

# Folk song with word chains

Primary: (ages 7 – 11)

Music

Students learn a simple folk song and create an appropriate accompanying word chain and motion to create a longer form. They then transfer this to unpitched percussion and experiment with and compare perspectives on different ways to make their composition more unusual and interesting. Finally they perform and appraise their composition, reflecting on the steps they have taken and why.

---

**Time allocation** 1-2 lesson periods

---

**Subject content** Create rhythmic accompaniments  
Group ensemble skills  
Rondo form and choosing timbres  
Music creation and performance

---

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

- Consider several perspectives on a musical composition
- Compose and perform music with expressive qualities
- Reflect and explain strengths and limitations of composition

---

**Other skills** Collaboration

---

**Key words** Rondo; singing; dynamics; Laban efforts; percussion; composition; beat

---

## Products and processes to assess

In this activity, students use rondo form to coordinate a traditional simple folk song with created word chains of voice and unpitched percussion instruments. At the highest levels of achievement they consider several ways of improving their compositions and making them more unusual and interesting, are willing to explore and challenge a variety of ideas, reflect on the strengths and limitations of their work, and fully meet and exceed the requirements of the task.

## 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
		This lesson can use any appropriate folk or other song in 2/4 or 4/4 time. For the purpose of this example, The Muffin Man, will be used. This is freely available on the internet, or another song that fits your curriculum can be substituted.		
1	Lesson period 1	Students learn The Muffin Man by rote (or if appropriate, a literacy activity could help teach part of the notation). Sing together as a group.	Learning a song  Singing together as a group	
2		Divide students into groups of 4. Each student thinks of one type of muffin and a way to say it over 2 beats. Each student creates a gesture to accompany their muffin type.  Each group experiments with ways to order their four muffin types to create a word chain. For example, blueberry, chocolate, raspberry, corn.  Groups practice performing their word chains as a group. All 4 students perform all 4 words and gestures.	Creating beats  Saying words to a beat	Generating ideas for words and chains  Performing music with expressive qualities
3		Class reconvenes with teacher to brainstorm ideas for making the word chains more interesting and unusual —vary dynamics, vary voice type, change gestures to incorporate different levels or different Laban efforts.  Students go back to their small groups to practice adding in the ideas that have been discussed. They can be encouraged to appraise the strengths and limitations of different methods of adding interest and consider everybody’s perspective on this before making their final decisions	Considering dynamics, gestures, etc. to increase interest  Practicing and discussing ways to make word chains more interesting and unusual	Playing with unusual ideas when preparing to compose music  Appraising strengths and limitations of compositional ideas  Considering several perspectives on a composition
4		Students share their word chains with the class. They should perform the chain twice in a row without a break between, at the same tempo of The Muffin Man.	Developing performance and audience etiquette	Performing music with expressive qualities
5	This may extend	Each student chooses an unpitched percussion instrument to transfer their word of the word chain to. Small groups practice performing their “word chain”	Using unpitched instruments	Appraising strengths and limitations of compositional

<p>into a second lesson period</p>	<p>without words—just instruments. Again they can be encouraged to experiment with, compare, and appraise different ways of using their instruments for this task.</p>		<p>ideas</p> <p>Considering several perspectives on a composition</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>The class performs The Muffin Man multiple times with one small group's word chain in between. Everyone sings The Muffin Man, but only each small group performs their word chain on instruments when it's their turn. If The Muffin Man is section A, and the word chains are B, C, D, etc., then the form of the song is ABACADA, etc. Depending on context, they can then be encouraged to reflect on what they have learned and what steps they have taken to create their performance and make it more interesting and unusual, and their chosen ways of composing relative to others.</p>	<p>Developing performance and audience etiquette</p>	<p>Performing music with expressive qualities</p> <p>Reflecting on steps taken and chosen way of composing music relative to possible alternatives.</p>

## Resources and examples for inspiration

### Web and print

- An appropriate simple folk song in 4/4 time

### Other

- Unpitched percussion instruments
- Paper and pencil for each student

**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

	<b>CREATIVITY</b> Coming up with new ideas and solutions	<b>Steps</b>	<b>CRITICAL THINKING</b> Questioning and evaluating ideas and solutions	<b>Steps</b>
<b>INQUIRING</b>	Make connections to other musical styles concepts or conceptual ideas in other disciplines		Identify and question assumptions and conventional rules in a musical performance, composition or analysis	
<b>IMAGINING</b>	Play with unusual and radical ideas when preparing to perform, compose, orchestrate, or analyse a music piece	2,3	Consider several perspectives on a musical performance, composition, interpretation or analysis	3,5
<b>DOING</b>	Perform, compose, or analyse music with expressive qualities or relating to personally meaningful subject matter	2,4,6	Explain both strengths and limitations of a performance, a composition or an analysis of a music piece	3,5
<b>REFLECTING</b>	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	6