

MUSIC MAKING WITH RHYMES

Scaffolded Composing in Primary School

Worksheets



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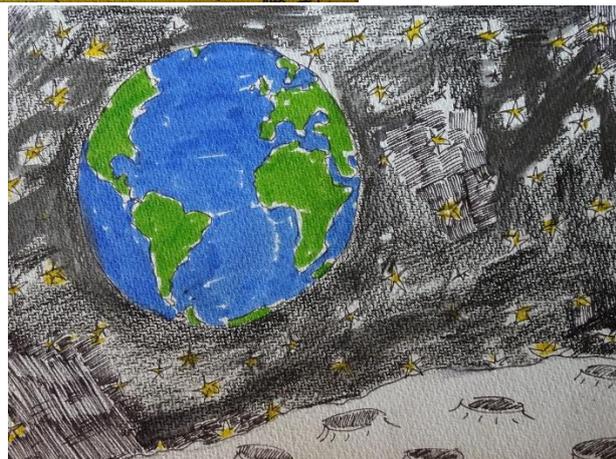
INTRODUCTION

New repertoire enabling teachers to introduce melodic composition to Primary School students – arranged sequentially, in both simple and compound time, using rhythmic elements from *Ta* through to *Syn-co-pa*.

The 35 original call and response rhymes in this collection are presented as **child/teacher friendly worksheets**, carefully designed to scaffold young children’s earliest melodic compositions. Each rhyme is presented in rhythmic/stick notation to which children add the letter-names of the melody as they compose.

The call and response and/or other repetitive structure of each rhyme enables the class to explore the piece in a variety of groupings eg. Teacher/whole class, vocal/body-percussion, individual/small group. Repeated motifs allow the children to easily memorize the rhyme and its rhythmic features.

Students can then experiment with and compose their own melodies – pentatonic or limited pitch at first – to fit the rhyme and its now familiar rhythmic structure. The process itself and the emerging song is an intrinsically rewarding experience. Students will quickly take ownership of their melodic creations – their own musical compositions.



PROCESS

Introduction and Exploration of the Piece

- The teacher should introduce/perform the selected rhyme vocally, with or without percussion. When introducing a rhyme, it is generally useful to have students listen for a particular thematic or musical feature.
- **'Call and response'** enables teacher and students to engage with the rhyme in a rhythmic/musical fashion.
- **Exploring and experimenting vocally, with movement &/or gesture** - Children can suggest (invent or 'compose') gestures, body percussion &/or movements for rhythmic or lyric elements. Rests can be made conscious by also giving them a distinctive sound (e.g. Vibraslap) or movement (e.g. Jump).
- **Different class groupings** can be explored to divide the piece up, highlighting form as suggested by the structure of the piece. Multiple performances of the piece can then include contrasting interpretations.
- **'Mix and match'** individuals/grouping/pairs, lyric with body percussion &/or gesture, dance (line, circle or square...) etc. adding interest to the familiarization process.
- **Non-melodic instrumental arrangements** (i.e. performance) may also include speech, gestures, dynamics variations, dance and/or varieties of groupings) and can be creative ends in themselves.
- **A rhythmic ostinato** accompaniment should be included as a feature of the arrangement.
- Only after the child is comfortable with the lyrics and rhythms of the piece should melodic composition begin.

Melodic Composition

- When progressing to melodic composition, it is useful to **restrict the children to a pentatonic scale**, C Doh Pentatonic (C, D, E, G, A) at first. Xylophones are ideal for this process. Notes not required can be physically removed (or placed upside-down on the instrument).
- If using ukuleles to assist with the melodic composition, initially, open 1st, 2nd and 4th strings (A, E, G) can be used and the 3rd string (C) employed as the home note. [Ukuleles can also be used as rhythmic accompaniment, for compositions in the C Doh Pentatonic scale. As the open strings form a C6 chord, no fretting fingers are required].
- The individual child, pair, or group should aim for something that can be successfully played &/or sung by the composer(s) i.e. at their own performance ability level.
- **Letter names**, in capitals, can be **written below the stick rhythms** on the worksheet. Initially, the focus should be on the composition process and the performance. Later, the finished piece can be transferred to the staff if desired.
- The teacher should decide how and when to introduce such concepts as the home note (to finish), variation within repetition, major or minor tonality, dynamics etc.
- If compositions are in a pentatonic scale, the 'call' or the 'response' (or selected phrases) can be **played together, by groupings or even the whole class**, without obvious dissonance.
- Experimentation, (instrumentation?), and 'polish', especially dynamics, should be encouraged. Allow the students time and space to have fun with their own compositions.
- The 'call and response' structure is also a great way to support **improvisation**. Children can improvise their melodic 'response', scaffolded with the particular rhythm.



NOISE LEVEL IN THE CLASSROOM

If the entire class is working on composing their own melody for a rhyme, noise level can be a real issue. In order to minimise classroom noise when composing using xylophones start the children off without any mallets at all – children use their fingers/fingernails. This usually proves to be unpopular, but serves to provide a baseline. Then allow children to use mallets but with their index fingers actually touching the mallet heads. This allows everyone to hear themselves without high noise levels. Once the pieces have been composed, and some performance structure agreed upon, correct mallet technique can be reinstated.

THE NITTY GRITTY

1. In learning the rhyme, allow a **minimum of two lessons** of exploration/familiarisation. This should include vocal grouping arrangements, body percussion and/or gesture, and choosing a suitable ostinato accompaniment (non-melodic and/or melodic).
2. When moving to melodic composition, **set some parameters** based on the age and experience of the children. E.g. Pentatonic C; home note at the end; it should be playable...
3. **Discuss sticking patterns and melodic contour** – what helps make the piece playable? (e.g. single note or pair of notes per beat, or some sort of ascending or descending pattern).
4. With call and response or repeated lyric/rhythmic pattern, children can compose their 'call' (melodic phrase) using **the same notes each time the call is repeated**. I.e. Make it the same, as per the lyric. **Or:** The same but vary the last note of the call phrase*.
5. If compositions are in a pentatonic scale, the 'call' or the 'response' (or selected phrases) can be **played together, by groupings or even the whole class**, without obvious dissonance.
6. The 'call and response' structure is also a great way to support **improvisation**. The Teacher plays the 'call' and children can improvise their melodic 'response', scaffolded with the particular rhythm.

**You may wish to leave point 4 until some composing has been done and then raise these ideas during discussion/reflection.*



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7, 9, 13 by IRW

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