

Doc Watson, *Blue Ridge Mountain Boy*

By Hannah Davis

STUDY GUIDE

1. What did Watson play first?
 - A. banjo
 - B. fiddle
 - C. guitar
 - D. harmonica

2. Which "crude instrument" did Watson's father make for him?
 - A. banjo
 - B. fiddle
 - C. guitar
 - D. harmonica

3. Who suggested the nickname "Doc"?
 - A. son, Merle
 - B. wife, Rosa Lee
 - C. radio announcer
 - D. audience member

4. What caused Doc's blindness?
 - A. He was born blind.
 - B. An infection caused his blindness.

- C. An accident early in life left him blind.
 - D. He was born with a degenerative condition that led to blindness.
5. What town is located near Watson's home community?
- A. Boone
 - B. Charlotte
 - C. Hickory
 - D. Linville
6. What is Doc's favorite instrument?
- A. banjo
 - B. fiddle
 - C. guitar
 - D. harmonica
7. Which music did Watson hear first?
- A. His wife's singing
 - B. Carter family's singing
 - C. His mother's banjo playing
 - D. His mother's hymn singing
8. What tragedy almost ended Watson's career?
- A. Loss of sight
 - B. Advancing age
 - C. Death of his son

- D. Death of his mother
9. Which achievement best demonstrates Watson's on-going support for his community?
- A. Merlefest
 - B. Grammy awards
 - C. National Medal of the Arts
 - D. Honorary degrees from Wilkes Community College and Appalachian State University

Words to know:

Match words with the meanings that apply to the profile.

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| ___1. crude | A. conceal or cover |
| ___2. mask | B. literature |
| ___3. genre | C. a person or object of devotion |
| ___4. icon | D. rough |
| | E. type or kind |
| | F. a style of writing |

EVALUATIONS:

Respond to the prompts in one page (or more). If needed, conduct research to obtain additional facts to support your analyses.

1. What impact do nicknames have on artists' careers? Why do you think Watson accepted "Doc" as his nickname? What nickname would you have suggested, if asked?

2. Think of your favorite artists and/or other celebrities and their names. Which nicknames do you find catchy or appealing? Which ones fail to appeal to you?
3. What catchy nickname might you adopt, if you became a musician, actor or other celebrity? Talk to friends about their ideas for you and themselves.
4. In your own words, explain the significance of the dream Doc describes.
5. How is Doc Watson similar to and different from other blind musicians, such as Blind Boy Fuller, Stevie Wonder and/or Ray Charles?
6. Merlefest takes place at the beginning of April/ early May. Learn more about Merlefest and its history at <http://merlefest.org>. On the days during the event, look for news in your papers. Specifically, check for coverage in newspapers that serve the area (northwestern NC) where the festival takes place. Find links to NC newspapers at www.ncpress.com, NCPA.
7. Listen to music sung and played by Doc Watson. Do you hear why Bill Ferris says, "Nobody can outrun Doc on the guitar."? How do you respond to Watson's music? Do you prefer one type of his music above others?
8. What music do you enjoy most? What does music mean to you? To your friends? What do you think inspires musicians such as Doc Watson? What do you think is the source of their passion for music?

NEWS CONNECTIONS:

1. Successful marketing involves the selection of catchy names, mascots and slogans. Find examples in the news of individuals and organizations that have chosen what you think are effective names, mascots, slogans or other communications. Which are most effective, in your opinion? Which are less? Do you think any fail in their appeal?
2. Watson influenced "country and bluegrass, rock and roll and the blues," according to the profile. Do stories appear in your paper about others who play the types of music associated with Doc Watson?

3. Doc Watson advanced the careers of other musicians. Do you find examples in the news of people helping others to develop and showcase their skills and talents?
4. Doc Watson dealt with losses. He dealt with blindness. He dealt with the death of a beloved son. News stories often focus on the difficulties individuals face. In the news, look for stories that deal with individuals who deal with disabilities. Look for stories of individuals who must deal with loss and grief. What do you learn from the stories?
5. Find stories written to honor someone. Find stories about events created to honor someone. List all of the ways chosen to honor and/or help keep alive memories of someone.
6. Read obituaries to identify ways that families and friends honor their loved ones. What do the obits say in love and tribute? In lieu or in place of flowers, where do obituaries ask friends and family to donate? What causes do the donations support?

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