

Lesson 1:

Transforming Words into Music

Overview: In this lesson, students are introduced to the concept that rhythm is a component of their everyday speech. Students are introduced to speech rhythms through musical games that involve their own names and simple sentences. In this lesson, students are introduced to the concept that rhythm is a component of their everyday speech. Students are introduced to speech rhythms through musical games that involve their own names and simple sentences.

Objectives:

- Demonstrate understanding of speech rhythms
- Transform speech rhythms into musical rhythms
- Play musical rhythms based on speech rhythms against a constant pulse.

Activity I. The Name Game

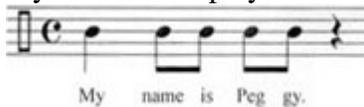
1. Seat students in a circle. Begin a 4-beat repeating pattern using hands and thighs as instruments (body percussion). Use simple to complex examples: pat, pat, pat, pat / clap, pat, pat, pat / pat, pat, clap, clap / pat, clap, snap right, snap left. Ask students to join in - emphasizing keeping the beat steady and counting the groups of four.

2. When all students are comfortable keeping the pattern going, the instructor says his or her name on the first pat of the 4 note grouping. The class echos on the downbeat of the next pattern of 4. Once students are comfortable saying the instructor's name on the downbeat, go around the circle and have each student say their name on the downbeat. Try to keep the beat going, emphasize the student is to say their name on the downbeat. [Note: Some names do not begin with the accent on the syllable (example: Re beka). For these names, place the unaccented syllable just before the first beat and the accented syllable on the beat.]

3. The instructor adds to the rhythm now by saying the words My name is ____ to the rhythm: quarter eighth eighth ____.

4. All together have students substitute their own names. Practice this until the students are confident with it.

5. Instructor explains to the students that language is made up of speech rhythms and that rhythms can be played on musical instruments.



Activity II. The Name Game Using Drums

1. Pass out percussion instruments to each student.
2. Play the name game again substituting instruments for body percussion. Emphasize playing softly so that everyone can be heard. Instead of speaking their name, students will "play" the rhythm of their name on their instrument on the first beat of each group of four.
3. Once all students have played their name to the steady beat, expand the rhythm to "My name is ____". Again pass around the circle with each new "My name is ____" statement beginning on the first beat of each group of four.
4. Create one large composition by having the group play in unison the rhythm for "My name is ____" for each person in the group, ending with one loud bang by all.
5. Instructor explains that musicians play in unison sometimes and take turns other times. In traditional African music, this turn taking is called "Call and Response".



Activity III. Call and Response

1. This time when each student plays the rhythm for "My name is ____" (the call) on their instrument, the group will respond with a new rhythm based on the sentence "Hi there ____" (the response).
2. Take turns letting each member of the group do the "call" on their instrument with the group responding.



Activity IV. Percussion Ensemble Piece

1. Create a percussion ensemble piece by having each student fill in the following

sentence: "I am like a _____ (noun), _____ (adjective) and _____ (adjective). For example: I am like a drum, loud and strong. Select 4 student sentences and transform them into groups of rhythms two measures in length. Divide the class into 4 groups: Group two repeats the rhythm for "I am like a _(drum/noun)___" ; Group three plays the rhythm for __(loud/adjective)_ and _(strong/adjective)_; Group four selects one word to repeat drum; Group one plays all four sentences over the top of the repeating rhythms ([rhythmic ostinato](#)).

2. Let students select instruments that reflect the words in the piece: Example: The word pretty may be set to wind chimes, while the word strong may be set to a loud drum.

3. Allow students to perform the piece and then switch parts so that everyone has the chance to play the solo line (all four sentences).

The image shows two systems of musical notation for a rhythmic ostinato exercise. The first system consists of four staves labeled S. Dr. 1, S. Dr. 2, S. Dr. 3, and S. Dr. 4. S. Dr. 1 has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with the lyrics "I am like a drum". S. Dr. 2 has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with the lyrics "I am like a drum". S. Dr. 3 has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with the lyrics "I am like a drum". S. Dr. 4 has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with the lyrics "I am like a drum". The second system consists of four staves labeled S. Dr. 1, S. Dr. 2, S. Dr. 3, and S. Dr. 4. S. Dr. 1 has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with the lyrics "I am like a drum". S. Dr. 2 has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with the lyrics "I am like a drum". S. Dr. 3 has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with the lyrics "I am like a drum". S. Dr. 4 has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with the lyrics "I am like a drum".

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Assessment for Lesson 1:

- [Rubric Generator](#)
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