Lesson 2:
Feelings Mapping

from the **Inspire Creativity Together** sequence

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

As presented at the Inspire Creativity Together workshop,
Missouri Music Educators Association Conference 2025

Missouri Alliance *for* Arts Education
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Description

Students will explore how music can evoke and change emotions over time using an Adjective Circles worksheet based on the Kate Hevner Adjective Circle. They will track their emotional responses and connect specific feelings to the music through active listening. This activity is an entry point to the creative process. It encourages active listening and focused attention and illustrates how music can be a powerful tool for expressing and regulating emotions.

This lesson is adaptable for students in grades K–8. Its intentional flexibility allows teachers to modify the content to best suit their students' needs.

Objectives

Students will:

- Build confidence in their creative capacities.
- Engage their active listening skills.
- Connect music and emotions on a fundamental level.
- Demonstrate (by drawing on their map) their understanding that music is a tool for expressing emotions.

Standards

Missouri Music Learning Standards

- MU: Re8A.K-8a
- MU: Cn10A.K-8a
- MU: Cn11A.K-8a

Materials

- Recordings of short musical excerpts of your choosing. For example, Arturo Márquez's *Conga del Fuego* could be excerpted as follows:
  - Excerpt 1: 1:41-2:35
  - Excerpt 2: 2:35-3:25
  - Excerpt 3: 3:25-4:50
- Colored pencils, crayons, or markers (optional)
- Adjective Circles worksheet, one for each student

This lesson was inspired by an activity introduced to us by retired music educator and SLSO volunteer Terry Gates.

Procedure

- Begin by explaining to students that music often evokes a range of emotional responses as it progresses.
- Hand out an Adjective Circles worksheet to each student. Ensure that students understand the various adjectives they might use to describe their emotional response to music before moving on.
- Tell students they will listen to different excerpts (short selections from a more extensive musical work). After each excerpt, they will pause to reflect and select an adjective(s) that describes the emotions they heard and felt in the music. Encourage them to choose as many adjectives as they like or write their own words if they feel something different. Emphasize that there are NO RIGHT ANSWERS – this exercise is about their perception of the music.

Procedure (continued)

- Play the first short excerpt from your selected piece of music. Use the excerpts provided in the materials section or choose your own. Instruct students to circle the first adjective that comes to mind and then draw lines to each subsequent adjective they choose, creating a "road map" of their emotional journey. It may be helpful to demonstrate this to the class before asking the students to work individually.
- Optional: Have students use a different color for each excerpt. For example, they could use red for the first excerpt, blue for the second, and so on. If you decide to do the extension, this will create a stronger visual for the students.
- After each excerpt, pause for about 30 seconds to give students time to reflect and make notes on their Adjective Circles worksheet. Encourage them to think about how the music made them feel and why they selected the adjectives they did.
- After listening to all the excerpts, invite students to share their feelings map if they feel comfortable. Discuss the various emotional responses and how different excerpts elicited different emotions, highlighting that everyone's experience is unique.

  Leave time for students to reflect on their experience.

  - How did the emotions in the music shift or change?
  - What did you hear in the music, and how did it influence your map of the emotions/adjectives?
    - Who had a similar experience/map?
    - Who had a different experience/map?
  - Did your mood change after listening to the music? How so?
  - Did you wonder about anything while listening to the music?

Extension

This activity lays the groundwork for further artistic creation. Using the "feelings maps" they created on their Adjective Circles worksheet, students can write a story, compose a poem, or create a work of art that communicates the emotions they experienced in the music. When transferring an emotional journey to another art form, use open-ended questions to guide students in visualizing each adjective they've identified. Alternatively, allow the students to focus on a single aspect of their emotional journey for deeper reflection and creative expression.

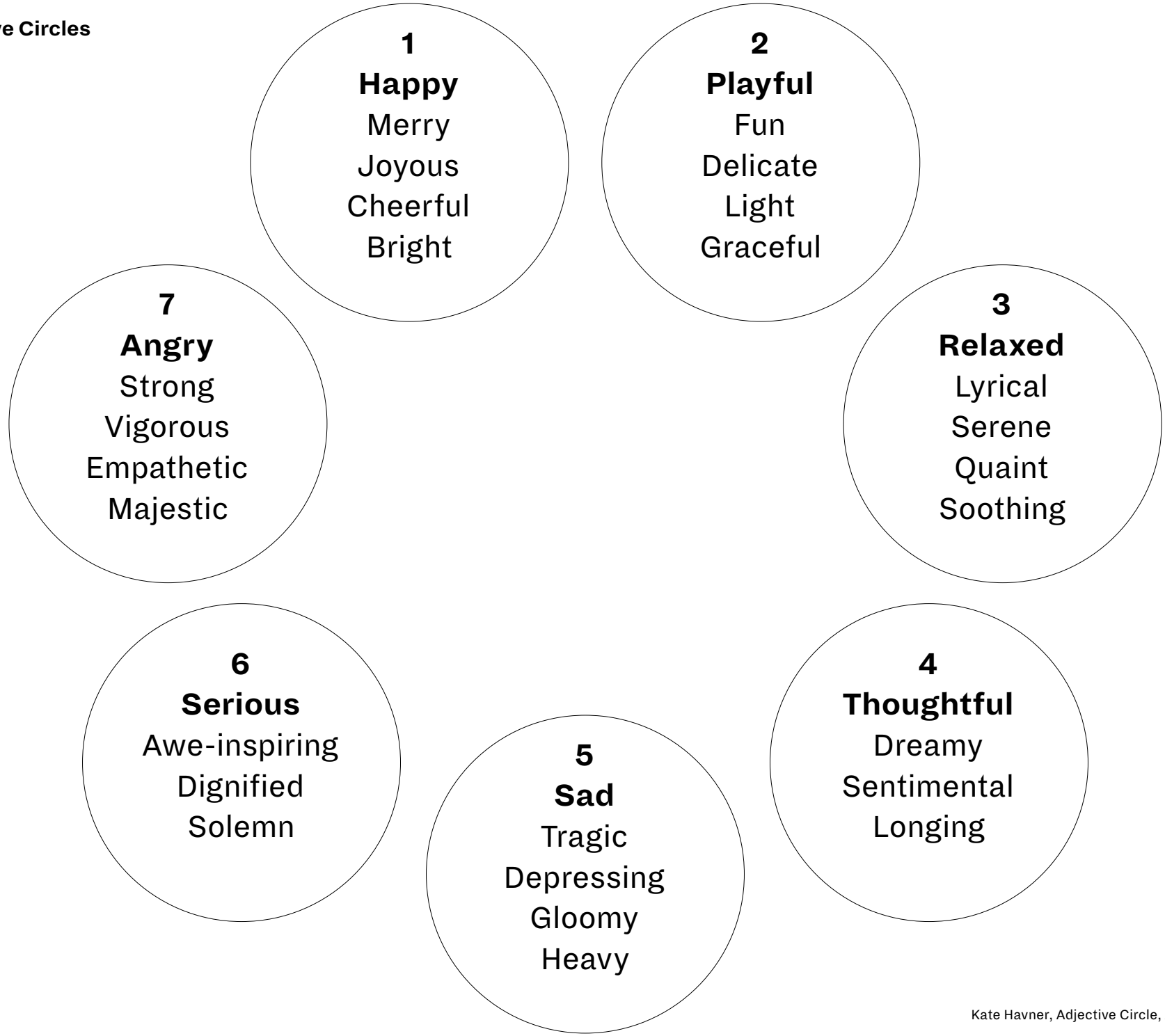
Evaluation

Using a two-point rubric, look for the following. The student:

- Engaged their active listening skills by identifying different emotions evoked by the music and creating a feelings map (Active listening: 1 point).
- Through self-reflection, demonstrated an understanding of how music expresses emotions (Music-emotion connection: 1 point).

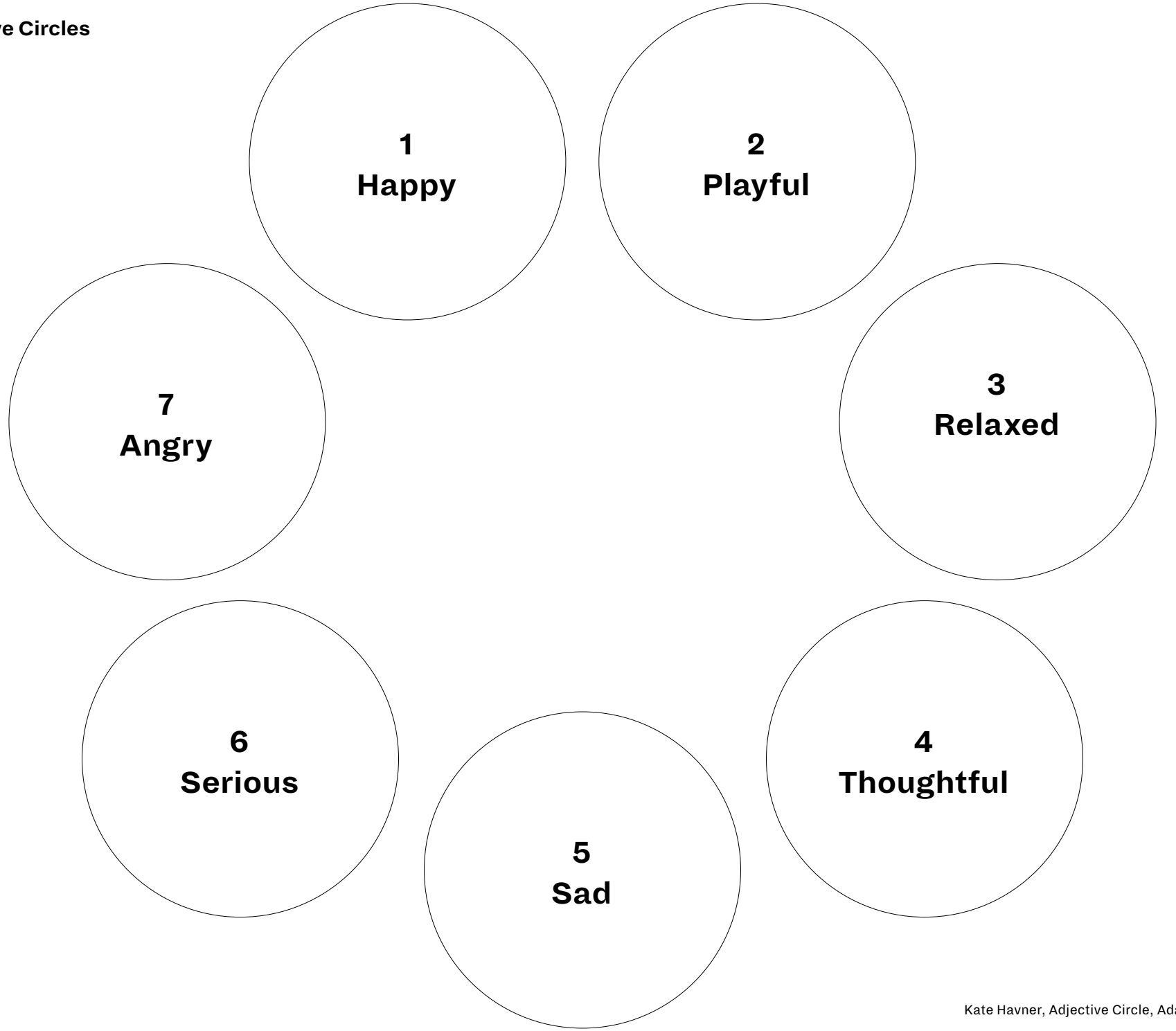
If you enjoy this lesson, extend the fun by participating with your students in the SLSO's Picture the Music

Adjective Circles



Kate Havner, Adjective Circle, Adaptation #1

Adjective Circles



Kate Havner, Adjective Circle, Adaptation #2