

Musical poetry

Primary: (ages 7 – 11)

Music

Students are challenged to create a musical soundscape to accompany a selected poem, for example a train poem. Students experiment with and discuss the expressive qualities of dynamics and tempo. They compose, perform, and respond to music and connect it to literature and poetry. Finally, they listen critically to evaluate the expressive qualities of dynamics and tempo in the compositions of other students.

Time allocation 2-3 lesson periods

Subject content Understand and use dynamics and tempo contrasts
Experiment with timbres to create sound effects
Evaluate dynamics, tempo, and soundscapes as expressive elements

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

- Explore and generate ideas for musical expression
- Make connections between music and poetry
- Produce a musical performance with expressive qualities
- Reflect on the consequences of creative and unusual musical choices

Other skills Collaboration

Key words tempo; dynamics; timbre; soundscapes; expressive qualities; contrasts; composing; performing

Products and processes to assess

Students work in small groups or individually to compose and perform. They make connections, generate musical ideas, play with original ideas, organise them in an appropriate way, and reflect critically on their and one another's work. At the highest levels of achievement, they create an imaginative accompaniment that features some risk-taking in its composition. Their work process shows willingness to explore a variety of ideas about what can be expressed with changes to dynamics and tempo, and an ability to articulate why final choices have been made and how they relate to the poem.

Teaching and Learning plan

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

Step	Duration	Teacher and student activity	Subject content	Creativity and critical thinking
1	Lesson period 1	<p>Teacher may choose to introduce the topic by reviewing the concepts of dynamics and tempo and giving examples and definitions.</p> <p>They then distribute or read the chosen poem, or ask students to select one among several with musical affordances, asking students to start imagining what sort of music or sound effects would go with it. Any poem with contrasts and some obvious rhythmic potential would work, for instance a train poem</p> <p>It may be useful to facilitate a short discussion (as whole class or in small groups) of the poem at this point. What do students notice about the poem? How does it make them feel?</p> <p>Teacher then asks for a couple of examples of how, where, and why different sound effects could be used and discusses with students how they could create these effects (from objects, body percussion etc.)</p> <p>Teacher can then ask about different kinds of dynamics or tempo and discuss what difference this makes. As appropriate, this could be extended to a discussion of what dynamics and tempo would be unexpected or unusual for this poem and why</p> <p>Teacher asks students (individually, in pairs, or in small groups) to create a performance in which the poem is read with accompanying sound effects or music. Students can be given access to instruments or can simply use body and mouth percussion.</p> <p>Teacher circulates, listening to progress and encouraging students to add more ideas or think more critically about their ideas</p>	<p>Developing or identifying ideas for sound effects, dynamics, and tempo changes</p> <p>Demonstrating understanding of the expressive qualities of dynamic and tempo contrasts</p> <p>Composing together in a group, listening to ideas of others</p> <p>Composing original music or sound effects</p>	<p>Observing and describing the feelings in poem and their experience of it</p> <p>Articulating connections between emotion in the poem and musical expression</p> <p>Generating ideas on dynamics and tempo and stretching and playing with those ideas</p> <p>Imagining and evaluating possibilities for musical expression and producing a performance</p> <p>Reflecting on and critically evaluating ideas</p>
2	Lesson period 2 (this may also be continued in a third lesson period)	<p>Students have time to review work they created in previous class and practice for performing in class.</p> <p>Teacher distributes a 'listening worksheet', reads it over, and asks if there are any questions about it. Teacher reminds class of appropriate audience behavior.</p> <p>Students perform their compositions for the class. After each soundscape/composition, students fill out a listening worksheet on what they heard. Teacher leads discussions about why students have made particular choices in order for the class to reflect on strengths and weaknesses and compliment particularly interesting musical examples.</p>	<p>Performing music and appropriate sound effects with dynamic and tempo changes</p> <p>Listening to performances of others respectfully and carefully</p> <p>Offering accurate and thoughtful written and spoken comments about compositions of peers</p>	<p>Reflecting on the novelty of compositions and performances and choices regarding dynamics and tempo</p>

Resources and examples for inspiration

Web and print

- Photocopies of poem (one per working group)
 - A train poem could be an example
 - Any poem with contrasts and some obvious rhythmic potential
- Photocopies of critical listening worksheet (one per student)

Other

- Instruments can be made available. However, they are not necessary; students can simply use body and mouth percussion.

Opportunities to adapt, extend, and enrich

- Students could be asked to notate dynamic and tempo changes as appropriate to teaching context
- Poems with different subject matter, emotions, or rhythm could be used and/or compared
- The lesson could be used to introduce music using the idea of trains (or the selected poem's idea):
 - Excerpts of Different trains by Steve Reich (classical music - instrumental)
 - Take the A train by Duke Ellington (in English)
 - Pedro Pedreiro by Chico Buarque (in Portuguese)
 - Examples of pop songs about trains: <https://www.ranker.com/list/songs-about-trains/ranker-music>

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	Identify and question assumptions and conventional rules in a musical performance, composition or analysis	
IMAGINING	Play with unusual and radical ideas when preparing to perform, compose, orchestrate, or analyse a music piece	1	Consider several perspectives on a musical performance, composition, interpretation or analysis	2
DOING	Perform, compose, or analyse music with expressive qualities or relating to personally meaningful subject matter	1-2	Explain both strengths and limitations of a performance, a composition or an analysis of a music piece	2
REFLECTING	Reflect on steps taken to create performances, compositions or analyses of a music piece	1-2	Reflect on the chosen way of performing, composing or analysing a music piece relative to possible alternatives	2