

Listening to Music

In I.S. music classrooms

What is the ultimate goal
of music listening in a
music education
context?

*To enable students to
experience music more richly.*

How do we do this?





Traditional approach:

Choose a widely approved ‘masterpiece’ and help students analyze it using the elements of music.

Another approach...

- First, identify a piece that will enable students to have a rich listening experience:
 - Music that will *reward* their engaged listening.
- *Where to start?*
 - Music that has rewarded *your* engaged listening.
- *Why?*
 - With any luck, your excitement and enthusiasm about the piece will be contagious
 - You are going to have to spend time with the piece, so you may as well choose something you like
 - ***Caveat:*** Students may not like your choice, and that can hurt...ask them to be gentle when you share your music.



Wait!

- Why not start with the students' music?
 - You could do that.
 - My preference is to start with my music, to model the process, *then* to invite them to share theirs.
 - It's also a chance to, perhaps, broaden their listening.
 - ***Caveat:*** It does, however, need to be something they can relate to...but you can help them relate to it.



On a piece of paper...

- List 1 or 2 pieces of music that have rewarded your engaged listening.
- List 1 or 2 things you notice in/find interesting in/like about your piece: “*Ways in.*”
- Think of strategies *to get your students to notice* what you have noticed.
 - ***Hint:*** Think of times when someone helped *you* find a “way in” to a piece of music—helped you ***connect*** to it.

strategies for helping students find *a way in*

- show them music notation and point out something interesting,
 - *e.g., ground bass, ostinato*
- describe what is going on in the piece
 - *(structurally, rhythmically, melodically, harmonically, emotionally)*
- tell a story about the piece's meaning or why it was written
 - *OR what it represents or evokes for YOU*

strategies for helping students find *a way in*

(continued)

- ask them to move to the music in a way that highlights a feature,
 - *e.g., put your hands up every time you hear...*
 - the violin; a new instrument enter; the chorus, etc.
- ask them to draw what they hear going on,
 - *e.g., draw something to represent rising and falling energy or tension*
- ask them to write down ideas/ lyrics that capture their attention, or resonate

sample activity 1: moving with the time signature

- ‘Everything’s All Right’ from *Jesus Christ Superstar* by Andrew Lloyd Weber and Time Rice
 - Group A walks for 5 beats then pauses for 5 beats
 - Group B pauses for 5 beats then walks for 5 beats
- ‘Mess Is Mine’ by Vance Joy
 - Group A walks for 7 beats then pauses for 7 beats
 - Group B pauses for 7 beats then walks for 7 beats
 - At ‘hold on darling’ switch between walking and pausing every 4 beats



sample activity 2: describe what you hear

- 'Fugue' from *A Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* by Benjamin Britten
 - Write down the different instruments in order as you hear them come in
 - Stand up when it sounds like a King is walking into the room



piccolo, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, violin, viola, cello, bass, harp, horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba, percussion

sample activity 3: write a response

- *'Castle on a Hill'* by Ed Sheeran
 - Write a haiku about your experiences of growing up
 - 5 syllables
 - 7 syllables
 - 5 syllables
 - Feel free to use words/ideas/phrases from the song



some things stay with me
I don't always remember
why they mean so much

sample activity 4: watch a graphic representation

- *Rite of Spring* by Igor Stravinsky
 - Watch and enjoy!
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02tkp6eeh40&frags=pl%2Cwn>
 - graphical score 2:41-4:38
- *Water Song* brought forth by Mashkoonce Day
 - Create your own (static) graphic representation



Brought forth by Mashkoonce Day,
Wasaw Wahzoo Banaise Dodem
(Condor Clan)

Performed by Doreen Day,
Waubanewquay (Marten Clan)

Doreen and her grandson, Mashkoonce,
give permission for everyone to sing this
song...

Sing it to the water every day.

Nibi, Gizaagi'igo
Water, we love you

Gimiigwechiwenimigo
We thank you

Gizhawenimigo
We respect you

Epiphany

Sometimes the thing *you* help students find as a way in to the music will not be the most important thing *they* find—it may just serve as a doorway to enter, so that they can find what is meaningful to *them*.

Another Epiphany...

Sometimes it's OK to just share something you like.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5neft4S0nr0>

Ukiuq

by The Jerry Cans