

Suggested activities to accompany Respighi's *The Birds* mvt. 3 "The Hen"

Animal Sound Activity

Objective: Help students connect the music with the imagery of animals.

- **Activity:** Before listening to the piece, explain to students that Respighi used music to represent different animals. Play the "Hen" movement and ask them to listen carefully for sounds that remind them of a hen or a chicken.
- **Discussion Questions:**
 - How do you think the music represents a hen?
 - What instruments do you think might be playing to sound like the clucking of a hen?
- **Extension:** Have the students try to mimic the sounds of hens using their voices or body percussion (e.g., clapping, tapping, or snapping fingers).

Instrument Identification

Objective: Teach students about the specific instruments that might represent a hen in the music.

- **Activity:** After listening to the piece, discuss the instruments used in "The Hen." Respighi often uses pizzicato strings (plucking the strings), which can imitate the light, perky movements of a hen.
- **Discussion:** Have the students guess which instruments might sound like a hen. You could play a short excerpt and pause to ask them which instruments they think are being used.
- **Hands-on Instrument Activity:** If you have access to simple instruments (e.g., maracas, tambourines, or stringed instruments), let the students try to replicate the sounds of a hen using these instruments. They can experiment with different ways of playing to make the sounds more "hen-like."

Objective: Help students recognize rhythmic patterns and how they relate to movement.

- **Activity:** Listen to the music and break it down into small rhythm sections. Ask the students to tap the rhythms on the floor or clap along with the music. Explain that the "hen's footsteps" could be represented by a particular rhythmic pattern.
- **Follow-up:** Let the students practice clapping out the rhythm, alternating between different speeds or intensities, just like how a hen might move at varying speeds as it pecks around.

Movement and listening skills

Objective: Help students connect the music with its imagery.

- **Listen to the Piece:** Play the third movement, *La Gallina*, and ask the students to close their eyes and listen carefully to the music.
- **Imaginative Movement:** After listening, ask students to move like hens. What does a hen do? Do they peck, flap their wings, or walk in a particular way? Encourage them to mimic the movement of a hen based on what they hear in the music (e.g., the rhythm, lightness, or sudden movements).
- **As An Extension:** Have the students create a dance or a small performance that portrays a hen's behavior to the music.

Visual Art:

- **Draw the Hen:** Play *La Gallina* again, and ask students to draw a hen or a scene inspired by the music. You could suggest that they imagine the hen moving or reacting to the sounds they hear.
- **Create a Musical Storyboard:** Divide the class into groups and ask each group to illustrate a different "scene" from the music. For example, they could draw the hen strutting or pecking, based on their interpretation of the music's tone and rhythm.

Working with finding rhythm and tempo

- **Clapping and Counting:** Teach the students the rhythm of the music. Have them clap along with the music, identifying any patterns that emerge. If there are any parts of the music that feel faster or slower, you can guide them to recognize changes in tempo. This will help them better understand how Respighi used the tempo to depict a hen's movements.
- **Tempo Experiment:** Ask the class to "walk" around the room at different speeds (fast, slow, medium) while *La Gallina* plays. Discuss how the music's tempo affects their movements and have them choose a speed that represents the hen.

Listen to Respighi's The Hen:

The Australian Chamber Orchestra

https://youtu.be/mzldQey0F5Q?si=9qFIOIS_cNI2nzhQ