

The First Music ~ A Rhythmic Composition

Materials

- Printed or digital copy of the story The First Music as Told by Dylan Pritchett
- Selection of classroom percussion instruments (drums, shakers, tambourines, woodblocks, rhythm sticks, etc.)

Objectives

- Demonstrate active listening and movement in response to rhythmic patterns.
- Identify and select appropriate instruments to represent rhythmic sounds.
- Perform rhythmic patterns in context.
- Create a simple rondo composition using story-inspired rhythms.

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Begin with a short body percussion warm-up using simple rhythms. Echo back 4-beat patterns (e.g., clap-clap-pat-pat-snap ~ I I M I).

Step 1: Read the Story with Movement (10 minutes)

Read the story aloud with enthusiasm. When each sound phrase appears, pause and model a movement (see video for examples). Ask students to join in with movements for each phrase.

Step 2: Instrument Selection and Performance (10 minutes)

Break the class into 4 small groups. Assign each group one of the rhythmic phrases:

- Group 1: Padada BOOM-pada BOOM-padada BOOM-pada BOOM!
- Group 2: Shh-ka-shh! Shh-ka-shh! Shh-ka-shh! Shh-ka-shh!
- Group 3: Skee-de-lee! Kee-key-key! Skee-de-lee! Kee-key-key!
- Group 4: Reep-reep-ree! Reep-reep-ree! Reep-reep-ree!

Have each group explore the classroom instruments and decide what best represents their rhythm (e.g., Group 1 can use drums, Group 2 could use guiros, and so on). Practice playing the rhythms on instruments. Read the story again and have each group perform their part in time with the reading.

Step 3: Isolate and Create (15 minutes)

Part A – Chant and Play (5 minutes):

Lead the class in chanting the 4 rhythms in sequence. Use this for your A section.

Part B – Improvise and Compose (10 minutes):

Option 1 (Improvisation): Call-and-response or circle improvisation: each student or group improvises 2 measures of 4 beats using their instrument (B section).

Option 2 (Composition): In small groups, create a contrasting 4-beat rhythmic phrase using classroom instruments. Notate with symbols or simple words.

Put It Together – Rondo Form (ABA or ABACA):

- Perform A (story chant with instruments)
- Perform B (improvised or composed section)
- Return to A
- Optional: Create additional C or D sections for extended rondo form

Wrap-Up & Reflection (5 minutes)

- What was your favorite rhythm and why?
- Which instrument sounded most like your rhythm?
- How did it feel to create your own music from a story?

Assessment

- Observation: Participation in movement, instrument selection, performance, and creation.
- Listening: Rhythmic accuracy and ensemble awareness.
- Reflection: Verbal or written response to the creative process.