

WoodSongs WS5 MIDDLE Lesson Plan



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Title: Bela Fleck, Abigail Washburn and The Banjo

Subject: Language Arts, Music

Length of Lesson: two class periods

Grade Level: 7th & 8th Grade

The topic of this lesson is the banjo. This lesson plan is designed to explore the history of the banjo in Appalachia. This lesson encourages students to reflect upon the various sounds and types of banjo within episode 782 of WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour, which features Bela Fleck and Abigail Washburn. Before watching the episode, there will be a warm up discussion time which will allow students to access prior knowledge. Bela Fleck and Abigail Washburn play several different banjos throughout this one episode of WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour. In addition, this lesson will inspire students to reflect upon making music their own as referenced by Michael Jonathon. Students will reflect upon Bela Fleck and Abigail Washburn's version of "I've Been Working on the Railroad". They have taken a very old song and made it their own. Students will explore the various instruments and sounds and then write down which sounds and songs stood out most to them and why. Students will recall the sounds of the various banjos used throughout their performances. These include the following: Banjo uke, cello banjo, fretless banjo, and open-back frailing banjo.

The activity within this lesson will have students choose and reflect upon a song they like, and then create their own version of this song. Michael Jonathon mentions the love of art and music at the end of the episode. He references an inspirational quote by William Barkley which is as follows: "There are two great days in a person's life, the day we are born and the day we discover why." Ask students to reflect upon this quote as they begin to think about what song they will choose and why they want to choose this song. What does this song mean to you? How does it inspire you? The goal is for the students to not simply choose any song that comes to mind, but rather one that inspires them and has meaning to them. This will ignite the love and passion for creating and making it their own. Michael Jonathon also references in the show making a song your own. Students are encouraged to do this and also reflect on the words of this song and what it means to them. This will allow the students to think about symbolism of words, literal and figurative language.

Connection to Language Arts Standards:

- Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text (music in this lesson)
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings
- Assess how point of view or purpose shapes content and style

- Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words
- Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text (music)
- Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on each other's ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively
- Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally
- Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in a different context, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening
- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate
- Demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression

Connections to Music Standards:

- Improvise variations on given melodies
- Analyze musical forms
- Identify and compare various styles of music (jazz, spirituals/gospel, Broadway musicals, opera, ballads)
- Describe and compare the characteristics and purposes of works of art representing various cultures, historical periods, artists, and/or style
- Identify characteristics of fiction and nonfiction and literary genres (folk literature, poetry, essays, plays, short stories, novels)

Vocabulary within the lesson: Banjo Uke, Fretless Banjo, Cello Banjo, Frailing banjo style, literal language, figurative language

Banjo: <http://www.encyclopediaofappalachia.com/entry.php?rec=32>

Encourage students to develop their own definitions of the banjos based upon the sounds they hear throughout the show and as demonstrated by Bela Fleck and Abigail Washburn and Madison Shepherd, WoodSongs Kid of the Week.

Literal Language: Literal language means exactly what it says

Figurative language: Figurative language uses similes, metaphors, hyperbole, and personification to describe something often through comparison

Description of Lesson/Activities & Procedures:

Before watching the episode, there will be a warm up discussion time which will allow students to access prior knowledge. Questions for this lesson may include: "Have you ever thought about the various types and sounds of one instrument? For instance, have you ever thought about the similarities and differences of one instrument; the guitar, the banjo, drums. Bela Fleck and Abigail Washburn will play several different banjos throughout this one episode of WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour. Other questions may allow students to explore how they feel the dialogue and conversation may help them to better retain information versus learning

about the banjo in only a textbook. This will allow them to get excited about what they are about to hear and allows the teacher the opportunity to let them know there are fun conversations and laughs shared throughout the episode. Students will then watch episode 781 of WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour featuring Bela Fleck and Abigail Washburn.

This lesson will inspire students to reflect upon making music their own as referenced by Michael Jonathon. For instance, Bela Fleck and Abigail Washburn's version of "I've Been Working on the Railroad". They have taken a very old song and made it their own. Students will explore the various instruments and sounds throughout the show. In addition, students will recall the sounds of the various banjos used throughout their performances. These include the following: Banjo uke, cello banjo, fretless banjo, and open-back frailing banjo.

The activity of this lesson will have students choose and think about a song they like, and then create their own version of this song. Michael Jonathon reflects upon the love of art and music at the end of the episode. He references an inspirational quote by William Barkley to begin the activity: "There are two great days in a person's life, the day we are born and the day we discover why." Ask students to reflect upon this quote as they begin to think about what song they will choose and why they want to choose this song. What does this song mean to you? How does it inspire you? The goal is for the students to not simply choose any song that comes to mind, but rather one that inspires them and has meaning to them, because this will ignite the love and passion for creating and making it their own. What instruments will you include? Will you slow it down? Will you turn it into more of a folk song or ballad? Will it be acoustic? Michael Jonathon references in the show making a song your own. Students are encouraged to do this as they create their own version of a song. For the purpose of this class, they will write down their ideas. Ideas may be expanded upon in the coffeehouse, or if teachers wish to extend the lesson, and students may then actually perform their songs and/or explain their version of the song and why they've chosen to create their version of it. The overall goal is for student's to select a song that has meaning to them, and then make it their own, as demonstrated by the artists in the episode of WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour.

Materials/Media Needed:

- Access to computer/iPad to listen to song students choose and also to explore various instrument sounds
- Also, students may research other songs in which artists have made a song more of their own version and their own unique sound.

Rubric & Guidelines:

Demonstrates an understanding of artistic and musical expression	<i>Shows an enriched and strong understanding of the episode of WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour and is able to participate and recount main points from the episode.</i>	<i>Shows an understanding of the episode.</i>	<i>Shows somewhat of an understanding of the episode but main points are not clear.</i>	<i>Does not seem to understand the connections the episode is portraying through music and artistic expression.</i>
Demonstrates an understanding of creatively creating their own song	<i>Understanding is clear of how the episode connects to creating their own song</i>	<i>Is able to somewhat make the connection of information from the episode to creating their own version of their chosen song</i>	<i>Demonstrates an understanding of musical and art expression demonstrated in the episode, but not entirely connecting it to creating their own song</i>	<i>An understanding of the episode is not evident.</i>
Song is designed creatively and in a way that will demonstrate meaning	<i>Very well</i>	<i>Fairly well</i>	<i>Needs extra guidance</i>	<i>Exhibits little to none of the desired goal</i>
Stays on Task while designing own version of song	<i>Stays on task all (100%) of the time.</i>	<i>Stays on task most (99-90%) of the time.</i>	<i>Stays on task some (89%-75%) of the time.</i>	<i>Stays more off task than on task.</i>