

“Catcher Sings the Blues”

Crouching low, I sing the blues
The aches are now a part of me
Blocking home, I sing the blues
O, the aches are now a part of me
Bruises, bumps, and scrapes
Have worn me down, can't you see?

My knees sing the blues
They sing 'em when I stoop and bend
My knees sing the blues
O, they sing 'em when I stoop and bend
They crunch, crackle, pop
The hurtful noises never end.

My fingers sing the blues
When I grip a ball or make a fist
O, my fingers sing the blues
When I grip a ball or make a fist
The knuckles moan and cry
By fire every one is kissed.

Crouching low, I sing the blues
The aches are now a part of me
Blocking home, I sing the blues
O, these aches are now a part of me
Too many bruises, bumps, and scrapes
I'm nothing like I used to be.

No, nothing like I used to be.

My Daddy

my daddy sings the blues
he plays it on his old guitar
my daddy sings the blues
and he plays it on an old guitar
he plucks it on the strings
and he sings about the way things are

he sings baby, baby, baby
I love you till the day I die
he sings baby, baby, baby
I love you till the day I die
well I hope you love me back
cause you know I don't want to cry

he sings 'Thaniel, 'Thaniel, 'Thaniel
boy I love you deed I do
he sings 'Thaniel, 'Thaniel, 'Thaniel,
boy I love you deed I do
well you're a mighty fine fella
and son I'm so proud of you

my daddy sings the blues
he plays it on his old guitar
yeah my daddy sings the blues
and he plays it on that old guitar
he ain't never been on TV
but to me he's a great big star

—Eloise Greenfield

Name _____ Date _____

Learning the Blues Form

As you read “Catcher Sings the Blues,” here are some things to do:

1 Underline the lines in each stanza that are repeated and draw a connecting line between them. If you have colored markers or pencils, you can use the same color to show the lines that are repeated.

2 Circle the end words that have the same sound and draw a line between these words.

3 Draw a box around a specific detail or two in each stanza.

4 Mark the stressed syllables in each line.

Name _____ Date _____

“My Daddy”

This poem by Eloise Greenfield is a little different from most blues poems because it doesn't sing of someone's misery. Rather, it tells about a young boy's love for his father. Read the poem again, then try these activities:

1 Find three lines that show how the dad feels about his son.

2 Check the rhyme scheme of this poem. Does it follow the pattern of a blues poem?

3 If you were going to write a blues poem about someone you love, what would you say about them? Write some ideas below:

4 Later you will write a traditional blues poem. After you have completed it, try to write one stanza of a blues poem like “My Daddy,” in which you write about someone you love.

Name _____ Date _____

Thinking About the Blues

What gives you the blues? What makes you sad? What depresses you? What frustrates you? What are your pet peeves? It could be a large issue that you see in the world around you, like violence or prejudice, or it might be a more personal issue, something like a broken heart, the loss of a loved one, or dealing with divorce. Of course, there are plenty of smaller personal issues that can give you the blues, like too much homework or a smelly locker room.

So, what gives you the blues? Think about it, then write down your ideas in the columns below. When you've completed your lists, circle the two topics that you think would work best for you. Pick one from each list.

World Issues

Personal Issues

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Name _____ Date _____

Thinking About the Blues, Part 2: Looking for Details

1 There are specific things in “Catcher Sings the Blues” on page 59 that give the narrator the blues. What are they? Read the poem again and underline them.

2 Now, choose a topic of your own that you think will make a good blues poem. Write it in the space below, then list specific details about the topic that make you blue. Try to come up with at least six details because your poem will include three or four stanzas. For example, if you are going to write about how your little sister gives you the blues, your details might include things like:

- ☉ whines at bedtime
- ☉ always asks for a piece of my candy
- ☉ tells my parents when I do something I’m not supposed to do
- ☉ listens in on my phone conversations
- ☉ goes in my room when I’m not home

Your Topic: _____

Your Details:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Name _____ Date _____

Editing Your Blues Poem

Write the draft of your blues poem on a separate sheet of paper. Edit your poem by reviewing these elements of the blues poem.

⊙ Rhyme

Circle the rhyming word at the end of each line and draw a line connecting it to the other words it rhymes with.

⊙ Rhythm

Read your poem aloud. Each line should have three or four beats. Make a mark above each syllable you stress as you read your poem. If you have a writing partner, read your poems aloud to each other. As you do, listen for the blues beat in the poem. If it's not strong, take a closer look at your poem and see what you can do to get that beat.

⊙ Details

Read your poem to yourself and underline each detail that you find. With each detail, ask yourself if you can tell which of your senses—sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch—that detail appeals to.

⊙ Spirit

Since the spirit of a blues poem is so important, ask a writing partner to read your poem aloud to you. Close your eyes. Listen for the music in your words. Can you snap your fingers to the beats in each line? Can you feel the misery in the poem, even if it's exaggerated? Do you think someone else who hears your poem will hear what you hear?