

Unit 7 Rain, rain, go away

Exploring timbre, tempo and dynamics

ABOUT THE UNIT

This unit develops children's ability to recognise how sounds and instruments can be used expressively and combined to create music in response to a stimulus.

During this unit, children explore how sounds can be changed, combined and organised to create a class composition. They respond to stimuli suggested by the weather and explore ways in which sounds can be used expressively. They record their compositions using pictures, symbols and words.

This unit should be revisited during the key stage using different stimuli, *eg the fairground*.

WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

This unit links to the ongoing skills unit (unit 1) by reinforcing understanding of the expressive elements. It can be linked to dance in physical education and could be linked through extension work to the science scheme of work ('Exploring living things' in Unit 2b). It could also provide a stimulus for work in English where children write poems about rain using the expressive words developed in the unit. It links to PSHE by developing the children's ability to take account of the views of others and make their own contribution to a group activity.

It leads to units 9, 13 and 18 in the development of description skills.

PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if children and teachers have:

- sung songs
- explored sounds, recognising how dynamics, tempo and timbre can be used expressively
- developed skills through the activities described in unit 2

VOCABULARY

In this unit children will have an opportunity to use words and phrases related to:

- dynamics, *eg loud, quiet, getting louder, getting quieter*
- tempo, *eg fast, slow, getting faster, getting slower*
- pitch, *eg high, low, getting higher, getting lower*
- timbre, *eg descriptive words such as: light, heavy, bright, dull, cold, warm*
- structure, *eg beginning, middle, end*

RESOURCES

Stimulus:

- the weather

Sound sources:

- voices
- classroom instruments
- other sound sources

EXPECTATIONS

at the end of this unit

most children will:

carefully and confidently choose and order sounds to achieve an effect/image; recognise and use changes in timbre, tempo, pitch and dynamics

some children will not have made so much progress and will:

make strong contrasts in sounds, but will need help to control more subtle changes

some children will have progressed further and will:

make subtle changes in sounds; recognise how sounds can be combined to create a wider range of sounds; make suggestions for improving work

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

LEARNING OUTCOMES

POINTS TO NOTE

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

INTRODUCTION: HOW CAN MUSIC DESCRIBE DIFFERENT KINDS OF WEATHER?

- how sounds can be used descriptively
- that music can describe an environment
- Choose a stimulus, *eg rain*. Choose a song related to the chosen stimulus, *eg Rain, rain, go away, I hear thunder or Dr Foster*. Ask the class to sing this song in different ways and discuss the effect, *eg singing the song angrily, sadly, happily, hopefully*. [Link to unit 1: Singing]
- Play pieces of music that describe different types of weather to the children. *What kind of weather do you think it is and why?* [Link to unit 1: Listening]

- sing songs expressively
- describe different images created by music

- Ensure children use the vocabulary given at the front of this unit in all activities.
- Place emphasis on use of tempo, dynamics, pitch and different instrumental sounds.
- **Extension activity:** Encourage children to listen for, and identify, more subtle uses of sounds.

EXPLORATION: HOW CAN WE USE SOUNDS TO DESCRIBE THE WEATHER?

- how words can describe sounds
- Talk about the different kinds of weather that make a sound, *eg heavy downpour, thunder, howling wind*. Find words to describe them and say them in a way that reflects their meaning, *eg rumbling thunder in a low voice, howling wind in a howling voice*. Also, explore words that describe how they might feel, *eg cold, shivering*.

- identify and use descriptive words to create sound pictures

- Develop expressive vocabulary by finding words that provide a strong stimulus for sounds. Onomatopoeic words can be helpful, *eg drip, drop, pitter patter*. Analyse the sound of each word in order to find out why they are effective, *eg how the long 'oa' sound in 'moaning' can be made to sound like the wind, how the 'sh' in 'shiver' sounds cold*.

- how sounds can be changed
- Using these words, explore different ways of saying them to create an effect, *eg getting louder to reflect thunder getting nearer, slowing down to reflect rain stopping*.

- change sounds to reflect different stimuli

- Record sounds made by the class and play the sounds back to them. *Could they be made more effective, eg by making them longer, shorter, louder, quieter, faster, slower?*

- about sounds made by different sound sources
- For each type of weather, ask the children to suggest instruments that make sounds like those described by the selected words. Take each of the weather words in turn and ask the children to think of instrumental sounds to match them, *eg a drum roll for the word 'thunder', rapid taps on a woodblock for the words 'pitter patter'*. Discuss ways of improving the instrumental sounds. Experiment with different beaters, with dynamics, tempos and duration.

- select appropriate instruments and choose and combine sounds carefully

- Selecting instruments before they are played is a challenge for children at this key stage but this should be encouraged as it develops and demonstrates the ability to internalise sounds.

- how sounds can be combined
- Encourage the children to try putting sounds together using words/voices and instruments. Ask the children to work in pairs: one child is responsible for a vocal sound, the other for an instrumental sound. The children combine voices and instruments to describe a chosen kind of weather. Discuss the effect. *Can the rest of the class guess the kind of weather that is being described?*
- Explore the effect of silence.
- Ask the children to decide on combinations that relate to the words describing the weather.

- select appropriate combinations of sounds

- Encourage the children to consider how they would describe weather which has no sound, *eg sunshine using instrument/vocal sounds that describe warmth, light*. Ask them to explain their choices.
- The exploration of different ways of combining sounds is fundamental to helping children develop their composing skills.
- Silence is a very effective part of making music. It is also quite hard to achieve! Children must be helped to recognise that in music all sounds are important and that silence helps to provide a clean sheet of paper on which the music can be created.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: CAN WE MAKE OUR OWN WEATHER COMPOSITION?

- how sound can be organised
- how to create a class composition, combining layers of sound within simple structures
- Talk about a typical weather sequence, *eg thunder, lightning, rain*. Discuss with the children how musical ideas can be organised, *eg using structure of beginning, middle and end*.
- Plan a sequence of weather, *eg light rain – heavier – thunder and lightning – light rain stopping*.
- Give the composition a title. Plan the vocal and instrumental sounds that can be used. Talk about timbre, tempo, dynamics. *How could sounds overlap to create more descriptive sounds?* After this discussion, which should encourage children to recall internalised sounds, choose instruments and experiment to improve the intended effect. *Are there any instances where vocal sounds would be more effective than instrumental ones? What other sound sources could we use, eg a large card wobbled to create the sound of thunder? Should there be any periods of silence?* Ask the children to practise their own sounds, then rehearse as a class. Record the rehearsals and discuss to improve the work.
- Try different sequences. Picture cards could be used to help children remember the different sections, *eg picture of drops, heavy rain, lightning*.

- choose carefully and order sounds within simple structures in response to the stimulus of weather
- contribute ideas and control sounds as part of a class composition and performance

- Let the class make their own decisions and discover what needs to be changed to make the end result better.
- All children can be involved by using voice or body sounds, *eg clicking fingers, tapping tables, using onomatopoeic words*.
- **Extension activity:** Explore other stimuli, *eg fireworks, space*. Go through the same process, that is, words, sounds, instruments, combining sounds, practising, performing and reviewing, making improvements.
- Note those children who are able to make helpful suggestions and ensure that their skills, knowledge and understanding are extended in future work.
- Note those children who are able to recognise and suggest how sounds can be combined.

EXTENSION AND FUTURE LEARNING

In addition to the examples given in the 'Points to note' section, children could go on to:

- create their own weather scenes in pairs or threes and record them
- write poems about the rain and the sun and use these to stimulate more subtle uses of sounds
- collect recordings of different kinds of weather and use these as supporting material for creative work
- celebrate their work by performing weather pieces to different audiences

When this unit is repeated, the focus will remain the same, that is, understanding pitch, but the content and the expectations should change. The content is changed easily through the use of different examples, stories and other stimuli, *eg a fairground*, that could be used to explore the expressive elements instead of weather.

Expectations are changed by expecting more of the children to achieve the 'most children' and 'some children will have progressed further' statements and by placing greater emphasis on the extension exercises in the 'Points to note' section.

ENRICHMENT

- Children could attend concerts and listen to music that describes different landscapes and imagine the type of weather.
- Visiting musicians could come to the class and perform a number of contrasting pieces showing the range of sounds and technical possibilities of their instruments and demonstrating how the sounds are produced. They could be asked to improvise a composition based on a type of weather.

GLOSSARY

Timbre: Different types of sound, *eg different voice sounds, sounds made by different instruments, sounds made using different kinds of beater.*

Dynamics: The loudness of the sounds, which generally changes, sometimes dramatically, throughout most pieces of music.

Tempo: The speed of the music, which can either be the same throughout the music or change, *eg getting faster/slower.*

Structure: The way sounds are organised within a composition, *eg sounds could be organised with a beginning, middle and end.*

