

THE FIRST MUSIC

By Dylan Pritchett

First Grade

Outcome:

Students will explore the concept of *first*.

Materials:

Map or globe, blackboard

Animal Sounds worksheet, scissors

Kitchen items (wooden, plastic and metal spoons, pots and pans, eggbeater, rolling pin, small radio...)

2 or more sets of 8 drinking glasses, spoon, pitcher of water, plastic tub or roasting pan, food coloring (optional)

Sturdy shoebox with lid, rubber bands of different lengths and widths but large enough to fit across the length of the box

Computer(s) with Internet access

Musical instruments (optional)

Optional:

[A Tale of Two Frogs](#) (Martha Hamilton and Mitch Weiss, August House 2006)

[Sing Me a Story: Song-and-Dance Tales from the Caribbean](#) (Grace Hallworth, August House 2002)

[The Moral of the Story: Folktales for Character Development](#) (Bobby and Sherry Norfolk, August House 1999, 2006)

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

Introductory Activity:

- Teacher writes the word first on the board and asks students to define this word.
- Inform students they are in the **first** grade. Years ago, first grade was the very first year that children attended school. Kindergarten and pre-school did not exist.
- Teacher shares a first experience with the class (i.e.: baked a cake, drove a car, went to a wedding...).
- Ask students to share the first time they:
 - rode a bike or tricycle
 - heard a favorite song
 - rode without a car seat
 - stopped wearing diapers
 - lost a tooth
 - got a haircut
 - held a baby sibling or friend
 - went to the zoo
 - could tie their shoes
 - could spell their name
 - got a pet

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Teacher Reading of Story:

- Inform students they will be listening to a story that takes place in Africa (show on map or globe).
- Make several copies of the Animal Sounds worksheets, cut apart the phrases and give each child an animal sound phrase.
- Display and read each phrase before reading the story.
- Read the story through one time and ask students to listen for their animal sound.
- After the first reading, review the animal sounds with students.
- Share with students that African storytellers often have their audience participate in the telling of stories.
- Read the book a second time and ask students to participate by saying their animal sounds at the appropriate time.
- Ask students what other ways listeners can participate in storytelling.

Animal Sounds worksheet

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Padada Boom!

Shh-ka-shh! Shh-ka-shh! Shh-ka-shh! Shh-ka-shh!

Skee-de-lee! Kee-key-key! Skee-de-lee! Kee-key-key!

Reep-reep-ree! Reep-reep-ree! Reep-reep-ree!

Comprehension:

- Where does this story take place?
- How did the elephant make the Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Padada Boom! sound?
- How did the monkey make the Shh-ka-shh! Shh-ka-shh! Shh-ka-shh! Shh-ka-shh! sound?
- How did the crane make the Skee-de-lee! Kee-key-key! Skee-de-lee! Kee-key-key! sound?
- King Frog told Parrot why the frogs were silent. What did he say?
- How many days did the animals dance and play?
- What day was it quiet at dawn?
- What was the new sound on the seventh day?
- What did the monkey say to King Frog when he heard the frogs sing?

Interpretation:

- How does this story make you feel?
- How do you feel when you hear music?
- What is your favorite kind of music?
- Name some other animals that you might find in the African forest.
- Name some other things, besides animals, you might find in the African forest.
- When the elephant hit the hollow log with his foot, the animals heard Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Padada Boom! What instrument makes this sound? Would the sound be the same or different if the log was not hollow?
- How did King Frog feel when he told Parrot that frogs could only watch and listen?
- The frogs went to the pond to ponder. What does ponder mean?

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Interpretation cont.:

- What did King Frog mean when he said, "...everyone has something to add when it comes to making music"?
- The animals had a great rhythm together. What rhythm do you hear when you listen to the story?
- Why is the word **first** important in the title of this story?

Follow Up Activities:

- Music Exploration

Materials: Kitchen items (wooden, plastic and metal spoons, pots and pans, eggbeater, rolling pin, small radio...)

The animals used their voices and what they found in the forest to make music. How can you make music using only your voice and objects in the classroom?

1. Teacher divides students to create small groups.
2. Instruct students to explore the many ways they can use their voice to make sounds. Examples include talking or singing in various ways, whispering, clicking, humming, whistling, coughing, smacking lips, and even yawning.
3. Groups share results with classmates.
4. Teacher asks students how they can make sounds with their body. Examples include tapping, sliding, or stomping feet, tapping with fist or hand on different surfaces, clapping and rubbing hands over different surfaces.
5. Groups share results with classmates.
6. Teacher instructs groups to explore how they can make sounds with objects found in the classroom.
7. Groups share results with classmates.
8. Ask groups to use all of these sounds to "play" a familiar song.
9. What objects found in your kitchen could be used to make music?
10. Teacher may ask students to bring in items the next day, teacher can bring in named items the next day, or teacher can bring in items and have them available the same day to continue activity.
11. Distribute kitchen items (wooden, plastic and metal spoons, pots and pans, eggbeater, rolling pin, small radio...).
12. Have students with similar "instruments" form groups. Students talk about how items are alike and different. Collectively, let the class categorize items to determine the appropriate group for each item.
13. Teacher asks students for suggestions of songs to play and writes suggestions on the board.
14. Teacher and students take turns "conducting" the gadget "orchestra."

- Making Musical Instruments

Water Xylophone

Materials: 2 or more sets of 8 drinking glasses, spoon, pitcher of water, plastic tub or roasting pan, food coloring (optional)

1. If desired, place glasses in a plastic tub or roasting pan. Pour varying amounts of water into each glass. The first glass should have the least amount of water and each glass in succession should have a little more water. The last glass should have the most water.

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Follow Up Activities cont.:

Making Instruments cont.:

2. Add food coloring if desired. Make each glass a different color or put 1 drop of the same color in each glass. The intensity of the color should gradually decline, as the amount of water increases. Ask students why there is a difference if the same amount of color is added to each glass.
3. Demonstrate how to tap glasses gently with a spoon. Ask students what happens to the sound when there is more water in each of the glasses.
4. Explore making melodies with the water xylophone.
5. Repeat exploration with 8 glasses of another size or shape. How does the sound change as the shape or size of the glasses change?
6. Can you play a scale? Add or subtract water from glasses to “tune” your water xylophone.

• Shoe Box Guitar

Materials: sturdy shoe box with lid, rubber bands of different sizes and widths that are large enough to fit across the length of the box, scissors

1. Cut a large circular hole in the center of the box lid and place lid on the box.
2. Stretch rubber bands across the length of the box, over the hole. Adjust rubber bands so that they are about an inch apart.
3. Pluck the rubber bands. Is there a difference in the sounds of the tighter rubber bands? Explain. Do the thicker bands sound different than the thinner ones? Explain.
4. Play a song with this guitar. Have classmates accompany the guitar with the water xylophone. Now accompany the guitar with singing.
5. African music is usually accompanied by dancing. Students who are not playing instruments should dance. As the music changes, how do the dance movements change?
6. Africans often dance in either a circle with dancers standing shoulder to shoulder or in a single line, in a snake like pattern. Experiment with different dance formations.

• Story Telling

Materials: musical instruments or instruments created in previous activity

“Tohio” is story time in West Africa. Before the time of TV or radio, folktales were a main source of entertainment. These tales taught children community values such as hard work, honesty, and bravery. They also explained environmental occurrences they did not understand such as why the sun rises in the morning and sets in the evening or why thunder and lightning exist. African storytellers often use musical instruments, chanting, or song to accompany their stories.

1. Teacher divides students into small groups.
2. Students choose a familiar story or create a story to tell to the class.
3. Students plan vocal and instrumental sound effects to accompany their story. Kitchen gadgets and classroom objects discovered during musical exploration activities can be used instead of musical instruments.
4. Students practice their stories with musical accompaniment and evaluate if the music adds to or detracts from their story. Students fine tune sound effects and music.
5. Each group tells their story to the class. How did the music add to their story?

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Follow Up Activities cont.:

- **Teach and Combine Rhythms**

Just like stories, early music was not written down. It was sung or played from memory and taught to others.

1. Teacher assigns students to groups consisting of 2 or 3 members.
2. Each student in the group creates a short melody by tapping on a desk.
3. Students teach their melody to their partner(s).
4. African music often has polyrhythms, many rhythms occurring at the same time. Students combine their rhythms by playing them at the same time. Does combining their rhythms work? If so, why does it work? If not, students should each create another rhythm that works with their partner's rhythm. Why does this new rhythm work? If the 2 rhythms do not go together, do your rhythms sound more like noise than music?

- Many African languages are *tone* languages. Different words are distinguished by changes in the pitch of a single syllable. These different pitches add important meaning to spoken words. One word may have several connotations depending upon which syllable is given greater stress.

1. Teacher writes the following words on the board:
record, convict, project, graduate, separate, august, and polish
2. Read each word, first with equal stress on all syllables and then stress a different syllable each reading.
3. Students repeat productions. Ask how the meaning of each word changes by changing the stressed syllable.
4. Ask students if they can you think of any other words that change their meaning when different syllables are stressed? (conduct, object, suspect)
5. The meaning of a sentence can change, depending on which word in a sentence is stressed.
6. Teacher writes the following sentences on the board:
I like the book.
It is called First Music.
The elephant is my favorite animal.
7. Teacher asks students to read each sentence, stressing a different word each reading. How does the sentence meaning change each time?
8. Students dictate sentences for the teacher to write on the board.
9. Students read these sentences, stressing a different word in each sentence, each time the sentence is read. How does the meaning change each time?

- **Poetry**

Poems in Africa are almost always chants or songs.

1. Try chanting or singing a poem that is familiar to the class.
2. Write a poem about Africa. Sing or chant the poem. Add music to accompany the poem.

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Extensions:

- Web site: www.wildsanctuary.com/safari.html
This site provides a map of Africa. When you click on a number, information about endangered animals and their sounds are provided.
- Compare and Contrast The First Music with A Tale of Two Frogs (Martha Hamilton and Mitch Weiss, August House 2006). How are the frogs in both books alike? How are they different?
- Read *Dancing to the River*, page 8, in Sing Me a Story: Song-and-Dance Tales from the Caribbean (Grace Hallworth, August House 2002). Most Caribbean folktales originated in Africa. Like African tales, they include chanting, singing, acting out and dancing. This lively tale features a clever turtle that used singing and dancing to save his own life.
- Read *The Dancing Hyena*, page 59, in The Moral of the Story: Folktales for Character Development (Bobby and Sherry Norfolk, August House 1999, 2006). This West African story features two hens that worked together and used music to escape danger. The purpose of African folktales is to teach lessons and community values. The character traits of courage, persistence, and cleverness are lessons taught in this musical tale.

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Animal Sounds

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