



A WORLD FROM MUSIC: An Idea-Generating Lesson Plan By Teaching Artist Mindy A. Early

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GOALS: to use music to imagine characters, settings, and plot; to widen students' story-crafting lens to include stories outside of their immediate world; to introduce tone and mood as part of a play.

MATERIALS: A device that plays sound, at least ten tracks of instrumental music that students are unlikely to be familiar with, chalkboard or chart paper, pens and paper for writing.

WARM-UP: Imagining Characters from Sound

Round 1 - To start thinking in terms of creating through music, as a piece of instrumental music is playing, students are asked one by one **who** (character) springs to mind when they hear that piece of music. Students are encouraged to think about character *types*, rather than a specific person. (Example: "An old woman praying" instead of "My Nana.") The goal is not to duplicate ideas – all answers will be cataloged on a piece of chart paper for all to see. If a student needs to pass, this is absolutely fine. *Note: if the piece of music suddenly shifts in tone, the student should imagine with what is playing when it's their turn!*

Round 2 - Next, a second piece of music is played. This time the students will be asked to think not only **who** matches this piece of music, but what that character is **doing** (action) *and/or* **where** they are (setting). (Example: A witch mixing a potion in her kitchen.) Again, the goal is not to duplicate ideas, and all answers will be written on chart paper for all to see.

Note: The lists of settings and characters can be kept and hung on the wall so that students can turn to them for additional ideas if they need an idea.

MAIN ACTIVITY - Plot to the Music

Round 1 - As a Class

Next, the class is asked to vote between two pieces of instrumental music. As a group, the class is asked to brainstorm possible character/action/setting ideas that could fit that piece of music. Choosing one, the class creates a **four sentence plot summary** of that story using the following prompt:

- FIRST** – CHARACTER A is where doing what?
- NEXT** – CHARACTER B enters bringing what problem (**conflict**) with him or her?
- THEN** – CHARACTERS A reacts to that conflict in what way?
- LAST** – CHARACTER A or B makes what decision?

With this outline as a guide, step by step the class will translate their scene from plot to play, with the teaching artist facilitating this process.

Round 2 - As an Individual

Students are asked to return to take out a pen and paper. As a group, the class is asked to vote on one last piece of instrumental music. Using the selected piece of music as a point of inspiration, students write their own four sentence plot summary inspired by the music.

(Over)

SHARING/REFLECTION

At least three student volunteers will be asked to share their plot summaries. To check for understanding, after each summary the rest of the class is asked if there is a character relationship, conflict and setting present in the plot summary. Finally, students are asked to reflect on their experience using music as inspiration – *is there a discovery they made today that had never occurred to them before?*

HOMEWORK or ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY IF TIME PERMITS

Just as the full class translated the class-generated plot summary into a scene, each student is ask to take their personal plot summary and craft the first scene of a play.