

LEAP INTO ENGLISH  
TOEFL PREPARATION COURSE

Read the following text, then answer the questions.

**Development of the Blues**

Blues music has influenced many other genres of music, from jazz to rock and country music. Blues originally evolved in the early 20th century in the rural Mississippi region based on the unaccompanied rhythmic vocal narratives sung by black slaves while working on plantations or farms in the 18th and 19th centuries. Slaves were often prohibited from owning instruments, especially drums, as slave owners did not want slaves to use the drums to **transmit** messages to each other. So, African-Americans created chants, hollers, spirituals, and work songs (known as *arhooties*).

By the 1920s, blues had developed a very particular style based around three-line rhymed **stanzas**. These consisted of one line that was repeated and a final line of rhyming verse with typically between four and eight stanzas in one song. The style also included a repeating blues chord progression, which was the basis of the harmony, utilizing the three major chords of the musical scale.

After the abolition of slavery, African-Americans started to move to the towns and cities and the blues moved with them. The music was no longer only related to work, but was now a form of entertainment and self-expression. Traveling musicians started to become more **widespread** and performed in bars and clubs, incorporating instruments such as guitar, harmonica, and banjo into their musical style. The lyrics of the blues often focus on themes of hardship, injustice, and suffering, as well as themes of love, jealousy, and sadness. A significant feature of blues singers is their ability to express suffering through personal experience.

1. According to the passage, *arhooties* do NOT
  - tell a story.
  - use musical instruments.
  - have a strong rhythm.
  - accompany work.
2. The word **transmit** in the passage is closest in meaning to
  - send.
  - repeat.
  - travel.
  - provide.
3. The word **stanza** in the passage refers to
  - a song.
  - a type of instrument.
  - a set of lines.
  - a set of songs.
4. The word **widespread** in the passage is closest in meaning to
  - musical.
  - popular.
  - restricted.
  - skilled.

This passage describes the evolution of blues music.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Answer options**

1. Blues music is associated with everyday life in the countryside of Mississippi.
2. Blues music often expresses sadness and suffering.
3. People in towns and cities used blues music to accompany their work.
4. Blues developed from songs that were sung by slaves on plantations.
5. The music developed a unique pattern and rhythm.
6. Blues musicians do not use musical instruments to accompany their songs.