“All Blues”  
Miles Davis

Instrumentation  
Can be arranged for any combination of melodic/harmonic instruments, preferably three or more musicians with some improvisation experience. The original recording featured:

Miles Davis – trumpet  
Julian “Cannonball” Adderley – alto saxophone  
John Coltrane – tenor saxophone  
Bill Evans – piano  
Paul Chambers – double bass  
Jimmy Cobb - drums

Broad Description  
This piece is a frequently played jazz standard from what is often considered the greatest jazz album of all time, *Kind of Blue*.

Type/Genre  
Jazz – Modal Blues

Background Information  
“All Blues” first appeared on the influential album *Kind of Blue* by Miles Davis in 1959. The musicians on this recording were given very little information regarding all of the pieces on this album, only sketches of scales and melody lines on which to improvise. All of the pieces are representative of modal jazz, contrasting Davis’ previous work with complex chord progressions and faster harmonic rhythm. “All Blues” was originally written as an instrumental piece and is typically performed that way. Oscar Brown Jr. later wrote lyrics for the song.

Elements of Music

- **Form**
  - 12 bar blues form  
  - The length of the song is 11:33  
  - Introduction consists of piano, bass and drums vamping for four measures over G7, then joined by the tenor and alto sax for backgrounds for four measures before the melody (head) begins.  
  - Melody repeats with a four bar vamp at the end  
  - Four bar vamp also occurs between solos  
  - The ending melody (head) follows the same form repeating twice  
  - Coda vamps with Davis improvising before fading out

- **Rhythm**
  - This piece is in 6/8 and is described as a “jazz waltz”

- **Melody**
  - The melody is chromatic and sparse, characterized by small intervals. The entire range of the melody is one octave (concert D – D) and most of the melody is within the range of a perfect fifth.
• **Harmony**
  - Typical of a basic 12 bar blues progression until bars 9 and 10. The piece is in G Major and the chord progression is as follows:

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<th>G7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C7</td>
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<td>G7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eb7#9</td>
<td>D7#9</td>
<td>G7</td>
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  - A conventional blues would go to the V7 and IV7 chords in bars 9 and 10. Instead the piece goes to the flat VI7(altered) and V7(altered) chords. This is typical of a “minor blues” progression. However, in a basic minor blues progression the chords in bars 9 and 10 would not be altered and the I and IV chords throughout the piece would be minor as opposed to dominant.

  - **Typical Blues**

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<td>D7</td>
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  - **Typical Minor Blues**

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<td>Cm7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eb7</td>
<td>D7</td>
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• **Timbre**
  - As the title of the album and the song title suggests, this piece conveys a bluesy color. Kind of Blue also suggests that this is not a blues album in the traditional sense. The feeling is introspective, mellow, relaxed and groove-oriented.

• **Texture**
  - The piece begins with the drummer using brushes through the melody with the drummer switching to sticks for the solos. The melody is simple

• **Expression**
  - The four soloists in this piece all approach their solos from a different perspective.
  - The melody is followed by four solos
    - Trumpet – four choruses, short syncopated motifs
    - Alto Sax – four choruses, wider range and quicker notes
    - Tenor Sax – four choruses, longer lines and quick runs, virtuosic
    - Piano – two choruses, melodic, parallel chords and relaxed

**Additional Considerations/Reasons to Perform this Composition**
  - Davis uses a mute, ghost notes, chromaticism, and space to convey his feelings.

**The Heart Statement**
What attracts me to this piece of music is the deceiving complexity. This piece (like many jazz standards) can be taught at a variety of skill levels. This piece is also unique in that it follows a blues form, but contains unusual harmonic and rhythmic choices. This piece is easily identifiable and has a great potential for groove and creative expression. The feel of the song is relaxed, yet very melodic and does not lack artistry or room for experimentation.
Introducing the Piece

Skill Outcome
- Improvising over the blues form - playing in 6/8, playing background figures during a solo, keeping the form of the song
  - Strategies
    - Introduce chord scales one at a time and vamp over each chord until students are comfortable
    - Have the rhythm section (or play-a-long recording) play through the form and stop at random spots to check and see if everyone knows where the form of the song is
  - Assessment
    - Students can reflect and journal on their own success improvising
    - Structured positive feedback from peers
    - Students can record solo and teacher can provide feedback

Knowledge Outcome
- History of the recording - Who did it inspire? Other musicians? Other genres” What did the players on the recording go on to do? Why is it considered one of the most important jazz records of all time?
  - Strategies
    - Have students describe the mood and feeling of the recording
    - Memorize the names of the players on the recording and their instruments
    - Differentiate between different soloists and their styles
    - Find examples of other recordings by band members
  - Assessment
    - Teacher can fact check the names of players and recordings and observe writing style on mood and feeling of recording

Affective Outcome
- Musical conversations including: the use of space during solos, motivic development, question and answer phrases
  - Strategies
    - Speak sentences really fast without leaving space between words and slowly with long pauses. Have student discuss different effect.
    - Have students repeat a statement in several different ways (i.e. the dog peed on the lawn, the lawn was peed on by the dog, the dog peed on the grass, the canine urinated on the sod, etc.)
    - Have students engage in musical conversations with you, having them play an idea then you imitate it. Reverse this technique and also have them try it with each other.
  - Assessment
    - Students will be assessed on how well they engage in each of these activities and the level of creativity they use. They will also be assessed in how they can apply these principles to their own musical improvisations.