Peter and the Wolf

SLSO Learning Lab

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

For Music Educators

This lesson is adaptable for students in grades 1–5. Its intentional flexibility allows teachers to modify the content to best suit their students' needs.

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 Learning Standards

- MU: Re7B
- MU: Re8A
- MU: Cn11A

Missouri English Language Arts Standards

- R1A
- SL2A

Illinois Music Learning Standards

- MU: Re7.1
- MU: Re8.1

Illinois English Language Arts Standards

- RL.1-4.3
- SL.1-3.2-3

Materials

- Story of *Peter and the Wolf*, provided on pages 4-5 (or use your favorite picture book version of the story)
- Recording of the musical themes from *Peter and the Wolf*. There are many options on YouTube or various websites where you can access the musical themes. 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 Horns
  - Peter (2:06–2:26) – Played by the Violins, Violas, Cellos, and Basses
  - Hunters (2:32–2:39) – Played by the Timpani
- Peter and the Wolf Character Maps, provided on pages 6-10 below
- Pencils

Assessment (5-point rubric)
Student successfully:

- Identified character traits using context clues from the story. (1 point)
- Made observations, using the elements of music, about the musical themes in *Peter and the Wolf*. (1 point)
- Drew inferences about Prokofiev's compositional choices supported by clues gathered from the story and the music. (1 point)
- Made their own compositional choices. (1 point)
- Demonstrated active listening and focused attention during listening prompts. (1 point)

Music Can Tell Stories!

When a composer has a story to tell, they make musical choices to help the listener imagine the characters, setting, and plot. In Prokofiev's famous piece of music *Peter and the Wolf*, he used a different instrument of the orchestra for each character in the story. Each character also has their own unique melody. Let's meet some of Prokofiev's musical characters!

Read the Story

Read the story of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*.

- Where does the story take place?
- Who are the characters in the story?
- Summarize the story: what happened at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end?

Choose a Character Map

Choose one of the Character Maps below. Using the information in the story of Peter and the Wolf, write down three character traits in the top left box. Next to each trait, in the top right box, write down what you read in the story that supports that character trait.

Listen to the Character's Musical Theme

Now listen to your character's theme. (A link to a recording and timings for each character are provided on the page above.) In the middle box ("Musical Observations") describe your character's theme. Think about the musical elements and use the musical vocabulary you know. For example, is it high or low? Loud or quiet? Slow or fast?

In the boxes below your musical observations, answer the questions:

- Why do you think Prokofiev chose that instrument for that character?
- Do you agree with Prokofiev's choice?
- Which instrument would you have chosen?

Discussion Questions

- Before listening to the other themes, try to predict which instruments Prokofiev will use for each character.
- Think about other animals: zoo animals, animals you see around your neighborhood, or your pets. What instruments could portray each animal? Why?

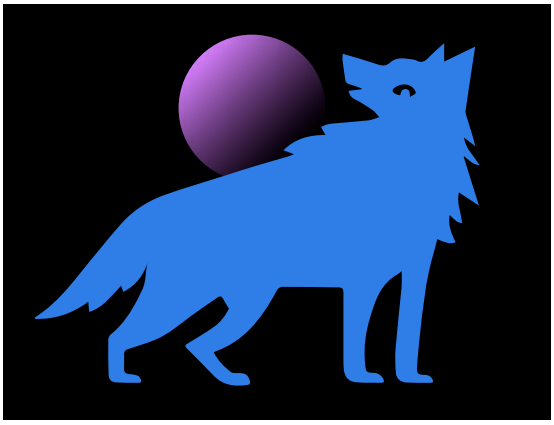


Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953) was born in Russia. He was an only child. His mother was his first music teacher. She gave him piano lessons until he went off to a special music school called a conservatory when he was 13 years old. At the conservatory, he studied piano, composition (or how to write music), and conducting. Sadly, Prokofiev's father passed away while Prokofiev was still in school. Things got tough for Prokofiev and his mother, and Prokofiev had to provide for himself. Fortunately, his hard work began to pay off. During his final year of school, Prokofiev won the highest prize for a student pianist, the Anton Rubinstein Prize, with a performance of his own First Piano Concerto. At the age of 23, Prokofiev graduated from the conservatory and began to work as a pianist, conductor, and composer.

In 1918 Prokofiev chose to leave his home in Russia because of a civil war and went on a concert tour abroad. He traveled to places like Japan, the United States, and Germany (to name a few), and eventually settled in Paris, France. In 1936 Prokofiev moved back home to Russia. While there the Moscow Children's Theater asked him to compose a piece of music for children. He wrote *Peter and the Wolf*: a musical story that introduces children to the instruments of the orchestra, where each character of the story has their own melody played by a distinct instrument.

SLSO Digital Concert: Peter and the Wolf

You can enjoy a free digital concert of the SLSO performing *Peter and the Wolf*! A virtual adventure to the Endangered Wolf Center in Eureka, Missouri, frames the concert. Register for free access to this and other Digital Programs at the SLSO Learning Lab.



The Story of Peter and the Wolf

Early one morning a young boy named Peter opened the gate and went out into the big green meadow. On a branch of a big tree sat Peter's friend, a little bird. "All is safe, all is quiet" chirped the bird merrily.

Just then a duck came waddling over. She was glad Peter had not closed the gate and decided to take a nice swim in the deep pond in the meadow. Seeing the duck, the little bird flew down upon the grass, settled next to her, and shrugged his shoulders:

"What kind of bird are you if you can't fly?" he said. "What kind of bird are you," replied the duck, "if you can't swim?" and she dove into the pond.

They argued and argued, the duck swimming in the pond, the little bird hopping along the shore. When suddenly, something caught Peter's attention. He saw a cat prowling through the tall green grass. The cat thought, The little bird is busy arguing, I'll just grab him...." Quietly, she crept towards him on her velvet paws. "Look out!" shouted Peter. The little bird immediately flew up into the tree while the duck quacked angrily at the cat from the middle of the pond. The cat walked around the tree and thought to herself, "Is it worth climbing up so high? By the time I get there the little bird will have flown away."

Just then Peter's grandfather came out. He was angry because Peter had gone out into the meadow. "It is a very dangerous place," he said. But Peter paid no attention to his grandfather's words. Boys like him are not afraid. Grandfather took Peter by the hand, led him home, and locked the gate behind them.

No sooner had Peter gone, then out of the forest came a great, grey wolf. In a flash the cat climbed up the tree. The duck quacked, but in her excitement, she jumped right out of the pond. No matter how fast the duck tried to run, she couldn't run faster than the wolf. He was getting closer and closer, catching up with her, until... the wolf caught her and with one big gulp, swallowed.

So now, this is how things stood: The cat sat on one branch of the tree. The little bird on another, but not too close to the cat. And the wolf paced round and round the tree looking up at them with mischievous eyes.

In the meantime, Peter stood behind the closed gate watching all that was going on. He knew he needed to help his friends, so he ran home, got a strong rope, and climbed up the high stone wall that surrounded his house. One of the branches of the tree, around which the wolf was still pacing, stretched out over the wall. Grabbing hold of the branch, Peter lightly climbed over onto the tree.

Peter said to the little bird: "Fly down and circle around the wolf's head; but be careful that he doesn't catch you." But the bird got so close, he almost touched the wolf's head with his wings. Startled, the wolf snapped at him from this side and that. Oh, how the little bird did tease the poor wolf! And oh, how the wolf wanted to catch the little bird! But the little bird was much too quick and clever. And the wolf simply couldn't do anything about it.

Meanwhile, Peter made the rope into a lasso, and carefully letting it down, he caught the wolf by the tail and pulled with all his might. Feeling himself caught, the wolf began to jump wildly, struggling to get loose. Peter tied the other end of the rope to the tree, but the wolf's jumping only made the rope around his tail tighter and tighter. Just then hunters came out of the woods following the wolf's trail.

Peter called down from the tree, "Wait! Stop! The little bird and I have already caught the wolf. Will you help us take him to his new home at the Zoo?"

The Story of Peter and the Wolf (continued)

And now, imagine the triumphant procession: Peter at the head, followed by the hunters leading the wolf. And at the end of the procession, Grandfather and the cat. Grandfather unhappily shaking his head and mumbling, “If Peter hadn’t caught the wolf, what then?” And above them all flew the little bird.

Just as the procession was leaving the meadow, something caught their attention. Listen very carefully. Can you hear it? Could it be? No...Yes. Yes, it is! It’s Peter’s friend the Duck, quacking from inside the wolf. Because the wolf, in his hurry, had swallowed her alive.

The End

Character Map

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Name: _____ **Date:** _____



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?

_____

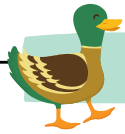
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Character Map

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Name: _____ **Date:** _____



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?

_____

_____

_____

Character Map

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Name: _____ **Date:** _____



Cat

Character Traits

Story Clues

Clarinet

Musical Observations



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

_____

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_____

_____

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

_____

_____

_____

Character Map

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Name: _____ **Date:** _____



Grandfather

Character Traits

Story Clues

Bassoon

Musical Observations



I wonder why Prokofiev chose the bassoon to play Grandfather?

_____

_____

_____

_____

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

_____

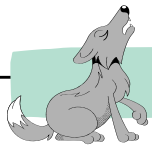
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Character Map

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Name: _____ **Date:** _____



Wolf

Character Traits

Story Clues

3 French Horns

Musical Observations



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

_____

_____

_____

_____

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

_____

_____

_____