
THE ROSE ENSEMBLE
SAMPLE LESSON PLAN: AMERICAN PROGRAM

Descriptive Overview

In this program, students explore N. American history through Acadian tunes, Appalachian folk songs, Shaker spiritual songs, and New England ballads. As they journey from one geographic region to another through the music, the students discover some of the diverse cultures that have contributed to N. America's rich musical heritage. They also learn about ways in which music gives expression to the beliefs and hopes of different communities and tells stories about social causes that have shaped the country. **Time Required** 1 hour

Description of Arts Learning Community

Approximately 200 young people, grades 3-8, with no assumed previous experience of the arts activity

Rationale

Music is an often-overlooked resource for learning about history. Traditional folk music and popular period songs offer a window onto community beliefs and values as well as social movements and activities. The different musical styles and genres also serve as an introduction to the diverse cultures that have contributed to N. America's musical heritage. This program uses music as a lens for learning about the history, geography, social life, and cultural heritage of N. America.

Learning Goals for Arts Learners

At the end of the program, students will be able to:

- match particular songs or tunes with specific historic groups/communities;
- identify these early American musical instruments: the African-American banjo, guitar, fiddle, and mandolin;
- describe how music was passed down from one generation to another;
- name 2 different ways that music can communicate feelings, beliefs, ideas.

Learning Activities

Program Introduction:

- The members of the Ensemble say their names; what instrument they play/voice part they sing; and when they began studying music.
- The program for the day is briefly described.

Music as an expression of Community Identity

Shaker Music

- The Ensemble performs PURE LOVE/GIVE GOOD GIFTS
- Engage students: Who were (are) the Shakers? Where were they active? What did they believe?
- Discuss the texts of the songs and how they reflect the beliefs of the Shaker community: e.g., ideas of peace, brotherhood, simplicity.
 - Note how the music reflects these ideas: it is often simple, single line melodies that everyone sings together.
- Describe/demonstrate how music is passed down as 'oral tradition' from one person to another

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- The Ensemble performs PEACE AND JOY
 - Students are asked to listen for words and ideas in the text that reflect the beliefs of the Shaker community.

Acadian Music

- Engage students: Who are the Acadians?
 - Describe how the Acadians were forced to flee Canada and came to Louisiana; their music was an important way of holding onto their culture – it is what we know as Cajun music today.
- Instrumentalists perform ACADIAN TUNES
 - Students are encouraged to hear the ‘spiciness’ of the music (like Cajun food)
 - Encourage kids to quietly tap hands to the beat of the music (not clap)

Music as a Response to Life Events

‘The Colonists’

- Engage students: Who are the colonists? What period in history do we associate them with? Where did they live and what was it like?
- Ensemble performs OUR FOREFATHER'S SONG
 - Ask students to listen for the different things that the colonists are complaining about and then report on what they learned about the life of these colonists (e.g., frozen ground, not enough water, deer eating the crops).

The Hutchinson Family Singers

- Describe how music can help to bring about social change, using the example of The Hutchinson Family Singers who used their music to advance the cause of emancipation [this word is introduced to the students and defined].
 - The songs gave new words to familiar, popular melodies that everyone knew and could sing along with.
 - Some of this music was sad; some of it was happy.
 - Give examples of how music can sound like what it describes: e.g. slow if it describes something sad; fast, peppy beat for happy ideas.
- Ensemble performs TENTING TONIGHT
 - Ask students to raise their hands if they thought the song sounded happy /sad.
- Introduce the song GET OFF THE TRACK and describe what it is about.
 - Students are taught the chorus and hand motions to act out the song
 - Ensemble performs GET OFF THE TRACK with students joining in
 - Ask students to raise hands if they thought the song sounded sad or happy.

Invite students to ask questions

- Opportunity to talk more about the instruments, oral tradition, or introduce another song

Conclusion:

- Teach refrain of Sweet By and By - mention the person who wrote it is from Wisconsin.
- Ensemble performs SWEET BY AND BY with the students