

# Muddy Waters: A Case Study in the Evolution of the Blues

## Worksheet

### Directions:

Complete the following worksheet by studying the artifacts, reading the text, and listening to the music in the exhibit *Sweet Home Chicago*.

### The Delta

1. What did you learn about life for African Americans in the Mississippi Delta region in the first half of the 1900s?

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2. How would you describe the blues of the Mississippi Delta?

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3. Read the two letters in the exhibit from Muddy Waters to Alan Lomax, a white folklorist who recorded blues songs (and specifically Muddy Waters in 1941 and 1942) for the Library of Congress. What do you learn about Waters from these letters?

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4. How was Waters' early music typical of the Delta blues?

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### Bronzeville/Crossroads

1. Muddy Waters left the Delta region in the 1940s for Chicago. What might have motivated him to leave Mississippi? Why was Chicago an attractive destination?

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### The Postwar Sound

1. In what ways did Waters' music in Chicago maintain elements of the Delta blues?

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2. In what ways did his music change?

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3. How might the Chicago of the 1940s have shaped Waters' music?

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4. Waters' image, as well as his music, evolved when he migrated to Chicago. What evidence does the exhibit offer to support this point?

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### Spreading the Word/Legacy

1. What evidence do you find in the exhibit of Muddy Waters' music spreading beyond Chicago to new audiences?

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2. How would you describe the image of Waters that promoters were trying to advance in the late 1950s/early 1960s? Was the image more of Waters the country bluesman or Waters the electric Chicago bluesman? Explain.

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3. Why might white audiences in the early 1960s have embraced Waters as a folk artist?

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4. What influence did blues artists have on rock musicians in the 1960s?

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5. Specifically, what evidence does the exhibit offer for Waters' influence on rock musicians?

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6. How does Waters' music in the late 1960s mark a move away from the folk revival earlier in the decade?

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**Wrap Up**

1. What does Muddy Waters illustrate about:

a. The changing sound of the blues as the music traveled from the Delta to Chicago?

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b. White control of black artists?

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c. The changing face of blues audiences?

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d. The impact of the blues on rock 'n' roll?

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2. Many people assert the Muddy Waters is the blues. What evidence from this exhibit would you use to argue this point?

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