

## The origins of rock music



Few people might consider how today's modern rock music evolved and where *it* began. By tracing rock music to its historical roots, we can **discover** that rock music evolved from an African American art form known as blues music.

Early blues music developed in the 19th century. It was very much an expression of sadness which had evolved from the songs sung by African slaves as a way of **coping** with the harsh working conditions in the cotton fields of the American Deep South. These songs in turn have their roots in traditional African music. The calls and responses that workers used to communicate with each other in the fields also formed a fundamental structure of early gospel music which also had a lyrical call and response structure.

Originally the music was purely vocal, but it evolved as time went by. After the abolition of slavery, guitars and other instruments were incorporated into the ensemble. Eventually, other forms of music began to **diversify** from the blues roots, such as gospel, ragtime, jazz and eventually rock and roll.

Many early rock and roll songs such as those by Elvis Presley relied heavily on the traditional “12 bar blues” chord structure. This musical form merged with European influences during the 1960s and 1970s to become modern rock music. Nowadays, rock music is constantly evolving and branching out into new genres.



1. The word “it” in paragraph 1 refers to:
  - a) blues music
  - b) modern rock music
  - c) African American art
  - d) modern African music
2. According to the article, what kind of music did modern rock music evolve from?
  - a) blues music
  - b) roots music
  - c) modern music
  - d) American art
3. The word “discover” in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to:
  - a) realize
  - b) ignore
  - c) advance
  - d) submit
4. The word “coping” in paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to:
  - a) handling
  - b) refusing
  - c) covering
  - d) compensating
5. Paragraph 2 is about:
  - a) traditional African music
  - b) the sadness of African slaves
  - c) a brief history of early blues music
  - d) working conditions in American cotton fields
6. The word “diversify” in paragraph 3 is closest in meaning to:
  - a) branch out
  - b) branch in
  - c) branch down
  - d) branch over
7. According to the article, when were musical instruments incorporated into blues music?
  - a) after slavery was done away with
  - b) after rock and roll was developed
  - c) because the music was purely vocal
  - d) when guitars were first mass produced
8. According to the article, what happened to early rock and roll music in the 60s and 70s?
  - a) it took over from traditional European music
  - b) it began to blend with European musical influences
  - c) it developed the traditional “12 bar blues” chord structure
  - d) this musical form diverged from European influences
9. What might be a good title for this passage?
  - a) why rock music is a traditional African American art
  - b) the music of Elvis Presley and other rock stars
  - c) the fundamental structure of early gospel music
  - d) how modern rock music evolved and where it began

Answers: 1. (b) 2. (a) 3. (a) 4. (a) 5. (c) 6. (a) 7. (a) 8. (b) 9. (d)