

Making music without instruments: Sounds from water

Primary: (ages 7 – 11)

Music

Students are challenged to consider what they can use to make music. They use water and ice as an inspiration for experimenting to create various timbres. Water is a familiar and ubiquitous subject for children. In this lesson, children are exposed to using water unconventionally as a musical instrument, and challenged to listen closely in order to create various types of sound.

Time allocation 1-2 lesson periods

Subject content Listen critically and respond to unconventional music
Experiment with timbres, create sounds, and invent instruments
Learn about world music

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

- Question assumptions about instruments and music
- Consider different perspectives on music
- Play with unusual, radical ideas about how to create music
- Analyse the expressive qualities of sounds from water

Other skills Collaboration

Key words timbre; world music; found sound; water drumming; instruments

Products and processes to assess

Students work together to create sounds from water, to create written accounts of the process, and to discuss their findings. At the highest levels of achievement, they are inventive about their use of sound, and are not afraid to experiment and to challenge their own assumptions about instruments and ways to make music. They are interested and curious about water drumming, open to exploring alternative perspectives on instruments, and display a good ability to describe and discuss different kinds of water sounds and relate them to music.

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
1	Lesson period 1	<p>Students are divided into small groups to discuss the driving question: If there were no premade instruments available, what could you use to make music?</p> <p>Come back as a whole group and have a discussion about what small groups came up with. Possible answers: voices, create instruments from available materials.</p> <p>Introduce videos of water drumming from people of Baka and Vanuatu. Explain that where they live, water is available and useful for creating music.</p> <p>Show videos and discuss. What makes this musical?</p>	<p>Offering quality ideas about what constitutes music</p> <p>Offering quality ideas about how to make music without instruments; listening carefully to ideas of others</p>	<p>Questioning assumptions about conventional musical instruments</p> <p>Considering different perspectives about what constitutes music</p> <p>Generating and playing with unusual and radical ideas about how to make music (evidenced in quality of contributions)</p>
2	Lesson period 1 (this can be continued into a 2nd lesson as appropriate)	<p>NOTE: This lesson can be very messy. It is best done outdoors in warm weather so students who get wet can dry off</p> <p>Give each student a sheet of paper (ideally, with two columns—one for the name of the “instrument” and one for a description—teachers can prepare this for students or lead them in dividing paper into columns), clipboard, and pen or pencil.</p> <p>There should be several water stations (different water containers with various tools inside—if possible, it makes sense to sort the tools by similarity so that each station has mostly the same type of tool), and students should be divided equally to each station</p> <p>At each station, students have 5 minutes to explore the tools there for making sound. They then have approx. 5-10 minutes (allowed time to depend on level) to give each type of sound they created a name and produce a written description in words of how they created the sound. Students rotate until they</p>	<p>Listening carefully to sound</p> <p>Finding ways to describe sounds and alternative instruments</p> <p>Experimenting with water and sound</p>	<p>Making connections between sounds from water and music</p> <p>Generating and playing with unusual ideas about how to create music</p>

		have been to each station.		
3	Lesson period 1/2	Class reconvenes all together. Students (or small groups) share some of their most inventive instrument sounds with each other. Teacher asks students to reflect (in small groups or as a whole class) on what they have learnt about different tools that can be used to make music.	Listening well to others and displaying appropriate audience behaviour	Performing and analysing music with expressive qualities Reflecting on and considering different perspectives on what constitutes music and how it can be created

Resources and examples for inspiration

Web and print

- Videos of water drumming by Vanuatu or Baka (find by searching Youtube; they are readily available; if nudity is a concern, be sure to preview the video before showing students, as these are sometimes filmed without clothing)

Other

- Tubs of water (kiddie pools work well, but any container will work)
- Water tools/instruments (anything that can interact with water and make different sounds will work. Good items include sponges, wooden spoons, rags, small plastic containers for pouring, strainers, water guns, old condiment bottles with a pour top)
- Paper and pen and clipboards for students.

Opportunities to adapt, extend, and enrich

- This activity could be expanded to create a more substantial project—an entire composition, for example. However, this can be difficult due to space, behaviour, and logistical reasons. The point of this activity is to experience listening closely to everyday things (such as water pouring), rather than necessarily the creation of a musical work
- Could be expanded and linked to science and/or maths by using a subsequent lesson to experiment with the use of water in jars for making music and discussing volume/measurements and vibrations/the science of sound as appropriate. It can be helpful to use food colouring when doing this, so that the amount of water in each jar can be seen more easily

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	1-3	Identify and question assumptions and conventional rules in a musical performance, composition or analysis	1,3
IMAGINING	Play with unusual and radical ideas when preparing to perform, compose, orchestrate, or analyse a music piece	1-3	Consider several perspectives on a musical performance, composition, interpretation or analysis	1,3
DOING	Perform, compose, or analyse music with expressive qualities or relating to personally meaningful subject matter	3	Explain both strengths and limitations of a performance, a composition or an analysis of a music piece	
REFLECTING	Reflect on steps taken to create performances, compositions or analyses of a music piece	3	Reflect on the chosen way of performing, composing or analysing a music piece relative to possible alternatives	3