

For Music Educators Grades 1-5

Musical Characters

Description

Students will find clues from the story and the music to help them make meaningful inferences about Prokofiev's instrument choices in *Peter and the Wolf*.

Objectives

Students will:

- Identify character traits using context clues from the story.
- Make observations, using the elements of music, about the musical themes in *Peter and the Wolf*.
- Draw inferences about Prokofiev's instrument choices based on clues from the story and the music.
- Compare and contrast their own instrument choices to those of Prokofiev.
- Practice active listening skills.

Standards

Missouri Music Standards

- MU:Re7B.1-5 – Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- MU:Re8A.1-5 – Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Missouri English Language Arts Learning Standards

- R1A – Develop and apply skills to the reading process.
- SL2A – Listen for entertainment.

Illinois Music Learning Standards

- MU:Re7.1.1-4 – Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- MU:Re8.1.1-4 – Construct meaningful interpretations of artistic work.

Illinois English Language Arts Learning Standards

- RL.1-4.3 – Reading Standards for Literature K-5, grades 1-4, strand 3.
- SL.1-3.2-3 – Speaking and Listening Standards K-5, grades 1-3, strands 2 and 3.

Materials

- Story of *Peter and the Wolf* (provided in a separate PDF) or use your favorite picture book
- Recording of the musical themes from *Peter and the Wolf*. There are many options on [YouTube](#) or various [websites](#) where students can access the musical themes on their Chrome Books or other devices. The timings suggested below are taken from Track 1 of RCA Victor's recording with Eugene Ormandy, conductor, and David Bowie, narrator, from a [Spotify Playlist](#):
 - › Bird (0:17 – 0:30) – Played by the Flute
 - › Duck (0:33 – 0:50) – Played by the Oboe
 - › Cat (0:53 – 1:12) – Played by the Clarinet
 - › Grandfather (1:17 – 1:40) – Played by the Bassoon
 - › Wolf (1:44 – 2:02) – Played by three French Horns
 - › Peter (2:06 – 2:26) – Played by the Violins, Violas, Cellos, and Bases
 - › Hunters (2:32 – 2:39) – Played by the Timpani
- *Peter and the Wolf* Character Map (provided below, one per group)
- Pencils (one per group)

Procedures

- Read the story of *Peter and the Wolf* with your students. Discuss how different characters felt and invite students to retell the story through acting, movement, or illustration.
- Explain to students that composer Sergei Prokofiev wrote music to accompany the story of *Peter and the Wolf*. In his piece, each character is represented by a different instrument of the orchestra and has their own musical theme or melody.
- Break students into small groups and provide each group with a *Peter and the Wolf* Character Map. We recommend having at least one group for each of six characters and use the seventh character's map to model for the class.

Procedures continued

- Have each group write down three character traits for their character on their Character Map. For each trait, students should provide context from the story to support their chosen trait. Model for the students first, if needed, before asking students to complete their own Character Maps.
- In their small groups students should write down their musical observations on their Character Map as they listen to their character’s musical theme. If students have access to Chromebooks or other devices, they may listen to their themes in their small groups, rather than as a class. Encourage students to use the elements of music and other musical vocabulary they’ve learned in class when describing the music. For example, the “dissonant” sounds of the French Horns made the Wolf’s theme sound scary. Model this for students first, using one of the characters, before asking students to complete their Character Maps.
- Next, have each group explore the statement, “I wonder why Prokofiev chose the [instrument] to play (the) [character].” Students should use the information they have from their character traits and their musical observations to develop their answer.
- Then have them answer the following question: “Which instrument would I have chosen to play (the) [character] and why?”
- Have each group share their Character Map and their character’s musical theme with the class. Prompt students to share how they think their peers’ instrument choices might influence the mood of the music and how that character might be perceived by the listener.
- For students who may need assistance with writing and vocabulary, complete this activity as a class using only select characters. You may also choose to ask students to act out their traits to the character’s musical theme instead of or in addition to writing them down.

Assessment

Using a six-point rubric:

- Student identified character traits using context clues from the story (1 point).
- Student made observations, using the elements of music, about the musical themes in *Peter and the Wolf* (1 point).
- Student drew inferences about Prokofiev’s compositional choices supported by clues gathered from the story and the music (1 point).
- Students made their own compositional choices (1 point).
- Student demonstrated active listening and focused attention during listening prompts (1 point).
- Student worked cooperatively with their peers (1 point).

Name: _____

Date: _____



Character Map



Bird

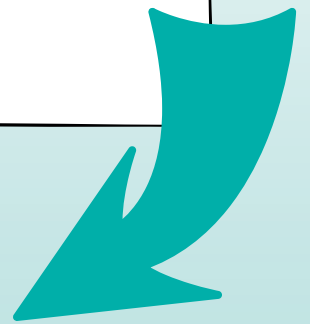
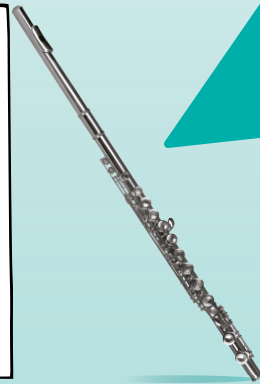
Character Traits

Story Clues



Flute

Musical Observations



I wonder why Prokofiev chose the flute to play the bird?

Which instrument would you have chosen to play the bird and why?

Name: _____

Date: _____



Character Map



Peter

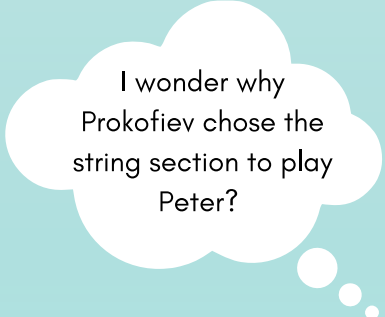
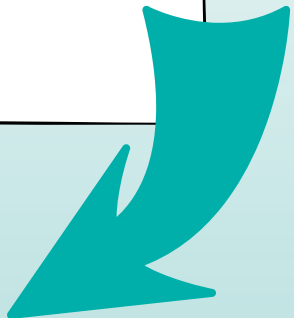
Character Traits

Story Clues



Strings (Violin, Viola, Cello, Bass)

Musical Observations



Which instrument would you have chosen to play Peter and why?

Name: _____

Date: _____

digital
peter
and the
wolf

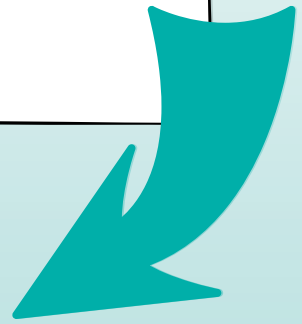
Character Map



Hunters

Character Traits

Story Clues



Timpani

Musical Observations




I wonder why Prokofiev chose the timpani to play the hunters?

Which instrument would you have chosen to play the hunters and why?

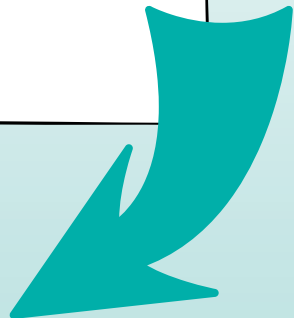
Name: _____

Date: _____

Character Map

 Duck	
Character Traits	Story Clues

Oboe	
Musical Observations	



I wonder why Prokofiev chose the oboe to play the duck?

Which instrument would you have chosen to play the duck and why?

Name: _____

Date: _____



Character Map



Cat

Character Traits

Story Clues



Clarinet

Musical Observations



I wonder why Prokofiev chose the clarinet to play the cat?

Which instrument would you have chosen to play the cat and why?

Name: _____

Date: _____



Character Map



Grandfather

Character Traits

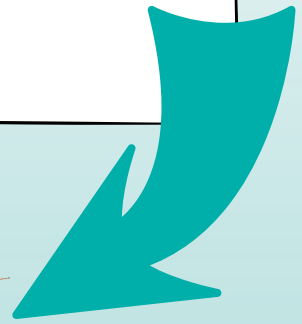
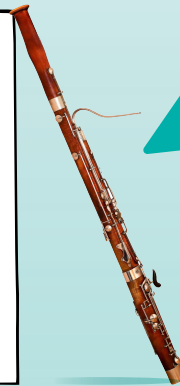
Story Clues

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Bassoon

Musical Observations

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I wonder why Prokofiev chose the bassoon to play Grandfather?

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Which instrument would you have chosen to play Grandfather and why?

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Name: _____

Date: _____

digital
peter
and the
wolf

Character Map



Wolf

Character Traits

Story Clues



Musical Observations

3 French Horns



I wonder why Prokofiev chose three French Horns to play the wolf?

Which instrument would you have chosen to play the wolf and why?
