

NAME A STRING INSTRUMENT

LESSON/ACTIVITY PLAN

OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will successfully name the instrumentation of a string quartet.
2. Students will correctly identify violin, viola, and cello by sight and sound.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Start with instrumentation of the traditional string quartet. Create a bulletin board with pictures but no labels. Create instrument name labels separately and ask students to attach labels correctly. Finished product might look like this:



2. Work on visual identification by repeating the first activity with each instrument alone.
3. Move on to aural identification. Find a variety of music with solo violin, viola, cello, or an ensemble piece that prominently features one of those instruments. Here are some suggestions for each instrument:

Violin:

- Felix Mendelssohn: *Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64*
- Jay Ungar: *Ashokan Farewell*
- Nicolo Paganini: *Caprice No. 24*

Viola:

- Arnold Bax: *Viola Sonata in G minor*
- Hector Berlioz: *Harold en Italie*

Violin and Viola:

- W.A. Mozart's [*Sinfonia Concertante*](#), K. 364 features a brilliant "conversation" between the violin and viola. Here's a great performance, with the violin/viola dialogue starting around 2:30.

Cello:

- J.S. Bach: Any of the *Six Suites for Unaccompanied Cello*
- Camille Saint-Saëns "The Swan" from *Carnival of the Animals*
- Edward Elgar: *Cello Concerto in E minor, Op. 85*

EXTENSIONS/MODIFICATIONS/NOTES:

1. Repeat the sequence of activities with any kind of performing ensemble: SATB vocal ensemble, brass quintet, jazz combo, rock band. Take note of any variations in instrumentation of common ensembles.
2. Use the activities—especially the listening/aural identification component—to study any specific piece in greater depth and really hone students' instrument identification skills. A few fun examples to try:
 - a. Steve Reich: *Music for 18 Musicians*
 - b. Darius Milhaud: *La Creation du Monde (Creation of the World)*,
 - c. Igor Stravinsky: *L'Histoire du Soldat (A Soldier's Tale)*
 - d. Franz Schubert: *Trout Quintet*
 - e. Edgar Varèse: *Poème électronique*
 - f. Henry Cowell: *The Banshee**

*The Cowell piece is for solo piano but uses unorthodox techniques. It will challenge students listening skills in a new way.

STANDARDS:

These activities include aspects of the following Minnesota State Standards for the Arts.

1. K–3. 4. Artistic Process: Respond or Critique. 1. Respond to or critique a variety of creations or performances using the artistic foundations. Music. 0.4.1.3.1. Compare and contrast the characteristics of a variety of musical works or performances.
2. Grades 4–5. Artistic Process: Respond or Critique. 1. Respond to or critique a variety of creations and performances using the artistic foundations. Music. 4.4.1.3.1. Justify personal interpretations and reactions to a variety of musical works and performances.



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