

Summary: Tennessee Traditions

The People of Tennessee

The population of Tennessee is about six million people. Most of the ancestors of the people of Tennessee came from Europe or Africa. The Cherokee are the largest group of American Indians. There is also a growing Latino and Asian population.

In the past, most Tennesseans made their living farming. Today, many people work in the service industries such as education, health care or business. Other people work in manufacturing.

Music has been an important part of Tennessee's culture for many years. The blues grew out of songs that had been sung by enslaved African Americans as they worked. These songs, that were often sad, helped them express their feelings and get their work done. Bessie Smith recorded one of the first blues records. She was known as the "Empress of the Blues."

Country music grew out of the folk music of the Appalachian Mountains. Bluegrass is a type of country music made popular by Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys. Tennessee is also famous for its musicians, such as Elvis Presley and Dolly Parton. Tennessee is also home to writers, such as James Agee, and poets, such as Nikki Giovanni.

Tennessee Celebrations

Tennesseans celebrate their culture and traditions through festivals. The Beale Street Music Festival in Memphis and the Riverbend Festival in Chattanooga are two examples of music festivals. The Smoky Mountain Fiddlers Convention held each year is the biggest bluegrass music event in the Great Smoky Mountains.

People from all over the country and the world attend The Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration. This celebration includes horse shows, concerts, and many other events. The Pioneer Day event in late summer features craft demonstrations and storytelling as well as music.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

blues *noun*, music that grew out of songs that had been sung by enslaved African Americans as they worked

country music *noun*, music that grew out of the folk music of the Appalachian Mountains

bluegrass *noun*, a kind of country music introduced by the Grand Ole Opry

walking horse *noun*, a horse born with the ability to walk very quickly



After You Read

REVIEW **Who was Bessie Smith?** Circle the sentences that tell the answer.

REVIEW **What are some Tennessee customs and traditions that festivals celebrate?** Highlight the customs and traditions that festivals celebrate.