

ACTIVITIES

ELEMENTARY LEVEL

(GRADES 5-6)



Activities for Listening

The Archive contains a wealth of material for students to listen to and learn from, either as an individual, in a small group, or even in a full class setting. Listening activities can be purely illustrative, or educators can also choose to include an assessment/evaluation component whereby students are tested on what they have learned.

Use selections from the Archive to illustrate and test:

- different rhythmic and melodic patterns, harmonies, textures and form (choice of selections will vary depending on specific goals).
- different instruments; assess students' understanding and listening abilities by then having them identify the instruments in various pieces of Archive music

TIP: Click on the Catalogue Link at the top of the Archive webpage. You can then initiate a search by Instrument which will give you information on which instruments are featured in a performance on the Archive and who the players are.

- different configurations, e.g., solos, duets, trios, quartets, and so on; test students afterward by having them listen to and identify these different kinds of ensemble configurations

TIP: Click on Band to obtain an alphabetical list of the bands featured in the Archive. Enter a keyword such as, e.g., 'quartet' into the search bar, to be provided with a sublist of all the quartets with performances on the site.

- jazz as a style of music compared with other styles such as classical, rock, or folk; initiate a discussion about what it means for a piece to be classified in a certain way; discussion that sometimes a piece does not fit neatly into one category or another but combines elements from different styles.
- characteristics of the variety of styles within the jazz genre, e.g., big band/swing, latin, be-bop, fusion, etc.
- the use of themes and motifs in music; have students listen to and pick out the themes that persist through a piece of music

Activities for Research & Critical Response

1. Artist Project (Individual)

Objective: To have students develop research and writing skills by researching and reporting on a selected artist from the Archive.

Activity: Students select an artist from the Archive. Using the information on the site – concert recordings, biographical profile – as a starting point for their research, they provide a written report describing the artist's life and career development.

2. Same Old Song? (Individual)

Objective: To have students learn how different artists can interpret the same material differently and how the style of the artists, different instrumentation and different musical choices can affect the end result.

TIP: Click on the Catalogue Link at the top of the site page, then on Track-Clip to obtain an alphabetical listing of all the clips contained on the site. Any song which has been played by more than one artist or group will have a separate listing for each performance

Materials: Computer with internet access
Listening Response Form

Activity: Select a piece of music from the Archive that is performed by more than one artist (for example 'Autumn Leaves' is performed by Donna Barber Trio and also by the Trombone Workshop Octet; 'Come Rain Or Come Shine' is performed by Nancy Walker Trio and Sam Noto Quintet; etc.) Play both versions for the students (or have them listen at home or outside of class time as part of the assignment).

Have students, using the Listening Response Form as a starting point, write a one or two page response where they discuss the differences (and similarities) between the two interpretations, using appropriate terminology learned in class to discuss rhythm, texture, expression, instrumentation, musical choices, etc.

3. Same Instrument, Different Sound

Objective: Students learn and explore how the same instrument can sound very different in the hands of different artists. The definition of 'instrument' here can be extended to include the human voice.

Activity: Students select an instrument that is featured by more than one performer on the Archive. From the list of artists, they select two who exhibit different performance styles. Students listen and write a report comparing and contrasting, using appropriate terminology, each individual musicians' tone and style.

4. Making It Up: Exploring Improvisation (Class or Small Group)

Objective: to encourage students to think critically about what improvisation involves

Activity: Start with a class discussion of what they think improvisation means. Then play piece of music from the Archive that features improvisation. Initiate a discussion on what the students think musical improvisation might involve. Is it a free-for-all? Or are there 'rules' to improvisation?

Following this, have students sit in a circle and create a collective impromptu short story or rap; as musicians would have a key, so the students are given a topic for the story; as a musical piece would have internal structure, so should the story have a beginning, middle and end; as musicians combine and communicate so that the performance has cohesion, so should the story flow as if it has one voice.

Play the same piece of music again from the Archive; discuss whether the students now have a different perspective on improvisation after having had the experience of trying to create a cohesive story as a group, impromptu

Activities for Creative Expression

1. Visual Art from Music (Individual/Small Group)

- Objective:** Students explore how an auditory art form (music) can be expressed or represented visually
- Materials:** Computer with internet access
Poster board
Materials with a variety of textures and colours (e.g., paint, cloth, found objects such as leaves, paper, plastic, cardboard)
- Activity:** Students listen to a selection from the Archive (if students are working in groups, each group can be given a different selection or the same selection). Over several listenings, they choose materials that they feel expresses the music in some way. They then create a collage/sculpture that expresses the mood, texture, colour and feel of the piece, together with a short paragraph explaining why they chose the materials and layout that they did.

2. Name That Tune! (Individual)

- Objective:** To encourage students to think about how our preconceived ideas about a piece of music may influence how we respond to it.
- Activity:** Play an unfamiliar piece of music from the Archive, and ask each student to make up a title for it, giving reasons for their choice of title. Then provide them with the real title of the piece and play it for them again. Ask them to discuss or write about which title they like better, and why, and how knowing the real title changed how they responded to the music.

3. My Dance Partner is a Saxophone! (Class)

- Objective:** To encourage students to express their response to music with movement while at the same time teaching them to listen for the particular qualities of specific instruments.
- Activity:** Choose a piece of music from the Archive that features many different instruments (e.g., a big band such as Rob McConnell's). Have students take the 'part' of a particular instrument and improvise movement expressing that instrument's tone, rhythm, melody line and texture.

4. Multimedia Jazz (Small Groups/Class)

- Objective:** To encourage students to explore how the themes and ideas behind a piece of music might be expressed in another art form.
- Activity:** Select a piece of music from the Archive, and then divide the class into groups where each group is assigned a different medium to represent the music – movement, visual art (collage, paint, clay, etc.), mime, poetry, puppetry, etc. – then combine the elements and have students present/perform the piece to younger classes as a multimedia presentation.

5. Music Tells a Story (Individual or Small Group)

Objective: To encourage students to think about how even music without words can still tell a story or bring to mind a certain kind of narrative.

Activity: Students create a cartoon depicting a story to go along with a selected piece of instrumental music from the Archive, keeping in mind that the story should fit with the mood and tone of the music. Cartoons from all of the students can then be compiled into a Jazz Comic Book.