RESTS: SOMETIMES MUSIC IS SILENCE

CURRICULUM

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WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

This curriculum guide is designed to prepare, reinforce and extend learning concepts and ideas from the Class Notes video Rests: Sometimes Music Is Silence.

The information and standards-based activities in this guide are intended to engage students through music making and music listening. We hope you will personalize, modify or adjust content to meet the needs of your unique classroom.

Rests: Sometimes Music Is Silence is packed full of musical concepts and ideas. This curriculum does not fully explore every element included in the video, but rather focuses on a few key areas.

PREPARING TO WATCH THE VIDEO

Just as literacy teachers use prereading strategies, music teachers can use prelistening and prewatching strategies. This helps students create a mental framework in which to organize new ideas, relate new content to prior knowledge and make connections. What you bring to a listening experience will affect what you hear and take away from that experience.

Listen to a wide variety of music. Preface your listening with a few remarks about how all music has a combination of sounds and silence. Together with students, observe and comment on those combinations of sounds/silence.

Here are a few good examples to use for this purpose. All tracks can be found on the Class Notes. Rests: Sometimes Music Is Silence Lesson Plan Audio page.

› The first four minutes or so of Symphony No. 38 in D Major, K. 504, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
› Select movements from Musical Toys, Sofia Gubaidulina
› The first few minutes of Waltz Fantasy, Mikhail Glinka

Preview concepts, symbols and vocabulary contained in the video. The video uses a lot of terminology. If students aren’t well-versed in time signatures or note values, emphasize the overarching concept that music includes sound and silence. The visuals will communicate the idea that there are different symbols to indicate how long those periods of silence should last. Below are several terms and concepts you may want to cover or review before watching.

› Musical score – a written musical composition
› Notes – symbols indicating sound in music
› Rests – symbols indicating silence in music
› Time signature (4/4) – a symbol indicating four beats per measure, in which a quarter note receives one beat

Note and rest symbols included in the video:

› Whole note/whole rest
› Half note/half rest
› Quarter note/quarter rest
› Eighth note/eighth rest
REFORCE IDEAS AND CONCEPTS FROM THE VIDEO THROUGH ACTIVE LEARNING

The following experiential activities are designed to support student comprehension of ideas presented in the Rests video. Some activities are geared for younger students, others are geared for older students or those who have a more sophisticated understanding of music literacy. Select and modify activities according to the needs of your students.

1. Sing “Bingo.”

Clearly, this activity is most appropriate for the younger set, and early elementary students might even consider this song to be “too young” for them. However, adding claps in the place of previously sung words gives students a strong sense of the “space” a rest occupies in a song or piece of music.

Adding a visual accompaniment with quarter rest symbols is especially effective and helps make the activity more age appropriate.

*There was a farmer who had a dog and Bingo was his name-o,*

\[
\begin{align*}
B & - I - N - G - O  \\
\frac{\text{clap}}{\text{quarter rest}} & - I - N - G - O  \\
\text{quarter rest} & - N - G - O  \\
\end{align*}
\]

And so on. Point along with the students’ singing so that their eyes are tracking with what they are singing and they are in effect “reading” the rests.

Extend this by substituting quarter and eighth notes one at a time for the letter names in “Bingo.”
2. Identify symbols and terms through visual matching.

3. Play Circle the Rest.

Find an excerpt of a score or any notated music and ask students to circle every rest they see. Color code to make sure students can accurately identify each kind of rest. Here's a short excerpt from Symphony No.5, Ludwig van Beethoven.

Quarter Rests – blue
Half Rests – red

4. Play Listen and Signal.

“The Cuckoo in the Depths of the Woods,” from Camille Saint-Saëns’s Carnival of the Animals, is a great piece for cultivating active listening skills. We hear the “cuckoo” (played by the clarinet) in a semi-regular pattern, but occasionally, that cuckoo will rest longer than we think. Listen together with students and ask them to raise their hand each time they hear the cuckoo. Find the music on the Class Notes Rests: Sometimes Music Is Silence Lesson Plan Audio page.
5. Play Poison.

Sing a familiar classroom song. After singing it completely, choose a word to be “poison,” meaning that singers must be silent on that particular word. Add “poison” words and see how far you can get. This develops impulse control and the inner listening skills required to successfully play rests.

Here’s an example with a very simple song. Use your own classroom songs that students know well. The more “automatic” the singing is for students, the harder the game.

Mary had a little lamb, little lamb, little lamb.
Mary had a little lamb, whose fleece was white as snow.

First “poison” word: lamb.

Mary had a little -------, little -------, little -------.
Mary had a little -------, whose fleece was white as snow.

Second “poison” word: had.

Mary ---- a little -------, little -------, little -----------.
Mary ---- a little -------, whose fleece was white as snow.

And so on.

EXTEND LEARNING WITH PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Designed for older or more advanced students, this activity integrates all concepts from the Rests video.

1. Ask students to compose a short melody for an instrument they play or for the voice. Set parameters about what must be included in the composition. Vary the parameters according to the students’ level of proficiency. Here are a few ideas to help set parameters and/or meet specific standards:

a. Require students to utilize all four kinds of rests discussed in the Rests video.

b. Make a rule about the frequency of rests. For example, require students to use at least one rest per measure, or perhaps ask them to use only one rest in the entire composition.

c. If you are studying key signatures, require students to write in a particular key or specify Major or minor modes.

d. Give specific guidelines for time signature, perhaps specifying mixed meter, 5/4, or other complex meters.

e. If you are studying or playing a piece by a certain composer, ask that students write in that composer’s style.

f. Require students to use technology to notate their finished product.
COMPANION CLASS NOTES VIDEOS

The Class Notes video A Look Inside the Score also addresses musical notation and related musical content. It reviews musical symbols related to rests, such as notes, clefs, staffs, dynamic markings, and instrumentation.

To view all the other available Class Notes videos with related curricula, go here.

LEARNING CHECKLIST

☐ I can perform music by responding to notation and active listening.
☐ I can identify repeating patterns while listening to and interacting with a variety of music.