

Create a movie score

Secondary: (ages 11 – 14)

Music

Students discuss the importance of music to film and experiment with how they can use musical expression in an inventive way to accompany film. They create a score (music and sound effects) to a short movie clip and create a representation of it in traditional or invented notation

Time allocation 4-5 lesson periods

Subject content Create sound effects and appropriate soundscape for a film
Compose and perform an accompanying melody
Work in small groups to develop ensemble skills
Use traditional or invented notation

Creativity and critical thinking This unit has a **creativity** and **critical thinking** focus:

- Identify and question convention and consider several perspectives on movie score composition
- Make connections between film scenes and musical ideas
- Play with unusual ideas to create music with expressive qualities and justify their choices

Other skills Collaboration

Key words movie; film; score; soundtracks; notation; soundscape; ensemble; tempo; dynamics

Products and processes to assess

Students are challenged to produce and perform an imaginative and inventive score that features some level of risk-taking to bring additional meaning to the movie clip. Another visible product is the notation, which can be assessed for its logic (can it be followed? Does it make sense?). Students' work process demonstrates willingness to work together and explore a variety of ideas in planning discussions, the ability to explain and justify their final choices, and a good awareness of how they have moved beyond the 'safer' musical options available to them and the effects they have created by doing so.

Teaching and Learning plan

This plan suggests potential steps for implementing the activity. Teachers can introduce as many modifications as they see fit to adapt the activity to their teaching context.

Step	Duration	Teacher and student roles	Subject content	Creativity and critical thinking
	NOTE	This lesson should be tailored to the composition and music theory experience of your students. Even students with no experience can be asked to do this—it is more important that they have the opportunity to experiment with sounds than they create something perfect. Students with more experience can practice working with a particular chord progression, or composing in a particular mode, or for a particular instrumentation.		
1	Lesson period 1	<p>Lead class discussion about the importance of music to film. Play a couple of clips known to the students (from popular movies, like Harry Potter, or from iconic film scores, like Jaws) without sound, and then with sound, to discuss the differences that music creates.</p> <p>Brainstorm what characteristics might describe music that accompanies different events (like a death, or a sunrise, or being chased down the street). As appropriate, students could be challenged at this point to identify the sorts of musical characteristics that are most often used for these sorts of events in film and some that would be more unusual. What does the music bring to the film in each case?</p>	<p>Learning about importance of music to film</p> <p>Identifying musical characteristics</p>	Making connections between movie scenes/events and musical ideas and reflecting on convention in musical composition for film
2		<p>Show students the one-minute movie clip for the activity without sound. Instruct students in their small groups to discuss for at least 10 minutes without any instruments. They should decide on the tempo for the melody that accompanies the movie clip, what instruments are appropriate and why, what dynamic is appropriate, and other details that help plan.</p> <p>Teacher can circulate and challenge students to come up with more unusual or original ideas and to discuss and justify their choices (e.g. identify what the 'safer' choice would be and explain why and how they have moved away from this and what they have brought to the movie clip by doing so)</p> <p>The movie clip should continuously play on a loop on the TV, or the students should have access to it from an electronic device.</p>	<p>Learning about tempo, dynamics, duration, and melody for composition</p> <p>Working together to envision and plan a composition without having access to instruments</p>	<p>Playing with unusual ideas whilst preparing to compose a movie score</p> <p>Identifying and questioning movie score convention in order to imagine alternatives</p> <p>Considering several perspectives on a musical composition</p>
3	Lesson period 2	<p>Students collect instruments and create a melody (and accompaniment, percussion, lyrics, whatever level the students are directed to work to, based on their experience. Teacher should give instructions about this that are appropriate for students.) They also may add appropriate sound effects that fit the movie clip, if appropriate.</p> <p>Teacher can circulate to support process, reinforce any particular areas of music</p>	<p>Understanding and exploring melodic composition and making appropriate musical decisions</p> <p>There are opportunities here to ask</p>	<p>Composing novel music with expressive qualities</p> <p>Reflecting on chosen way of composing movie score</p>

		<p>knowledge they are working on in class, ask students to reflect on and justify their choices, and challenge them to be more daring as appropriate.</p> <p>Students rehearse multiple times after composing.</p>	<p>students to explore a particular area of music as appropriate to curriculum</p>
4	Lesson period 3	<p>Students are instructed to notate their melody (or a more complete composition) in either traditional notation (if appropriate), or in a graphic invented notation. (This should not be a first experience with graphic notation; students should be previously exposed to this idea.) Teacher circulates to see how the notation and the song match up.</p>	<p>Learning about and using visual notation</p> <p>Inventing methods of notation</p>
5	Lesson period 4 and 5 (if needed)	<p>Students share their compositions, while movie clip plays so everyone can see. (If technology is available, compositions can be recorded in a program like GarageBand, and aligned with the movie clip in a program such as iMovie). The class can be invited to give feedback, as appropriate.</p>	<p>Developing audience and performance etiquette</p> <p>Performing music with expressive qualities</p>
6		<p>After a group shares, they hold up their graphic notation (if graphic notation was used instead of traditional), and explains the system they invented to show some of their sounds.</p> <p>Once the class has heard all the compositions, the teacher may decide to ask each group to analyse the effectiveness of their composition and score, looking at strengths and limitations relative to possible alternatives and further reflecting on what they have learned from the exercise. If they had to do it again what would they do differently?</p>	<p>Explaining choices made in creating notation</p> <p>Explaining strengths and limitations of their movie score composition and reflecting on the process used to create it</p> <p>Analysing musical compositions</p>

Resources and examples for inspiration

Web and print

- Not applicable

Other

- Available instruments
- Paper and pencil for each student
- Manuscript paper (if using traditional notation)
- Movie clip of about 1 minute
- Means to play the clip (either on a TV that the whole class can view on a loop, or ideally, on laptops or other devices that each group can control)
- Video examples for class discussion

Opportunities to adapt, extend, and enrich

- Students could be given a choice of movie clip
- Students could be asked to write their own scripts and make a movie clip, providing cross-curricular opportunities in literacy (screen-writing) and technology (recording and editing etc.)
- Students could be asked to create their own success criteria to enhance creativity and critical thinking skills
- If students use graphic notation, other groups could be asked to interpret their score as a follow-up activity.
- Students can be asked to explore and analyse famous soundtracks or the use of different styles of music in film as a preliminary or follow-up activity

Creativity and critical thinking rubric for music

• Mapping of the different steps of the lesson plan against the OECD rubric to identify the creative and/or critical thinking skills the different parts of the lesson aim to develop

	CREATIVITY Coming up with new ideas and solutions	Steps	CRITICAL THINKING Questioning and evaluating ideas and solutions	Steps
INQUIRING	Make connections to other musical styles concepts or conceptual ideas in other disciplines	1-4,6	Identify and question assumptions and conventional rules in a musical performance, composition or analysis	1,2,6
IMAGINING	Play with unusual and radical ideas when preparing to perform, compose, orchestrate, or analyse a music piece	1-4	Consider several perspectives on a musical performance, composition, interpretation or analysis	2,6
DOING	Perform, compose, or analyse music with expressive qualities or relating to personally meaningful subject matter	2-6	Explain both strengths and limitations of a performance, a composition or an analysis of a music piece	6
REFLECTING	Reflect on steps taken to create performances, compositions or analyses of a music piece	6	Reflect on the chosen way of performing, composing or analysing a music piece relative to possible alternatives	1-6