

I am the Music Man

Explore instruments with your children!
Liz Rhodes shows how this can be done
with this exuberant book in a Year 2 class

Learning objectives

- Learning about music and instruments.
- Using adjectives and knowing their opposites.
- How sound is made and transmitted.
- Know how the ear works.
- Onomatopoeia.
- Calligrams.

You will need

- A big book copy of *I am the Music Man*.
- As many as possible of the following: piano, saxophone, drum, xylophone, violin, trombone, triangle, guitar, recorder, cymbals and tambourine. Failing the real thing, try to get a big picture of each instrument so that the children can see what makes it work.
- Some rice.
- Copies of a diagram of the ear.
- Model of the ear.
- A video or DVD of Benjamin Britten's *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*.
- Lots of boxes, plastic bottles, rice, dried beans and peas, string, sellotape, glue paper.

DAY ONE

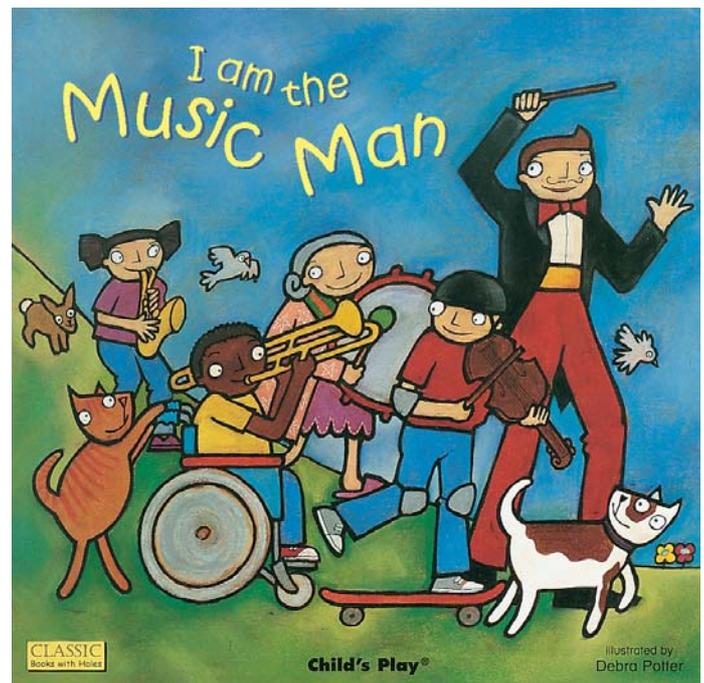
Shared reading

Introduce the book by showing the children the title page. What instruments can they identify? What is the music man doing? Show the back cover, which has the song of the music man printed on it. Do they know what the music notes show?

Talk about how if the notes go up on the lines, the sounds get higher in pitch. Demonstrate this by singing the first verse with them. It can be helpful if you show the notes' movements by holding your hand horizontally and moving it up with a 'chopping' action if the sound goes up, and down if it goes down. This also helps to give the children the idea of a conductor, who keeps everyone singing and playing together. When the children have learned each verse they can mime the movements used to play each instrument.

Have as many of the instruments available as possible. Explain that they are delicate and need to be handled carefully. Demonstrate with the tambourine that if you use it gently, it makes a lovely sound, while if you thump it, it doesn't sound so good. Each day when you are singing the book let different children have a selection of percussion instruments so that they can get used to keeping time.

Sing through the whole book (except for the right hand side of the spread featuring the trombone – keep that ostentatiously paper clipped to the next page until Friday!) and tell the children that each day you will feature a different instrument. Today discuss the piano and saxophone. Talk about the portability of instruments. The saxophonist is



carrying hers on her back in a case. Pianists don't take their own pianos with them, but have to play one that is already in the place where they are playing.

Talk about large, small, light and heavy. Both pianos and saxophones are versatile and can be used for all kinds of music. Saxophones are part of the brass section of the orchestra. Do the children know any other brass instruments? What kinds of music do the children know about? For example: pop, classical, jazz or folk.

Talk about different instruments. The other sorts of instrument you blow, but are not made of brass, are called wind instruments, such as: the recorder, oboe, clarinet, flute and bassoon.

Why are fingers important in music? They help us to find the notes. With a piano or a brass instrument, notes are already there, on stringed instruments you have to make the string longer or shorter to find the right note. You can make a piano play louder or softer by pressing hard or lightly with your fingers; with a brass instrument you make it louder by blowing more strongly. It would be great if you could play sections of *Young Person's Guide to the*

Orchestra during the week, as this shows most of the instruments being played.

Word level

Look at word opposites. Write on the board: light, large, loud, long, low. Ask the children to think of words that mean the opposite. Sometimes there will be more than one, for instance the opposite of 'light' could be 'dark' or 'heavy'.

Independent activity

Write the names of different instruments on the board and ask the children to choose two of them to go with words in the 'opposites' list, for example, a heavy piano or a small drum. Ask them to write their pairs of words down and draw pictures of what they have written.

Plenary

Share the words and pictures the children have made. Ask them why we use describing words.

DAY TWO

Shared reading

Sing through the book again, repeating the actions and finger-pointing the words to reinforce left-right directionality. Tell the children that when they are singing, they

are using one of the most versatile instruments there is – their voices. Voices can do loud, soft, high, low. Try to sing the verse softly and then the chorus loudly.

Go back to the double page spread featuring the drum. Tell the children that it is a percussion instrument (like the piano) because it is hit when you play it. Percussion instruments can also be shaken, like maracas.

You can demonstrate how sound is made by putting some grains of rice on the surface of a drum. When you hit it, the rice will vibrate in the same way as the air vibrates to carry sound. The ear has a membrane (the eardrum) which is tight like a drum and the sounds vibrate against that. Brainstorm other percussion instruments (piano, tambourine, triangle, cymbals). Ask the children what the animals in the book are doing (listening). How does it make them feel? (Happy.)

Word level

Ask the class to think of some words that describe or make sounds and write them on the board.

Independent activity

Show the children an enlarged copy of the ear diagram and say that they are going to label their own copies. Do the labelling on the large copy. You can restrict the labels to earlobe, eardrum, ear bones, cochlea and nerve taking sounds to the brain. Explain that all these pick up vibrations in the air and pass them from one to another. If you had a model of the ear, that would be ideal. Now the children can label their diagrams.

Plenary

In preparation for tomorrow's session, which will be about

onomatopoeia, ask the children to use the sound words on the board appropriately, for example: SHOUT, whisper, CRASH!, *sing*.

DAY THREE

Shared reading

Go through the song again, and return to the pages featuring the xylophone. Ask the children what part of the orchestra this belongs to (percussion again). Show them that each key on a xylophone is a different length and it is that which makes one note higher or lower than the others. The longer the key, the higher the note.

Word level

Remind the children about the sound words they chose yesterday. Explain that onomatopoeia describes a word that sounds like its meaning. Try and think of one for each instrument we have looked at so far. Sometimes they can be made-up words – perhaps 'ching' for a xylophone.

Independent activity

Using the words you have harvested from the children, both sound words and onomatopoeia, get them to write them as calligrams, so that the word looks like what it is. So 'bang', 'crash' and 'shout' are going to look big and noisy, whereas 'whisper', 'rustle' and 'flutter' will be altogether less bold. Divide an A4 page into four or six, depending on ability, and ask the children to fill each space with one chosen word.

Plenary

Share the children's work and draw attention to any particularly striking examples.

DAY THREE

Shared reading

Sing through the book, remembering to sing the verse softly and the chorus loudly.

Turn back to the spread about the violin. This is a stringed instrument. Others are (going from large to small) double bass (played standing up), cello (played sitting down, between the knees), viola (like a violin only bigger and playing lower notes). These are all stroked with a bow, which is made of wood and horsehair or nylon. They can be plucked too.

Guitars, ukuleles, banjos, harps and lutes are also stringed instruments. How do we make different notes on stringed instruments? By changing the length of a string with our fingers.

Word level

Start to compile a list of musical words we have learned during the week. Do a brainstorm for each instrument – its name, parts and the kind of sound it makes, which section of the orchestra it belongs to, portable or not-portable, what it's made of.

Independent activity

Ask the children to work independently or in pairs to make a musical instrument. What sort of thing do they think would be easy to make and satisfying? Do they want to make something that works or something that looks like the instrument? Remind them that most percussion instruments need a stretched membrane or something that rattles; stringed instruments need – strings, which can be shortened by pressing your finger on them.

Plenary

Have a look at what everyone has produced and, where possible, play the instruments.

DAY FIVE

Shared reading

Your final chance to sing the book. Have a special look at the trombone page. The trombone is a brass instrument. Can the children work out how it makes different notes? The slider makes the tube

which the air goes through longer (lower note) or shorter (higher note). Now ask the children 'who can play music?'. Anyone. The people in the book are old, young, black, white, male, female, able, disabled. And where can you play music? Open up the paper clipped pages. Anywhere! The old lady is on the bed, the saxophonist is playing for a dancing dog, the xylophonist is playing with his friend who has a recorder, the trombonist is in the bath (does he blow bubbles?), the violinist is playing with his trumpeter girlfriend and the pianist is playing a dance for the lady and the rabbit. And they are all having fun. Why do people make music? Because they want to be happy and to express themselves.

Word level

On the final page we can see some instruments which haven't been featured in the book, so make a quick list of these and work out which part of the orchestra they belong to.

Independent activity

On the board write 'I would like to play a ... in [or] on ...'. Model a few examples and then ask each child to write the sentence, filling in the gaps (the more outlandish the better) and to draw a picture to go with their writing.

Plenary

Have a look at everyone's work and ask why they made their choices. Ask the children what they can remember from the week's work and what they enjoyed most.

5to7

I am the Music Man illustrated by Debra Potter, published by Child's Play. ISBN 1846430097 © Child's Play