



Environmental Orchestra

Overview: *This lesson encourages students' awareness of the world by reproducing the sounds of insects, birds and weather.*

Theme: Environmental Music

Grade Level: K - 5

Concept: Environments

Time needed for lesson: 45 minutes

Objective: In this activity children dramatize an environment through sound by becoming an "orchestra."

Essential Question: Will students understand the relationship between environmental sounds and a "real" orchestra?

Preparation for lesson: Students should go outdoors during a rain shower and listen to the sound of rain and also focus on any bird and insect sounds. If this is not possible, play an environmental CD for children featuring these sounds. Introduce children to the concept of an orchestra (what it is and what it does). A good book that introduces this subject is *Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin* by Lloyd Moss. This is also an excellent resource for phonemic awareness.

Lesson Activities:

1. Inform the class that they are going to participate in a special orchestra.
2. Sitting in a circle, the students are divided into 3 sections representing rain, birds and insects.
3. Conduct several sessions until children are comfortable with their roles by practicing ways to produce sounds, loudness and softness, etc. Compare these sessions to the rehearsals of a real orchestra.
4. Conduct the "orchestra" so that some sections get louder and softer at specified intervals. Point to a section and raise your hand; that section should get louder. When you lower your hand, it should get softer. If you raise or lower both your hands, everyone should get louder or softer.
6. Sections switch roles so that everyone has a chance to "play" all three sounds. The students take turns being the "conductor."
7. After the concert is over, encourage students to share the feelings they experienced and what they imagined while playing.

“Rain shower” effect:

To produce the effect of a rain shower beginning, becoming harder, and then gradually decreasing:

- Rub palms together back and forth.
- Clap hands together softly and slowly and then gradually increase in volume and speed.
- Slap thighs (heavy rain)
- Stamp feet on the ground (downpour)
- Slap thighs (reverting to heavy rain)
- Clap hands together loudly and rapidly, gradually decreasing the volume and speed.
- Rub palms together, gradually stopping altogether.

Bird and insect sounds:

“Birds” can produce whistling, tweeting, hooting, screeching, and cawing sounds.

“Insects” can make chirping, buzzing, humming, clicking, and whirring sounds.

Extension of the lesson: Encourage children to think of other environmental sounds their “orchestra” can produce. For older students, you can introduce the musical terms involved in this activity: dynamics, forte, piano, crescendo, decrescendo, form.

Materials needed: Outdoor space for listening to the environment or environmental CD’s and *Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin* by Lloyd Moss.

Vocabulary: wind, rain, thunder, environment, orchestra, conductor, onomatopoeia: tweeting, hooting, screeching, cawing, chirping, buzzing, humming, clicking, whirring, musical terms: dynamics, forte, piano, crescendo, decrescendo, form and timbre (tone color).



Benchmarks:*Science:*

The student observes, classifies and describes the sensory attributes of objects according to taste, smell, hearing, touch and sight.

Language Arts:

Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies for reading and responding to a variety of literacy texts.

- Participates in independent and group reading experiences.

Demonstrates competence in speaking and listening.

- Listens and responds to oral directions.
- Listens attentively to books read aloud.

Music:

Language of Music:

- Identify elements of music: tone color (sounds from nature or the environment), form, dynamics

Music Expression:

- Participate in music by singing, chanting, etc.

Whole child:

Thinking/Cognition: The students have to be aware of sounds that are being produced all around them and apply that knowledge into their own sounds.

Feelings/Emotions: This activity definitely requires patience in listening and an initial curiosity of the world outside you.

Doing/Physical: Each student is clapping, slapping, stomping, etc.

Creating/Intuition: The students interpret and create their own sounds for the environment.

Teacher Assessment: Yes Somewhat No

Did the student participate in the activity? 1 2 3 4 5

Did the student wait for their “part” to be signaled by the conductor? 1 2 3 4 5

Did the student comprehend the relationship between the environmental orchestra and a “real” orchestra? 1 2 3 4 5

For older students:

Did the student understand and use the correct musical terms when needed? 1 2 3 4 5

Was the student able to understand the term; onomatopoeia and give examples? 1 2 3 4 5

Student Assessment: Yes Somewhat No

I enjoyed this activity. 1 2 3 4 5

I liked listening to the rain and the birds and the insects. 1 2 3 4 5

I felt like I did a good job making environmental sounds. 1 2 3 4 5

