



MUSIC IN OUR SCHOOLS MONTH®

Music In Our Schools Month® General Music: 3rd Grade 2021–2022

TITLE: Sourwood Mountain: 3rd Grade

Appalachian Folk Song: “Sourwood Mountain”

Smithsonian Folkways Link: <https://folkways.si.edu/jean-ritchie/sourwood-mountain/childrens/music/track/smithsonian>

Recording:

Jean Ritchie. “Sourwood Mountain,” *Children’s Songs and Games from the Southern Mountains*, Folkways Records, 1957.

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Overview

Throughout these lesson plan launching points, students will explore music of America’s Appalachian region, improvise while playing classroom rhythm or barred instruments, respond to the music through movement or body percussion, and connect how musicians make personal choices in their performance of a song by studying variants.

Prerequisite Skills

For students to be successful in this unit they will need knowledge of and experiences with the following:

- Read basic music notation, including quarter notes, eighth notes, and half notes.
- Ability to play a variety of classroom rhythm instruments
- Basic understanding of music vocabulary
- Prior experience with improvising
- Prior experience with group work
- Demonstrate good singing technique by using a head voice, supportive posture, diction, and breath control

Instructional Goals/Objectives

Launching Point 1: Students will create new verses and add instrumental parts.

Launching Point 2: Students will respond to the music through movement or body percussion.

Launching Point 3: Students will connect how musicians make personal choices in their performance of a song by studying variants.

NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS (2014)

CREATING

Anchor Standard #1

Essential Question: How do musicians generate creative ideas?

Enduring Understanding: The creative ideas, concepts and feelings that influence musicians' work emerge from a variety of sources.

MU:Cr1.1.1.3b

Generate musical ideas (such as rhythms and melodies) within a given tonality and/or meter.

RESPONDING

Anchor Standard: #7

Essential Question: How does understanding the structure and context of music inform a response?

Enduring Understanding: Response to music is informed by analyzing context (social, cultural, and historical) and how creators and performers manipulate the elements of music.

MU:Re7.2.3a

Demonstrate and describe how a response to music can be informed by the structure, the use of the elements of music, and context (such and personal and social).

CONNECTING

Anchor Standard: #11

Essential Question: How do musicians make meaningful connections to creating, performing and responding?

Enduring Understanding: Musicians connect their personal interests, experiences, ideas and knowledge to creating, performing, and responding.

MU: Cn10.0.3a

Demonstrate how interests, knowledge and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing and responding to music.

Assessments

Exit ticket
Movement form
Fist to five

Materials and Library of Congress Resource Links for the Unit

- <https://folkways.si.edu/jean-ritchie/sourwood-mountain/childrens/music/track/smithsonian> Jean Ritchie's version
- <https://folkways.si.edu/iron-mountain-string-band/sourwood-mountain/old-time/music/track/smithsonian> Iron Mountain String Band version
- Markers and marker board to write down ideas, examples from students
- Exit tickets, movement forms, compare and contrast forms clip boards, pencils
- A variety of rhythm instruments and/or barred instruments

Teacher Talk—To the Teacher (Historical and Culturally Significant Information)

Historical recordings from the Library of Congress are offered in this lesson and may sound of different quality than teachers and students may be used to. Teachers should feel free to substitute their own recordings and examples for the items in this lesson.

Launching Point 1

Song History

- The song “Sourwood Mountain” has been played or sung in a variety of versions for centuries. It was most likely a fiddle tune from the British Isles before arriving in America’s Appalachian region.
- In the 1700s, more than 200,000 Scotch-Irish immigrants from the Ulster province in Ireland found their way to the thirteen original American colonies, with large numbers settling in the Appalachian region. They soon became the dominant culture of the Appalachians both due to the size of their population and their adventurous spirits. Many of the traditional folk songs and folklore of the Appalachian region can be traced back to Northern English or lowland Scots people.
- As is the case with many folk songs, “Sourwood Mountain” has many variations. The version of “Sourwood Mountain” I prefer to use with students can be found in the book *150 American Folk Songs: To Sing, Read and Play* by Peter Erdei. It was collected in 1913 by Cecil Sharp and was sung by Will Biggers of Rome, Georgia. I prefer this version because it avoids all lyrics about love interests and “pretty girls.” However, it should be noted that in subsequent verses about hunting, guns are mentioned.
- The version that includes the lyrics, “so many pretty girls I can’t count them” can be found in the *Handy Play Party Book* by Lynn Rohrbough, published in 1940 and 1968. Jean Ritchie sings the “pretty girls” version in the Smithsonian Folkways link provided in this lesson. A third version of the song includes the lyrics “so many miles that I can’t count ’em.” This version was located on the Kodály collection of Holy Names University’s website at <https://kodaly.hnu.edu/> This version was sung by George Roark and was collected by Mary Elizabeth Barnicle in 1938.
- There is a great debate about whether or not an actual place named Sourwood Mountain exists and where it may be. Some say the ballad originated near a place in Massachusetts. My friend from Tennessee, Kendra Kay Friar, believes the Sourwood Mountain of this song is in Jefferson County, Tennessee, on the edge of the Smoky Mountains. Maps can be seen here:
<https://www.topozone.com/tennessee/jefferson-tn/summit/sourwood-mountain/?fbclid=IwAR1tKLF44OvrYLaXJw16QhTOPiQtpq2zNfZAtUNDJ9PdvPmsBqgKINg7x3E>
or here: <https://tennessee.hometownlocator.com/maps/feature-map,ftc,1,fid,1311256,n,sourwood%20mountain.cfm>
- My students over the years have really enjoyed adding their own animals to the song as well as matching their lyrics to accompanying rhythm instruments. This is a small collection of ideas gathered in March 2021. Animal examples and corresponding instrument ideas are from my students:
 - Wolves are howling, windchimes
 - Dolphins squeaking, Boomwhackers

- Dogs are whining, triangles
- Lions pouncing, woodblocks
- Goats are screaming, cowbells
- Cats are scratching, guiros
- Tigers sneaking, maracas
- Dragons roaring, cymbals
- Penguins flopping, rhythm sticks
- Unicorns sparkling, agogo
- Deer are prancing, castanets
- Pandas eating, sand blocks

Information from

“Appalachian Music,” n.d. Retrieved from <https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200152683/>

Leyburn, J. (December 1970). *The Scotch-Irish*, American Heritage, Volume 22 (1).

“Scotch-Irish Americans,” n.d. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotch-Irish_Americans

Launching Point 2

- Music and movement go hand in hand. Students will enjoy working in groups to create movement or body percussion to accompany their chosen verse.
- Encourage students to use their entire bodies. For example, if their verse is “cats are scratching,” show them the difference between just using hands to imitate scratching versus a whole-body approach, where you are imitating a cat’s body, facial expressions and scratching. The whole-body approach is much more fun to do and to watch.
- Common body percussion movements include clapping, patsching (patting legs), snapping, and stomping. More body percussion movements and sounds can include hitting the chest, whistling, tongue clicks and any other noise you can invent!
- The reason I have students plan and write out their movements is that it seems to help them remember their chosen movements and follow through with them if they perform in front of the class.
- There are a variety of examples of great body percussion acts that can be found on your favorite streaming platform.

Launching Point 3

- Folk songs live on through oral transmission. Each performer may have a unique interpretation of the same song. These changes, over time, become variants.
- Jean Ritchie is a folk-song singer from Viper, Kentucky. She was born December 8, 1922, the youngest of fourteen children in a very musical family.
- Ritchie graduated from the University of Kentucky with a degree in social work in 1946. She landed a job at the Henry Street Settlement in New York City. Ritchie taught her

Appalachian songs and traditions to local children. It was then she was introduced to New York's folk song singers, scholars, and enthusiasts, including Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and Alan Lomax.

- By 1951, Jean Ritchie had switched careers and became a performer, folk-song collector, and songwriter.
- In May of 1951, her singing was recorded in the Library of Congress' recording lab.
- Throughout her life, she published several books and recorded many albums.
- Jean Ritchie died June 1, 2015 in Berea, Kentucky.
- The Iron Mountain String Band includes three members: Eric Davidson, banjo, Caleb Finch, fiddle, and Peggy Haine, guitar. Haine was succeeded in 1974 by Brooke Moyer.
- In the 1950s, Finch and Davidson made field recordings of musicians in the Appalachian region, particularly in Greyson and Carroll counties in Virginia.
- The band was founded in 1963. Ten years later, they recorded songs for Folkways.
- Appalachia is made up of 420 counties across 13 states. The Region's 25 million residents live in parts of Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia, and all of West Virginia.
- Appalachian musicians have influenced country music, bluegrass, and gospel as well as the American folk music revival of the 1960s.
- Instruments typically used in Appalachian music include banjo, fretted dulcimer, American fiddle, and guitar.

Information from

"About the Appalachian Region," n.d. Retrieved from <https://www.arc.gov/about-the-appalachian-region/>

Carter-Schwendler, K. (n.d.) *Mountain Born: The Jean Ritchie Story*, <https://education.ket.org/resources/mountain-born-jean-ritchie-story/>

Epstein, B. (September 13, 1996). *Back to the Old Country*. *Los Angeles Times* <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1996-09-13-ca-43463-story.html>

"Old Mountain Music Gateways: The Iron Mountain String Band" (December 6, 2013). <http://glorybeamingbanjo.blogspot.com/2013/12/hooked-on-old-time-music-iron-mountain.html>

Winick, S. (June 11, 2015). *Jean Ritchie, 1922–2015*. <https://blogs.loc.gov/folklife/2015/06/jean-ritchie-1922-2015/>

Launching Point 1

Objective: Students will create additional verses to the song “Sourwood Mountain” using animal names and rhythm instruments or barred instruments.

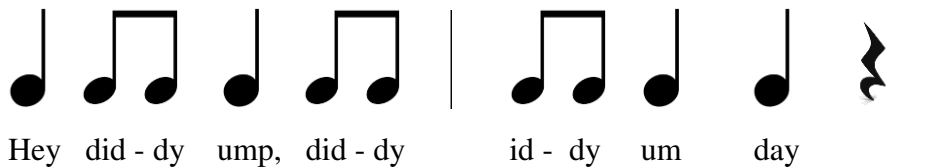
Essential Question: How do musicians generate creative ideas?

Specific Performance Standards: *MU:Cr1.1.1.3b*

Generate musical ideas (such as rhythms and melodies) within a given tonality and/or meter.

Procedure

1. Sing or play the song “Sourwood Mountain” for students.
2. If you are using the version of the song found in *150 American Folk Songs*, ask students to identify which phrase is repeated. What do you notice about this phrase? (It is made up of nonsense words, vocalables.)
3. What animal do you hear about in the first phrase of the song? (Chicken). Ask students to select a rhythm instrument that could represent the chicken, for example, triangles or woodblocks.
4. Sing the song again and demonstrate the sound of the instrument on the second and fourth phrases of nonsense words. Give the instrument(s) to student(s) to play. If possible, have students reading the rhythm while playing.



5. Ask students to improvise another animal and corresponding instrument sound. (Note: Students’ examples can be found in the Teacher Talk section.)
6. Continue improvising with new animals and instruments.
7. Explain to students that this song was sung in the Appalachian Mountains, and that the Sourwood Mountain mentioned *could* be in eastern Tennessee.

Assessment

Students will fill out an exit ticket: If you could add another verse to the song, what would it be?

_____ are _____ on Sourwood Mountain.
(animal) (action/noise)

Extension (This could refer to other grade levels or other ideas for this Launching Point).

There are many possible extensions possible with Appalachian music, culture, or instruments.

If you are looking for a mountain theme, I would suggest pairing Sourwood Mountain with songs such as “Rocky Mountain,” “Fire on the Mountain,” “Big Rock Candy Mountain,” “I Love the Mountains,” “Goin’ Round the Mountain,” “Rocky Top,” “Climb Ev’ry Mountain,” or “Ain’t No Mountain High Enough.”

There are many Appalachian folk songs about animals including:

“Bought Me a Cat,” “Cock Robin,” “The Bell Cow,” “The Big Sheep” (Darby ram), “Fed My Horse in a Poplar Trough,” “Frog in the Meadow,” “Go Tell Aunt Rhody” (goose), “Groundhog,” “Hunt the Cows,” Little Sparrow,” “The Mockingbird,” “My Horses Ain’t Hungry,” “My Old Hen,” “Old Bald Eagle,” “Old Woman and the Pig,” “Over in the Meadow,” and “What Makes the Wildcat Wild?”

Listen to or watch clips on your favorite streaming platform from Appalachian musicians such as Jean Ritchie, the Carter Family, Clarence Ashley, Dock Boggs, Roscoe Holcomb, Ola Belle Reed, Lily May Ledford, Hedy West, and Doc Watson and composer/arranger John Jacob Niles.

The movie *Songcatcher* (2000) tells the story of a musicologist who is collecting and researching folk songs in the Appalachians. The soundtrack alone to this film is worth a listen.

Launching Point 2

Objective: Students will respond to the music through movement or body percussion.

Essential Question: How does understanding the structure and context of music inform a response?

Specific Performance Standard: *MU:Re7.2.3a*

Demonstrate and describe how a response to music can be informed by the structure, the use of the elements of music, and context (such as personal and social).

Procedure

1. Remind students what animals and actions/noises were used in Launching Point 1. For example: Chickens are crowing, or wolves are howling. (If you choose to skip Launching Point 1, there is a list of student ideas in the Teacher Talk section.)
2. Fill out a movement form together as an example.
3. Ask students to work in groups of 3–5 people, depending on the size of your class and the amount of space you have. Hand out a movement form and pencil to each group.
4. Each group will choose one animal and a corresponding action/noise to focus on. Groups should be given time to discuss that animal including how it moves, where it lives or other interesting or unique qualities it has.
5. Let them have a few minutes to decide how to respond to the music. They can create movements or add body percussion to the verse. Ask students to fill out the form while they work. Students of this age tend to pantomime using gestures. Encourage them to use their *entire bodies* to tell the story.
6. Practice their movements or body percussion with the song.
7. Have each group take a turn showing the class their response. Have volunteers choose new volunteers and repeat the process. Keep going until all students have an opportunity to show their movements or body percussion.

Assessment

Have each group fill out a movement form with their names and movements.

Sourwood Mountain - Movement Form

Group members - _____ , _____ ,
_____, _____ , _____ .

We chose the animal _____ because _____
_____.

Plan your movement!

_____ are _____ on Sourwood Mountain.
Animal action or sound

movement _____

Hey diddy ump, diddy diddy um day.

movement _____

Get your dogs and we'll all go a-hunting.

movement _____

Hey diddy ump, diddy diddy um day.

movement _____

Extension (This could refer to other grade levels or other ideas for this launching point).

The children's literature book *When I Was Young in the Mountains* by Cynthia Rylant, illustrated by Diane Goode details daily life in the mountains. You see a coal-mining Grandfather, southern food, a johnny-house (outhouse), a swimming hole, a mercantile store, a water pump, and a country church. The story mentions frogs, black snakes, and bobwhite (quail), all animal connections. This book is the 1983 Caldecott Honor Book and was featured in *Reading Rainbow*, Season 1, Episode 1. Play an instrumental tune such as "Sally Goodin," "Soldier's Joy," or "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" as you read to your students.

If you would rather have your students respond through rhythm creation or rhythm matching, there is a rhythm form you can use that contains several animals found in the Appalachian region. This sheet may be copied, cut, and used for reading exercises, rhythm matching, or student composition in which they arrange rhythms in an order of their choosing.



Snow - shoe hare



White tailed deer



Moose



Elk



Black snake



Wild pig



Rac - coon



Wood - chuck



Box tur - tle



Tree squir - rel

Launching Point 3

Objective: Students will learn about variants by listening to two versions of the song “Sourwood Mountain.”

Essential Question: How do musicians make meaningful connections to creating, performing, and responding?

Specific Performance Standard: *MU: Cn10.0.3a*

Demonstrate how interests, knowledge and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.

Procedure

1. Teacher will explain to students that variants naturally occur in folk music, since the music is passed on through aural tradition.
2. Give examples of nonmusical examples of variants. Ask students if they have ever seen or tried two different versions of something. For example, in our family, we have two cars. They do not look alike but they are both cars. In our family, we enjoy eating chili. It tastes different when I make it versus when my husband makes it because we put in different amounts of the ingredients. Have you ever heard the same song performed by two different people or groups? There are differences due to their unique performance styles.
3. Students will be asked to listen to two different versions of the song “Sourwood Mountain.” The versions I suggest are Jean Ritchie’s version, played on dulcimer and sung by a female voice, and the Iron Mountain Band’s version, played by fiddle, banjo, and guitar and sung by a trio of male and female voices. Use the links provided, or find versions of the song on your favorite streaming platform.
4. The teacher will ask students whether they can tell that it was the same song, but not exactly the same. On the board together, make a list of things that were alike and different in the two performances.
5. Students will pair share with a partner:
(1) something they learned about song variants and (2) something that was alike and something that was different in the two versions of the song “Sourwood Mountain.”

Informal Assessment

Pair share something they learned about song variants.

Show a fist to five your level of understanding about song variants.

Fist = I don’t understand at all,

1 finger = I need help,

2 fingers = I need more practice and examples,

3 fingers = I understand pretty well,

4 fingers = I mostly understand, and

5 fingers = I completely understand.

Extension (This could refer to other grade levels or other ideas for this Launching Point).

Students may want to compare and contrast different versions of the song independently. There are many variations of the song performed by a variety of singers and groups.

Students may find other examples of song variants or remakes.

Sourwood Mountain

Appalachian Folk Song

$\text{♩} = 120$



Chick-ens a - crow-ing on Sour-wood moun-tain, Hey did-dy ump did-dy id - dy um day.

5

Get your dogs and we'll all go a-hunt-ing, hey did-dy ump did-dy id - dy um day.

Music Class Exit Ticket

Student Name _____

If you could add another verse to the song “Sourwood Mountain,” what would it be?

_____ are _____ on Sourwood Mountain.
(animal) (action/noise)

Music Class Exit Ticket

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