

TEACHER'S NOTES

UNIT: The Concert in the Woods

Katharine and Kevin Hamel
Illustrated by Kate Brown

About the Unit

In this unit, children read the on-line story *The Concert in the Woods*. They identify simple percussion instruments featured in the story. They explore a range of classroom instruments and everyday objects played through striking, shaking, scraping etc. Children create a simple 'graphic' or 'picture score' recording the order in which instruments and sound makers are to be played. They follow this in their re-telling of the story. This might be extended by creating a story map to reflect the sequence of events in the narrative.

Children recognise, explore, and work with, rhyming patterns in the story *The Concert in the Wood*, linking sound and spelling patterns and discriminating, reading and spelling words with initial consonant clusters

The Concert in the Woods

The story makes connections with Pat Hutchins' *The Surprise Party*. In Hutchins' story, Rabbit is going to have a party. Instead of sending out written invitations to his animal friends, he passes on the message through word of mouth. Mishearing results in much amusement and opportunities to explore rhyme, etc.

In *The Concert in the Wood*, the Fox gives orders for the animals to collect in the woods to sing together. Unfortunately, the message gets hopelessly confused as it passes from creature to creature. Sure enough, the animals meet together in the woods on time, but armed with a range of instruments to 'ring', 'ding', 'shake', 'scrape' etc.

Eventually, Fox saves the day by deciding on an order in which instruments play, and by conducting the concert himself.

The story provides possibilities for musical activities with Early Years children.

These may include:

- Exploring effective ways of playing instruments and soundmakers

- Listening to, comparing and selecting different sounds
- Describing sounds and ways of playing instruments
- Sorting and classifying instruments
- Agreeing on, and recording, an order in which instruments are to be played
- Keeping to a steady pulse signalled by a 'conductor'
- Learning and practising some simple instrumental techniques

The following introductory activity might be helpful:

Sit children in a circle around a selection of instruments and soundmakers. Pass these around in turn, encouraging children to find different ways of playing them. Encourage descriptive language from children as they explore the instruments. Responses might relate to the qualities of sounds (*tinging, fizzy, scratchy*) or to how sounds are made (*shaking, hitting, scraping, etc.*). Prioritise careful listening at all times. Introduce each player with the following (or similar) rhyme, to be whispered, spoken or sung by everyone.

*Here's a (triangle) (Kate) has found
Find a way to make it sound*

Making simple musical instruments can be a very useful learning experience. The following rhyme might prove helpful as children share their instruments.

*Now let's see what _____'s made
Can s/he show us how it's played?*

Ringers and dingers

Fox's invitation to sing is confused with 'ring' and 'ting'.

- Encourage children to consider other onomatopoeic words describing the sound of instruments
- Ask the children to select sound makers that 'ring', 'ding', 'ping' or 'ting' when they are sounded.

Do children think these words describe long or short sounds?

Possible sound makers might include an old school bell, a chime bar, triangle, finger cymbal, etc.

- Try suspending metal objects like spoons, etc. and tapping them with a metal rod.
- Can children make the sounds of 'ringers and dingers' with their voices?

Drummers and strummers

The animals confuse 'hum' with 'drum' and 'strum'.

- Encourage children to try out found objects that might be played like drums.

These could be cardboard and plastic boxes, a table-top, tins and cardboard tubes with close fitting plastic tops, etc. The quality of sound alters according to where the resonating surface is struck. Try striking in the middle/on the rim etc.

- Show the children a guitar, and discuss how the sound is made

Children might make simple strumming instruments from elastic bands stretched over small boxes, etc.

Shakers and scrapers

Various shaken instruments, or *rattles*, are usually easy to find or make. Natural rattles include dried seed-pods and gourds. Children could make their own shakers with different fillings (rice, lentils, etc). Draw attention to differences in sound, and ask children to compare and describe these. Play games where children have to guess what is inside the shaker.

Simple scraped instruments include notched sticks and the guiro, often shaped like a fish.

Can children make a guiro 'sound like a frog'?

The Concert in the Woods

Fox outlines the order in which singers, hummers and instrumentalists are to be heard.

This provides an opportunity to make flashcards with younger children, or a graphic or 'picture' score.

Flashcards depict instruments or sound makers to be 'tinged', 'drummed', 'shaken', etc. They will be held up during the performance so that different groups of players know when it is their turn to perform.

Alternatively, a large 'graphic score' may be prepared by older children on a number of sheets of paper joined together. This should clearly show the order in which sound makers will be heard, and should be read from left to right

The concert ends with a song,

This provides an opportunity to compose a class song with the children based around a familiar melody. This should describe the sounds to be heard in the concert.

e.g. *The Wheels on the Bus*

The bells in the wood go ring ring ring

Ring ring ring, ring ring ring

The bells in the wood go ring ring ring

All day long

The final verse is, of course, hummed!