



MUSIC IN OUR SCHOOLS MONTH®

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

**How Are Composers Inspired? Exploring Works by Vaughn Williams,
Mussorgsky, and Cowell**

Recordings:

“March Past of the Kitchen Utensils” from *The Wasps* by Ralph Vaughn Williams

“Bydlo” from *Pictures at an Exhibition*, by Modest Mussorgsky

“The Banshee” by Henry Cowell.

Sound recordings used in these lesson plans may be obtained through your favorite streaming platform.

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Overview: Composers are inspired by things we would never imagine. This series of lessons explores music inspired by household objects, works of visual art, and folklore.

Prerequisite Skills

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

- Using classroom manipulatives.
- Playing barred instruments (Orff) and other nonpitched classroom instruments.
- Basic understanding of ABA form.
- Moving through the classroom space safely.

Instructional Goals/Objectives

Launching Point 1: “March Past of the Kitchen Utensils” from *The Wasps* by Ralph Vaughan Williams. Through active listening, students will respond to the ABA form of the piece using manipulatives (paper plates and plastic forks and spoons) and maintain a steady beat throughout the activity.

Launching Point 2: “Bydlo” from *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Modest Mussorgsky. Through active listening, students will respond to the meter (macrobeats) and changing dynamics using playground balls.

Launching Point 3: “The Banshee” by Henry Cowell. Through active listening, students will make note of the timbres they hear and determine the instrumentation of the piece. During teacher-facilitated group discussion, students will identify which sounds evoked the strongest emotional response or idea. A sample tracking chart is provided in the Launching Point 3 Assessment section.

National Core Arts Standards (2014)

CONNECT

Anchor Standard: Connect #11: Relate musical ideas and works with varied context to deepen understanding.

Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

Essential Question: How do the other arts, other disciplines, contexts, and daily life inform creating, performing, and responding to music?

Enduring Understanding: Understanding connections to varied contexts and daily life enhances musicians’ creating, performing, and responding.

MU: Cn11.0.3a

Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

RESPONDING

Anchor Standard: Analyze how the structure and context of varied musical works inform the response

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 by 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 as personal and social).

Anchor Standard: Interpret: Support interpretations of musical works that reflect creators’/performers’ expressive intent.

Essential Question: How do we discern the musical creators’ and performers’ expressive intent?

Enduring Understanding: Through their use of elements and structures of music, creators and performers provide clues to their expressive intent.

MU: Re8.1.3a: Demonstrate and describe how the expressive qualities (such as dynamics and tempo) are used in performers’ interpretations to reflect expressive intent.

Assessments

Assessments are embedded within each Launching Point.

Materials

- **Launching Point 1:** a recording of “March Past of the Kitchen Utensils.”; one paper plate, one plastic fork, and one plastic spoon for each student; one assessment sheet (sample found in Assessment section of Launching Point 1) and a pencil for each student.
- **Launching Point 2:** a recording of “Bydlo”; one playground ball or tennis ball (which be borrowed from the physical education teacher) for each student; one assessment sheet (sample found in “Assessment” section of Launching Point 2) and a pencil for each student.
- **Launching Point 3:** a recording of “The Banshee”; one assessment sheet (sample found in the Assessment section of Launching Point 3) and a pencil for each student; if desired, art supplies for the extension.

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

The links provided will help the teacher with background knowledge about the composers and pieces taught in the Launching Points.

Launching Point 1

Biographical information about Ralph Vaughan Williams:

- <https://rvwsociety.com/short-biography/>
- https://www.classicsforkids.com/composers/composer_profile.php?id=77

Information about the composition *The Wasps*:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wasps_\(Vaughan_Williams\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wasps_(Vaughan_Williams)) Vaughn Williams composed this work as incidental music for an adaptation of ancient Greek play *The Wasps* by Aristophanes. In the play, one of the main characters, Bdelycleon, turns his home into a courtroom in a fabricated case between the household dogs to keep his aging father interested in staying at home. The kitchen utensils serve as witnesses in the trial, which is the inspiration for the movement “March Past of the Kitchen Utensils.”

https://www.ancient-literature.com/greece_aristophanes_wasps.html

Launching Point 2

Biographical information about Modest Mussorgsky:

https://www.classicsforkids.com/composers/composer_profile.php?id=47

Note: This website also has links to recorded selections from *Pictures at an Exhibition*, including “Bydlo.”

“Bydlo” comes from the Polish word for “cattle.” In Russian, the term is often used to describe someone who is lacking culture or refinement. Since the original artwork depicted a heavily burdened ox, the teacher may wish to only use the original definition.

Information about the composition *Pictures at an Exhibition*:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pictures_at_an_Exhibition
- https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pictures_at_an_Exhibition
- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pictures-at-an-Exhibition>

Information about Viktor Hartmann, who painted the pictures described in the Mussorgsky work:

- <https://www.jaxsymphony.org/about-pictures-at-an-exhibition/>
- <https://houstonSymphony.org/mussorgsky-pictures/>
- <https://abstractedreality.com/pictures-exhibition-symbiosis-art-music/>

Launching Point 3

Biographical information about Henry Cowell:

<https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/composer/297/Henry-Cowell/>

This site provides information about the composition “The Banshee” as well as the composer:

<https://www.nypl.org/blog/2020/12/09/beyond-score-henry-cowells-banshee>

Information about the legend of the banshee:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/banshee>

Note: The teacher may wish to omit some of the scarier elements of the legend and simply describe her as a “noisy ghost.”

Launching Point 1

Objective: Students will respond to the ABA form of the piece “March Past of the Kitchen Utensils” by Ralph Vaughn Williams using manipulatives.

Essential Understanding

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

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

Procedure

1. State the objective of the lesson.
2. Provide biographical information on Ralph Vaughn Williams and background information on the composition “March Past of the Kitchen Utensils”.
3. Pass out one paper plate, one plastic fork, and one plastic spoon to each student using whatever procedure is standard for your classroom.
4. Designate the paper plate as the “marching space” for the utensils.
5. Direct the students to copy what you do and to keep track of how many times each utensil gets to march.
6. Start the music. During the A section, model marching the fork on the paper plate to the beat of the music for the students. During the B section, switch to the spoon. You may want to vary the movement of the spoon in the B section. Return to the fork for the last A section.
7. Ask the following questions: How many times did the fork get to march? (2). How about the spoon? (1). How many sections did this music have? (3). What was the order? (fork, spoon, fork). If we assigned the letter A to the fork’s music and the letter B to the spoon’s music, what was the pattern, or “form,” created? (ABA).
8. Before a second listening/ responding, introduce the 3-2-1 Likert scale assessment illustrated below. If using a paper copy, pass out one copy and a pencil to each student. Have the students perform the activity again and evaluate their performance based on the criteria listed in the assessment tool.

Assessment:

1. Assessment is formative and is conducted through both teacher observation and student self-assessment. The same criteria can be used for both. Assessment can be accomplished by using a 3-2-1 Likert scale. Teacher can fill out the form below, students can respond with a show of fingers.

Responding to Form

Student switched utensils at the right time to demonstrate ABA form appropriately.	3
Student switched utensils inconsistently while demonstrating ABA form.	2
Student needs more practice.	1

Responding to Steady Beat

Student tapped utensils consistently and maintained a steady beat all the time.	3
Student tapped utensils inconsistently and maintained a steady beat some of the time.	2
Student needs more practice.	1

2. Exit Ticket Question:

How did this piece of music make you feel?

Extension: Try a creative movement exercise: Divide students into an A group (Soldiers) and B group (Lookouts). The A group marches during “A section while B group remains frozen in place. The B group only becomes animated when their section plays. Group A marches like soldiers; group ” moves around as if searching the area or looking for danger. Students can also create their own movements for each section and freeze in a tableau.

Launching Point 2

Objective: Students will respond to the meter and changing dynamics in “Bydlo” by Modest Mussorgsky, using playground balls as manipulatives.

Essential Understanding

Through their use of elements and structures of music, creators and performers provide clues to their expressive intent.

Essential Question

How do we discern the musical creators’ and performers’ expressive intent?

Specific National Standard:

MU: Re8.1.3a: Demonstrate and describe how the expressive qualities (such as dynamics and tempo) are used in performers’ interpretations to reflect expressive intent.

Procedure

1. State the objective of the lesson.
2. Provide biographical information about Modest Mussorgsky and general information about *Pictures at an Exhibition* and the piece “Bydlo.”
3. Pass out one playground ball to each student using whatever procedure is standard for your classroom. Tennis balls can be substituted, though playground balls or basketballs are easier for children to manipulate and control.
4. Before starting the music and activity, remind the students to bounce their ball on the “big” or “macro” beat. Model the activity as the students participate. To help the students bounce their balls at the appropriate time, have them count to four silently as they listen. Tell the students to bounce on 1 and 3 and catch on 2 and 4.
5. Encourage the students to adjust the size of their bounce to the dynamic level of the piece. To avoid confusing “higher” with “louder,” equate “bigger bounce” with “bigger sound.”
6. After the first listening, go through the “Questions for Discussion” listed in the Assessment section of the lesson.
7. Before a second listening/ responding, introduce the 3-2-1 Likert scale assessment illustrated below. Have the students perform the activity again and evaluate their performance based on the criteria listed in the assessment tool.
8. Alternative activities:
 - Students work as partners and bounce one ball back and forth—on the macrobeat—between them. As the piece gets louder, they gradually move farther apart to show how the dynamics “grow.” During the diminuendo, they gradually move closer together again.
 - Use a Hoberman sphere to illustrate the change in dynamics. Have the students turn their bodies into a Hoberman sphere and grow from small/ compact to big/ expanded and back again during the piece.

Assessment:

1. Assessment is formative and is conducted through both teacher observation and student self-assessment. The same criteria can be used for both. Assessment can be accomplished by using a 3-2-1 Likert scale. Teacher can fill out the form below, and students can respond with a show of fingers.

Responding to Meter

Student bounced the ball on the strong beats (1 and 3) all the time.	3
Student bounced the ball on the strong beats (1 and 3) most of the time.	2
Student needs more practice.	1

Responding to Dynamics

Student responded to decrescendo and diminuendo by changing body level and size of bounces appropriately.	3
Student responded to decrescendo and diminuendo by changing body level and size of bounces inconsistently.	2
Student needs more practice.	1

Questions for Discussion

1. Why do you think the composer chose the solo instrument he did to represent the ox (if listening to the Ravel orchestration)?
 2. What did the composer do to create the idea of “heaviness” in his music?
 3. Why did the composer use crescendo and diminuendo? What did it make you think of?
- Possible answer:* The oxcart started far away, came closer and closer, then moved farther and farther away again.

Extension

1. Create original artwork depicting the selected work, either with the art specialist, homeroom teacher, or in music class: Bring in crayons, colored pencils, paper, etc. from their classroom/desks. “Bydlo” is one of artist Viktor Hartmann’s original paintings that *has not* survived, so students will have the opportunity to create their own version of an ox pulling a cart and use the music as inspiration: the reverse of Mussorgsky’s process.
2. Compare and contrast Mussorgsky’s original piano composition and Ravel’s orchestral arrangement of the piece.

Launching Point 3

Objective: Students will make note of the timbres they hear and determine the instrumentation of the piece “The Banshee” by Henry Cowell.

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

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

Specific National 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. State the objective of the lesson.
2. Provide biographical information about Henry Cowell and information about the legend of the banshee, and the composition—without revealing the instrumentation.
3. Pass out a paper copy of the assessment tool later in this lesson and a pencil using whatever procedure is standard for your classroom.
4. After the first listening, go through the Questions for Discussion listed in the Assessment section of the lesson.
5. Divide the class into groups of no more than four per group.
6. Randomly pass out one barred instrument or other classroom instrument (hand drum with mallet, tubano, woodblock, triangle, guiro, jingle bell, etc.) using whatever procedure is standard for your classroom.
7. Give the students 5–7 minutes to explore unusual ways of creating sound with their assigned instruments. At the end of the allotted time, have each group share their discoveries with the class.

Assessment:

1. Students will track what timbres they hear and what emotion or idea they evoke:

Circle the sound you hear and the feeling or idea it creates. Then draw a line that connects the two together.

Sound			Emotion or Idea			
scrape	squeak	something else?	afraid	mysterious	spooky	cold
tap	creak	plucking	wind	silly	surprised	something else?

2. Questions for Discussion:

1. Let's talk about the assessment sheet you filled out. Who would like to share what sounds they heard and how those sounds made them feel?
2. What does "timbre" mean?
3. What instrument or instruments do you think Henry Cowell used to create this piece?
4. What does "unusual" mean?
5. Can music make you feel a certain way? How?

3. Exit Ticket Question:

The instrument I would most like to play in an unusual way is _____.

Extension:

1. Create an original classroom composition using Orff and other classroom instruments called "The Ghost," or have the students generate a title. Use the instruments in an unconventional way: Tap the bars of the Orff instruments with the sticks of the mallets, hold the sides of the triangles when tapping them to limit resonance, tap the sound box of the Orff instruments rather than the bars, etc.
2. Use found sounds to create a spooky composition or soundscape.