

WHAT CAN WE DO?



Music has always been a powerful tool for expressing emotions, connecting people, fostering community healing, and building collective resilience.

In this activity, students will have the opportunity to create and perform original music, focusing on composition and improvisation. You will experiment with different rhythms and melodies, working both individually and in small groups to develop and perform short musical pieces. This activity encourages creativity and collaboration in the music-making process, with an emphasis on ensemble playing and working together to create a cohesive performance.

The proposed sample combines class work with homework, suitable for individual and group projects. Teachers can adapt and implement them as best suits their educational context.

Lesson

Music

Grade

6-7

Learning Objectives

Students will collaborate on ensemble performances and group discussions, using music as a means to foster community healing, develop shared experiences, and build collective resilience.

Duration

One Lesson (40 Minutes)

Required Materials

- ✓ Various percussion instruments (drums, tambourines, etc.)
- ✓ Melodic instruments (xylophones, keyboards, or any available melodic instrument)
- ✓ Whiteboard and markers
- ✓ Paper and pencils

Preparation and Implementation

- ✓ Set up the instruments (percussion, melodic, and any available classroom instruments) and make sure they are ready for use.
- ✓ Duplicate the WORKSHEET as many as the number of students

PROCESS

1 INTRODUCTION (5 Minutes)

1. Briefly discuss improvisation and composition, explain how music can be both spontaneous and structured.
2. Introduce the idea of the "Jam Session" where each student or group will contribute musical ideas.
3. Lead a quick improvisation warm-up - start with a simple rhythm (using percussion instruments) and invite students to join in, gradually adding melodic ideas with instruments like xylophones or keyboards.

2 JAM SESSION (25 Minutes)

1. Divide the class into small groups (4-5 students each)
2. Give each group a mix of instruments (percussion and melodic)
3. Group work:
 - give them time to create a short, original one-minute piece, incorporating improvisation and some structure
 - ask them to write/describe to structure on the list of paper
 - encourage them to listen to each other and experiment with rhythms and melodies

3 PERFORMANCE (10 Minutes)

1. Allow each group to perform their composition for the class (1-2 minutes per group)
2. After each performance, briefly reflect on the process of creating music, improvising, and combining these elements

EVALUATION

- Participation in the jam session and the ability to contribute to the creative process
- Originality and effort in the composition challenge
- Engagement during performances and reflections

RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Encourage Active Listening:

During the jam session and performances, encourage students to actively listen to their peers. Ask them to focus on how the rhythms and melodies interact and how they can respond musically to what others are playing. This will help keep students engaged and foster a sense of collaboration.

2

Provide Positive Feedback and Encouragement:

As students present their compositions or participate in the jam session, offer specific positive feedback to highlight their creativity and effort. Praise their use of improvisation and their willingness to experiment with new ideas. This builds confidence and keeps them motivated throughout the activity.

3

Ask Thought-Provoking Questions:

During and after performances, ask open-ended questions to prompt students to reflect on their music-making process. For example, "How did you decide when to change the rhythm?" or "What made you choose that melody?" This encourages deeper engagement and helps students think critically about their creative choices.

4

Keep the Atmosphere Fun and Low-Stress:

Make sure the classroom environment is relaxed and encouraging, where students feel safe to experiment and make mistakes. Create a positive atmosphere where students are excited to share their music without fear of judgment. This helps maintain high levels of engagement and enthusiasm.

5

Incorporate Movement and Body Percussion:

If possible, allow students to incorporate movement or body percussion into their compositions. Physical engagement with music can help students feel more connected to their compositions and maintain interest in the activity.

What is a Jam Session?

A jam session is an informal, collaborative music activity where students create and play music together without strict notation or pre-set arrangements. It allows students to improvise, experiment with rhythms and melodies, and respond to each other's ideas in real time. In the classroom, jam sessions help develop ensemble skills, active listening, creativity, and confidence, while also fostering teamwork and a sense of shared musical experience. Teachers can guide the session by suggesting themes, instruments, or starting motifs, but the emphasis is on exploration and collaboration rather than perfection.

Here are some text and video resources that may be useful for this activity:

Why Teachers Should offer Jam Classes...

https://banjonews.com/2012-02/why_teachers_should_teach_jam_classes.html

Kids Jam Session at The Music Farm

https://youtu.be/gwCt5SOBJa0?si=7Xgd_OUetJgsRsE7

Jam Session: After-school music program builds students' confidence

https://youtu.be/prr-RJzY5pw?si=H3ooiQ2j_J-xWU2G

Jamming with the kids

https://youtu.be/w9_ET2DP4GE?si=PSmfWT0TSYtJIYIN

WORKSHEET

Name of the Student:

Date:

Part 1: Musical Impressions

Listen to the three pieces of classical music played by orchestra, for example:

Ludwig van Beethoven - "Symphony No. 5 in C Minor" (First Movement)

<https://youtu.be/8NdeNCsF2K8?si=VG2L-LQ2JyjmTen9>

This iconic piece is full of energy and drama, with its famous "da-da-da-daah" motif. It's a great introduction to classical music and demonstrates the power and precision of an orchestra. The repetition of the theme also helps students grasp how motifs can evolve within a symphonic structure.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky - "The Nutcracker Suite" (Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy)

<https://youtu.be/GiEie0ClGIM?si=2tHJ--30t4KFIsv4>

This piece is light, magical, and familiar, especially for students. It's perfect for introducing the sounds of an orchestra, and its whimsical nature captures students' imaginations. The delicate sound of the celesta is a standout feature and gives students a chance to hear different timbres within the orchestra.

Johann Strauss II - "The Blue Danube"

<https://youtu.be/IDaJ7rFg66A?si=km1aQTCXGIwblav3>

This waltz is lively, elegant, and cheerful, showcasing the orchestra's ability to create a sense of movement and rhythm. It's easy to listen to and offers students a chance to appreciate the beauty of orchestral music while also understanding the concept of dance and rhythm in classical compositions.

Part 2: Questions

Answer the following questions in 1–2 sentences each:

7. **What similarities did you notice between the different pieces of music?**

8. **What differences did you notice between these pieces of music?**

9. **Which one did you like the most?**

Part 3: Reflection

1. Reflect on the role of different instruments in a classical orchestra:

- How do different sections of an orchestra (strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion) work together to create a full piece of music?

2. If you were to compose a piece inspired by a classical orchestra, which instruments or sections would you feature, and why?

Thank you for exploring the world of music and its power to connect people!