List of illustrations xi

Introduction: what is blues? 1

Part A short history of blues

- Roots of the blues 11
- 2 Prewar blues 21
- 3 Modern blues 47

Part I Blues in American culture

- 4 Blues and jazz 81
- 5 Blues and country music 95
- 6 The language and poetry of the blues 111

References 125

Further reading 128

Index 131