

# Howling on Dowling

## Lesson Plan – High School Social Studies

### **TEKS directives:**

#### §113.32. United States History Studies since Reconstruction

(10) Geography. The student understands the effects of migration and immigration on American society. The student is expected to:

(A) analyze the effects of changing demographic patterns resulting from migration within the United States

(20) Culture. The student understands the relationship between the arts and the times during which they were created. The student is expected to:

(A) describe how the characteristics and issues of various eras in U.S. history have been reflected in works of art, music, and literature.

#### §113.37. Sociology

(12) Culture. The student understands how cultural socialization, norms, values, motivation, and communication influence relationships among groups. The student is expected to:

(A) compare cultural norms among various U.S. subculture groups such as ethnic, national origin, age, socioeconomic strata, and gender groups.

### **Objectives:**

1. Analyze the lyrics of a song to gain understanding of a specific time/place/experience.
2. Understand the cultural norms of a region based on population migration and other issues of the era.
3. Describe how a song can communicate historical information.

**Description:**

In 1947, Conrad Johnson wrote and recorded a song that described life on Dowling Street, the heart of the Third Ward neighborhood of Houston, TX. With context provided by historian Roger Ward, students will hear the song, see the neighborhood as it looks today, and be able to envision life in a thriving African-American urban neighborhood in the 1940s.

**Procedure:**

1. Hand out the attached lyrics and worksheet to the class (next page in this pdf).
2. View the video, "Howling on Dowling."
3. Break the students into groups, and have them discuss and fill out the worksheet.

## HOWLING ON DOWLING – Conrad Johnson

*Have you ever been howling on Dowling? / Have you ever been prowling that beat?*

*Have you ever been howling on Dowling? / My, it's a real great treat*

*Have you ever been whooping and hooping / Where it's groovy around the night*

*Have you ever been whooping and hooping / My it's a real delight*

*Now Dowling Street is where you meet the great folks of a nation*

*Chicks, shows, records and barbecue - ice cream parlors, Eldorado too*

*Dowling street's got a solid beat / when you're there everything's all reet*

### QUESTIONS:

1. What does Conrad Johnson mean by “howling?”
2. How would you describe the atmosphere on Dowling Street?
3. What kind of people would you find on Dowling Street?
4. Johnson uses the word “beat” in two different ways. Describe what he means in each instance.
5. How does Conrad Johnson feel about this neighborhood? Explain your answer.