Picture the Music

SLSO Learning Lab

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

For Music Educators

This lesson is adaptable for students in grades K–6. Its intentional flexibility allows teachers to modify the content to best suit their students' needs.

Objectives

Students will:

- Understand that music can convey emotion.
- Use emotional vocabulary and music vocabulary to describe a piece of music.
- Respond to the emotion of a piece of music through drawing.

Standards

Missouri Music Learning Standards

- MU: Re7A
- MU: Cn10A
- MU: Cn11A

Missouri Visual Arts Learning Standards

- VA: Cr1A-B
- VA: Cr2A
- VA: Cn10A

Illinois Music Learning Standards

- MU: Re8.1
- MU: Cn10.1
- MU: Cn11.1

Illinois Visual Arts Learning Standards

- VA: Cr1.1
- VA: Cr2.1
- VA: Cn10.1

CASEL Framework

- Self-Awareness: Identifying one's emotions
- Self-Management: Managing one's emotions; identifying and using stress management strategies
- Social Awareness: Taking others' perspectives

Materials

- Device on which to play music from the internet
- Paper and colored pencils, crayons, or markers

Music Selections

Choose any piece of instrumental music for this activity. Start with something that is less than five minutes long. Whichever piece you choose, DO NOT SHARE THE TITLE OF THE PIECE WITH YOUR STUDENTS. Here are some suggestions:

- Aaron Copland, "Hoe-Down" from *Rodeo*
- Edward Elgar, "Nimrod" from *Enigma Variations*
- Dmitry Kabalevsky, *Comedian's Galop*
- Aram Khachaturian, Waltz from *Masquerade Suite*
- Arturo Márquez, *Conga del Fuego Nuevo*
- Jessie Montgomery, *Starburst*
- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro*
- Florence Price, Symphony No. 1, Movement 3: "Juba Dance"
- Camille Saint-Saëns, "The Swan" from *Carnival of the Animals*

Assessment (4-point rubric)
Student successfully:

- Contributed to the discussion about emotion in music. (1 point)
- Demonstrated self-awareness and the ability to communicate their feelings. (1 point)
- Used musical vocabulary. (1 point)
- Drew something as they listened to the musical selection. (1 point)

Extension

Showcase your students' imagination and creativity with Picture the Music. This annual FREE cross-curricular art competition invites students in grades K–6 to discover a piece of orchestral music and respond with paintings and drawings that express creative thought and emotion inspired by the music. Visit slso.org/picture to learn more about Picture the Music and this year's musical selection.



Music can make you feel a lot of different emotions. And it can change your mood! Have you ever listened to fast music to energize yourself or to motivate yourself to do something? Or maybe you've listened to slow, calm music when you needed to relax. It can be fun to listen closely to music and really think about how it makes you feel. Then you can share those feelings by creating art!

Discussion Questions

Think about what types of music make you feel different emotions. For each emotion, try to be specific about why the music makes you feel that way. Can you identify any musical elements—like the volume of the music, its speed, the instruments that are in it, what the melodies sound like, etc.—that make you feel a certain way?

- What music makes you feel happy? Why?
- What music makes you feel calm? Why?
- What music gets you excited? Why?
- What music do you like to listen to if you're feeling sad?

Listen and do nothing else (We know, it's hard!)

First, choose a piece of music. You can try this with any music. But for this activity, find something that doesn't have words and that is less than five minutes long.

If possible, make your room into a calm listening environment. Maybe dim the lights and get comfortable on the floor or in a cozy chair.

Now take a deep breath. Press play on that piece of music. Don't watch the video that goes with it. Don't pay attention to the time bar that tells you when it is going to be over. Close your eyes, if you're comfortable doing that. And while you listen, think about how it makes you feel or what it makes you think of or imagine.

When the music is over, take a deep breath. Now think about your experience.

What did it feel like to listen and do nothing else? Was it hard to focus? Did you start thinking about other things? Did you get sleepy?

Now get a piece of paper and draw a line down the middle of it. On the left side of the paper, write down all the things that the music made you feel or imagine. These could be emotion words (like happy, angry, excited, nervous) or images (like the ocean, a fast car ride, or birds flying through the air) or experiences (like the time I went to the zoo with my friends or the time I got stuck out in the rain).

Then on the right side of the paper, try to think of what elements of the music made you feel those things. Elements could include:

- Tempo – Was it fast or slow, or did it change from one speed to another?
- Dynamics – Was it loud or quiet? Did the volume change during the piece?
- Instrumentation – What instruments were used?
- Melody – Did the melody jump around or was it smooth? Was it high or was it low?

Listen and Draw

Now you're going to listen to that same piece of music again. But this time, you can draw while you listen! Find a piece of paper and some colored pencils, crayons, or markers.



Press play on that same piece of music. And while you listen, start drawing something that matches the emotions you felt the first time you listened. If you thought of an image or an experience, you could draw that. Or you could make *abstract art*: art that isn't a picture of something specific. You get to decide! Just make sure you're thinking about those emotions you experienced while listening to the music.

When the piece is over, stop drawing. Look at your artwork. **Do you think it communicates the emotion you were feeling while listening? If yes, what specifically about your art communicates that emotion? Is it the image itself, or the color, the types of lines you used? If not, what could you add or change?**

Share your drawing with a friend and ask them what emotion they see in your art. Does it match the emotion you were trying to share? Ask them if they have any suggestions for how you could make it match the emotion that you're trying to communicate.

Now you can finish your artwork! Fill the page with your drawing. Add colors with paint or crayons or markers. Or add textures with collage. Have fun! As you add to your artwork, keep in mind those emotions you felt while listening.

How did it feel to get your emotions out through drawing while listening to music?