning about, appreciating, playing, and creating music can benefit children’s lives and help them navigate the complex world around them, appealing to different ways of learning and collaborating in the classroom.

Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathways are designed to do just that: Engaging, thematic, integrated, attractively designed, authoritative, and customizable journeys of discovery that place recordings from the rich and diverse Smithsonian Folkways collection and other primary sources from the Smithsonian at the center of the educational experience.

Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathways address systemic inequities by providing targeted, high-quality, multidisciplinary educational materials to teachers and learners in any discipline at no cost--bringing cultural background into the music classroom and integrating music into social studies, history, language, art, and other subjects.

Each Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathway contains at least 12 hours of rich, cross-curricular, and contextualized content, based on an overarching theme. The themes for our first set of Pathways celebrate the cultural and ethnic diversity of the United States and beyond. These curriculum resources represent an important step towards ensuring ALL students recognize themselves as musicians and their history and culture as an integral part of the American story.

While we anticipate there will eventually be dozens of these resources, we are initially offering the following two fully developed Music Pathways:

- ***Estoy Aquí: Music of the Chicano Movement*** (6th - 8th Grade)
- ***Cajun & Zydeco Music: Flavors of Southwest Louisiana*** (6th - 8th Grade)

With plans to release more in the near future:

- ***Listen What I Gotta Say: Women in the Blues*** (6th - 8th Grade; 3rd - 5th Grade)
- ***Fiesta Aquí, Fiesta Allá: Music of Puerto Rico*** (9th - 12th Grade; 3rd - 5th Grade)
- ***Hear Us Out! Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, and Their Music*** (9th - 12th Grade; K - 2nd Grade)
- ***May it Please Your Highness: Music of the Asian Courts*** (3rd - 5th Grade)
- ***Power to the People! Sounds of the Civil Rights Movement*** (9th - 12th Grade)

We hope you enjoy these exciting new resources and invite you to provide us with feedback: [folkwayseducation@si.edu](mailto:folkwayseducation@si.edu).



## HOW TO USE SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS MUSIC PATHWAYS

Each Music Pathway consists of 10 - 12 *Lesson Hubs* that focus on sub-themes (e.g., a specific social issue, musical genre and/or artist, type of ensemble or instrument, cultural environment, historical event, geographic region, etc.).

Each Lesson Hub has an associated *slideshow* and an accompanying *teacher's guide*.

The *slideshow* serves as a curated musical journey through a given topic and provides a solid basis for teachers to facilitate culturally diverse learning experiences with confidence in culturally sensitive, historically accurate, and meaningful ways.

The slideshows are available online through the Folkways website by navigating to the Music Pathway, and then the Lesson Hub of your choice.

[folkways.si.edu/learn](https://folkways.si.edu/learn)





Because the audio tracks, engaging images, and detailed contextual information are embedded directly into the slideshows, they are easy to use in a wide variety of learning environments (in-person, hybrid models, and fully online learning settings).

The teacher's guide includes a topic overview, learning objectives, a detailed teaching plan, worksheets, and a list of additional readings and resources. The lessons themselves consist of three distinct *Paths* (20-30-minute segments of curricular content), each of which promotes a different type of student learning.

Look for these icons so you can customize the learning experiences to meet the needs of your students and your teaching circumstances:



**CREATIVE CONNECTIONS:**  
Generate, develop, and document creative ideas



**HISTORY AND CULTURE:**  
Learn about the historical and cultural context



**MUSIC LISTENING:**  
Listen attentively to analyze and interpret music



**MUSIC MAKING:**  
Actively participate in making music



## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the heart of Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathways are active, in-depth encounters with primary sources (often music from the Smithsonian Folkways collection of over 65,000 tracks). These resources provide engaging and compelling narratives of a music culture, social movement, musical theme, and/or historical/cultural event.

Each learning experience is explicitly aligned with the 2014 National Music Standards and addresses educational standards in several other subject areas as well.

Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathways embrace an integrated, multidisciplinary approach, which maximizes instructional time and helps teachers recognize the ways in which connections between subject areas can deepen students' understanding of complex topics. In addition to gains related to academic and musical growth, its integrated learning approaches - informed by the tenets of [World Music Pedagogy](#) - have potential to stimulate student engagement and motivation, higher levels of student self-confidence, and better attitudes towards school.

Perhaps most importantly, Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathways are based on the premise that teaching music isn't only about sounds. Music is a human phenomenon. It is something that people from all corners of the world make and do for and with each other. Participatory experiences with music from a wide variety of cultural settings can break down barriers of otherness, build bonds, and cultivate cultural sensitivity and empathy. These are outcomes that are often overlooked, and countered by early exposure to intolerance and prejudice, promoting the development of cultural competencies that are essential for communities and societies in the 21st century.



# MUSIC PATHWAYS AND LESSON PLANS

Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathways invite engagement with music and underlying stories, without being prescriptive and overly didactic. They are based on the premise that “one size does not fit all.” Although there are suggested “paths” that logically guide teachers and students from one destination to the next (e.g., Lessons 1–12 of a Music Pathway, in order), there are many options for “re-routing,” “taking the scenic route,” and even taking an “off-ramp” to a different Music Pathway altogether. Teachers are encouraged to use the provided materials to design a journey of discovery that will be meaningful and relevant for their students. See Figure 1 for an example of this idea.

Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathways differ from traditional lesson plans, which can also be valuable and popular. In fact, our previous generation of Folkways Lesson Plans, which emerged from our World Music Pedagogy courses, average 200,000 downloads a year! Although we often hear that these Lesson Plans are useful and interesting (especially in dedicated music classrooms), we also hear they sometimes lack the depth and the flexibility teachers seek. We aim to address this issue through the Music Pathways.

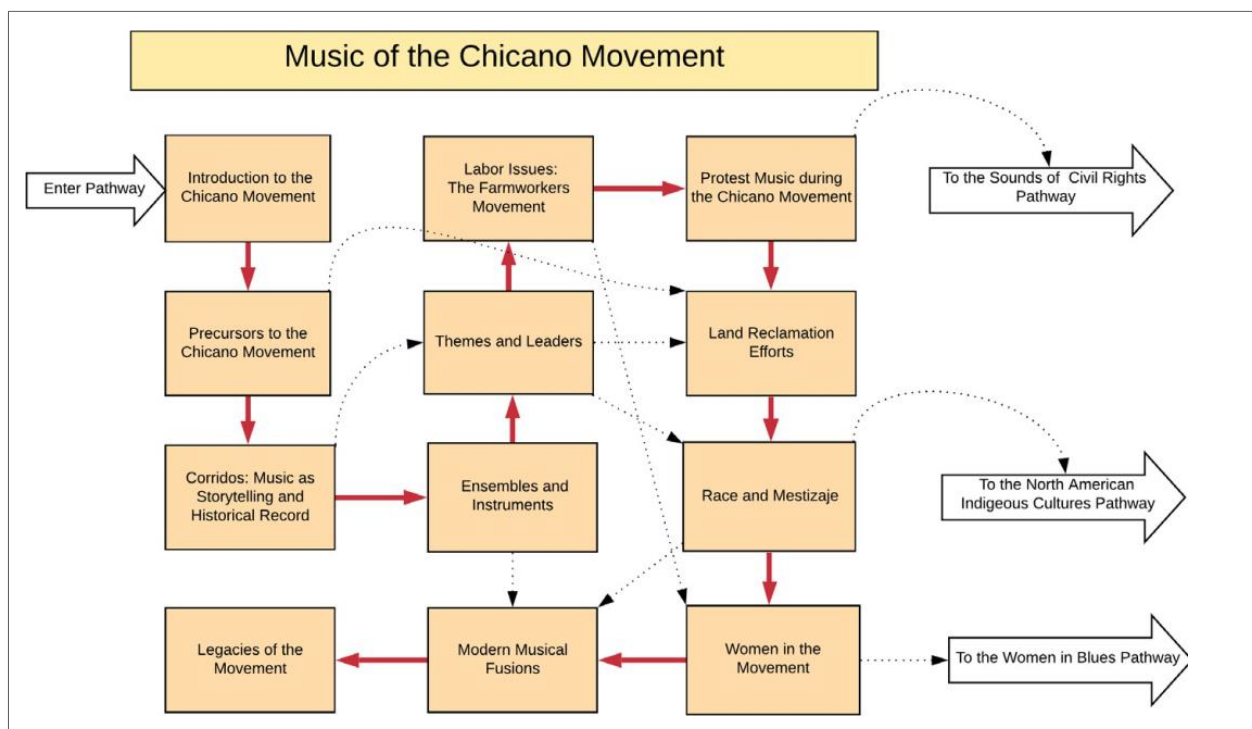


Figure 1. Navigating the Music Pathways: Paths, Re-routing, and Off-ramps

# EXAMPLES OF USING SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS MUSIC PATHWAYS IN THE CLASSROOM

Although there really is no “right” or “wrong” way to use the Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathways, you may have some questions about how to customize them to meet the needs of your unique teaching situation. We hope the following ideas will help you conceptualize some of the ways in which YOU can use the Music Pathways to design and facilitate deep and meaningful journeys of educational discovery for (and with) your students!



## GENERAL MUSIC:

The general music classroom is an ideal environment for implementing the Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathways. By implementing one Music Pathway, in its entirety, general music teachers can address all performance standards outlined in the 2014 National Core Music Standards document. If they are facing time constraints, general music teachers can prioritize Paths that conceptualize student learning through the **Music Making** and/or **Music Listening** lens.



## SECONDARY PERFORMANCE ENSEMBLES (BAND/CHOIR/ORCHESTRA):

Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathways can also enhance student learning within the context of school music performing ensemble classes, such as band, choir and orchestra. The lesson paths denoted by the **Music Making** icon will be the easiest to integrate into existing curricula.

Music Making paths will encourage students to actively engage with music from different cultural settings while making historical, cultural, and personal connections, and learning about important musical concepts (e.g., rhythms, scales, structure, texture, timbre, musical styles, improvisation, ear training, music literacy, composition, etc.). Secondary ensemble teachers can also use Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathways to meet “non-performance”-oriented curricular goals in authentic and meaningful ways (e.g., Responding and Connecting standards).



## SOCIAL STUDIES/HISTORY/CIVICS:

Throughout history, various composers have used songs to communicate their perspective of important historical and cultural events as they were happening. In this way, music functions as a form of historical record and civic engagement. Music can prompt learners to connect and engage with historical and current events in ways that a traditional textbook simply cannot.

Teachers in subject areas like social studies, history, and civics can look for lesson paths denoted by the **History and Culture** icon. The activities included via these paths will prompt students to consider the ways in which music can help us understand complex historical, cultural, and social ideas and/or events.







## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:

Many song lyrics are intended to tell a story or function as a form of poetry or historical text. Throughout the Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathways, students have ample opportunities to analyze and interpret song lyrics and structural elements and explore the ways in which lyricists have used literary devices, such as imagery, hyperbole, symbols, and point of view to tell stories that are interesting and meaningful.



English/Language Arts (ELA) teachers can look for lesson paths denoted by the **History and Culture** and **Creative Connections** icons. In these paths, students will actively engage in creative, project-based experiences, such as writing poetry, analyzing and composing song lyrics, and creating annotated music playlists.

## DISTANCE/VIRTUAL LEARNING

The COVID-19 pandemic forced educational systems around the world to identify effective ways of delivering curricular content in the online environment. Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathway slideshows are user-friendly and compatible with a variety of virtual and hybrid learning models. We intend for these slideshows to help teachers (in a variety of subject areas and at all levels of the system) provide their students with authentic and meaningful virtual learning experiences when in-person experiences are not possible. Students can easily work through the slideshow content on their own (or in small groups), participate in threaded and video-based discussions regarding song lyrics/meaning and musical elements, and submit written assignments through online learning platforms.

## CREATE A MUSIC PATHWAYS “TEAM”:

Perhaps the most effective way to maximize the impact of the Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathways is to form a team of educators who have different areas of expertise and enjoy integrating/collaborating. Consider the following hypothetical example, which illustrates how members of a “pathways team” can share the responsibility of implementing a Music Pathway and use their individual strengths to provide students with a deeper and more meaningful (and perhaps even transformative) journey of discovery.

**Andy, Meredith, and Jennifer** decide to “team-up” to teach Lesson 3 from *Estoy Aquí: Music of the Chicano Movement*: [“Corridos: Music as Storytelling and Historical Record”](#).



**Andy**, a middle school social studies educator, teaches the path framed through the “History and Culture” lens. Students learn about the contributions of an important Chicano movement leader (Reies Lopez Tijerina) by listening to corridos that have been written about him.



**Meredith**, a middle school English language arts educator, teaches the path conceptualized through the “Creative Connections” lens. She wants her students to learn more about how they can use music and song lyrics to tell stories that matter to them in engaging ways.



**Jennifer**, a middle school music educator who teaches general music, band, and choir classes, teaches the path conceptualized through the “Music Listening” lens. She prompts students to listen attentively to identify musical characteristics that distinguish corridos from other songs.

**Possible Outcome:** Students make a list of important people and events in their lives and write corridos based on their own experiences. The three teachers organize a “Corrido Concert,” during which, students recite their original compositions in front of a small audience comprised of parents and friends. Some students even decide to set their lyrics to music and accompany themselves on instruments. At the end of the semester, Andy, Meredith, and Jennifer meet to discuss other topics covered in the *Estoy Aquí: Music of the Chicano Movement* Pathway and decide which Lesson Hub they will explore next.



Of course, you may decide to use these materials in ways that do not correspond to the above example, and that's the idea! We want the Music Pathways to provide tools for different ways of learning about music and culture—but it's up to you and your students to decide the best “path” to take!

## WORLD MUSIC PEDAGOGY

Teachers who have participated in SFR-World Music Pedagogy courses can look for paths designated by the WMP icon, which indicates the learning experiences follow the five dimensions of [this pedagogical approach](#) (attentive listening, engaged listening, enactive listening, creating, and integrating).

