



Smithsonian Global Sound

Conjunto Music from South Texas

A Global Sound Lesson

Designed by: Amanda Soto

Suggested Grade Level: K-2 3-5 6-8 9-12

Musical Culture(s): Mexican American; Conjunto Music - regional music from South Texas

Musical Knowledge/Skills:

- Listening to (instruments, beat, *cancion ranchera*, *cumbia*)
- Spanish words and lyrics; Singing (partial lyrics and full melodies)

General Knowledge/Skills:

- Getting to know the South Texas people, language, location, and values; immigration; experience of living in the borderlands

Materials from Global Sound:

- “Bellos Recuerdos” by Los Fantasmas del Valle from *Taquachito Nights: Conjunto Music from South Texas* (SFW40460)
<http://www.smithsonianglobalsound.org/trackdetail.aspx?itemid=38285>
- “El Coco Rayado” by Ruben Vela y su Conjunto from *Taquachito Nights: Conjunto Music from South Texas* (SFW40460)
<http://www.smithsonianglobalsound.org/trackdetail.aspx?itemid=38290>

Instruments: hands (clapping); voice; feet (dancing)

Other:

- lyrics in Spanish and English
- map of South Texas
- liner notes
- picture of instruments or actual instruments; video or pictures of field workers and/or South Texas
- Accordion Dreams from PBS or The Music of the Texas-Mexican Borderlands

National Standards: (1) (6) (7) (8) (9)

Experiences:

Video: Accordion Dreams – PBS Video

<http://www.pbs.org/accordiondreams/main/index.html>

“Bellos Recuerdos” by Los Fantasmas del Valle

- Listen to recording
 - (a) Clap on the up beat strum
 - (b) Move side to side to the bass downbeats
- Ask students if they hear what type of instruments are being used; explain instruments through pictures, video, or having the instruments present
- Explain short history of South Texas and conjunto music and history of the Conjunto Festival of Narisco Martinez Cultural Arts Center in San Benito, TX; see map and liner notes
- Explain type of song - *cancion ranchera*; origins from Mexico; how it is used in other types of Latin music
- Talk about the people who live along the border; immigration; and issues of working in the fields
- Hand out lyrics in Spanish and English; discuss the lyrics and meanings; ask students if they know of anybody who has worked in fields; had similar experiences; or has found memories during rough times

“El Coco Rayado” by Ruben Vela ys su Conjunto

- Listen to recording
 - (a) Clap and move side to side to the downbeats
 - (b) Learn simple dance moves and practice with partner or alone to music
- Ask students if they hear what type of instruments are being used
- Ask students if they hear the difference; explain “cumbia” and how song appeals to younger generation, audience participation
- Look at Spanish and English lyrics and sing favorite parts – i.e. “Que si, que si. Que no, que no, Ese coco rayado lo quiero yo” Oh yes, oh yes, oh no, oh no, I want that stripped coconut (2 times)

Video: Accordion Dreams – PBS Video

<http://www.pbs.org/accordiondreams/main/index.html>

Finish watching the video; possible extensions can be retrieved from website

Extensions:

- Lesson easily can be tailored to age group; for older students – more in-depth talk about issues of identity, racism, and immigration; research projects can include histories of family members that have migrated or work in the fields; fields workers and the economy – current debates; where do our groceries come from- trace produce from local food store; immigration laws and debates taking place today in Congress

- Listen to more music from the region; explain the difference between Conjunto and Tejano; listen to Tejano music – Selena – how she brought Tejano to the mainstream
- View videos about this music and location; *Songs of the Homeland, The Music of the Texas-Mexican Borderlands; Chulas Fronteras; Selena*
- Learn how to partner dance to the music; view videos of people dancing
- Invite local musicians to come and conduct a lecture-demonstration