

## GEOGRAPHY & MUSIC – Making a Connection

GRADE LEVELS: Elementary (5), Middle School (6-8)

CONTENT CATEGORY: General Music

DESCRIPTION: These four lessons are based on 40 minutes classes. They are designed to provide students a further educational connection with the Virginia Chamber Orchestra program entitled *Wonders of Geography: A Musical Atlas of America*. Students will understand and hear music from the five regions of the United States, as well as use musical vocabulary to discuss the elements of music used by composers.

OBJECTIVES: Students will be able to:

- Use appropriate connections between geographic characteristics and cultural characteristics to show understanding of regions
- Find the five regions of the United States on a map and share one important geographic feature about each
- Participates in discussion and written assignment of musical characteristics heard in the musical selections
- Identify orchestral instruments when seen and heard
- Demonstrate good citizenship by taking turns and sharing ideas

NATIONAL STANDARDS OF LEARNING:

- 6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
- 9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture

VIRGINIA STATE STANDARDS OF LEARNING:

- 5.8 The student will use music terminology to describe music performances and compositions.
- 5.9 The student will identify instruments from various music ensembles, using sight and sound.
- 5.13, MS.9 The student will compare and contrast the relationships between music and other disciplines.

- MS.5 The student will investigate musical sounds, forms, styles, and genres through listening, discussing, writing, and performing
- MS.7 The student will describe performances, live or recorded, using music terminology.
- MS.8 The student will demonstrate appropriate performance behavior as a participant and/or listener.  
Exhibit respect for the contributions of self and others within a music setting.

MATERIALS:

1. Free streaming video: *Wonders of Geography: A Musical Atlas of America* at [www.virginiachamberorchestra.org](http://www.virginiachamberorchestra.org)
2. Maps from [www.teachervision.com](http://www.teachervision.com) (go to: subjects/social studies/ grade 5/geography/Continental United States (lesson 1 & 2), and Map of US Regions (optional-lesson 4). Copy the maps.
3. Colored pencils
4. Pencils
5. Poster of names of pieces to be heard (attachment: VCO-Musical Examples)
6. Lists
  - a. Basic Vocabulary (lesson 1)
  - b. Musical Vocabulary (lesson 2 & 3)
  - c. Musical Characteristics (lesson 2 & 3)
7. **Create Your Own Region** assignment (attachment for lesson 1)
8. **You Are the Composer** assignment (lesson 4)
9. Newsprint and markers (lesson 1)
10. Computer or LCD and screen for showing streaming video
11. White board/chalkboard or overhead projector

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE: General familiarity with the geography of the United States; understanding of musical terms; familiarity with orchestral instruments and sounds

PROCEDURES:

**Lesson One**

- A. Introduce streaming video lesson *Wonders of Geography: A Musical Atlas of America*  
Watch streaming video, 1:00-2:33 (explanation and introductions); stop at 5:46.
- B. Review and discuss vocabulary heard in beginning segment of video (Basic Vocabulary list)  
Ask students what those words mean. Find out prior knowledge.

<b><u>BASIC VOCABULARY</u></b>		
<b>Geography</b>	<b>Physical Characteristics</b>	<b>Black Belt</b>
<b>Cultural Characteristics</b>	<b>Region</b>	

**Teacher Notes:**

**Geography** – what a place is like/where a place is located; characteristics and features

**Cultural characteristics** – ethnicity, food, music, clothing

**Physical characteristics** – how something appears/things one sees

**Black Belt** – refers to the rich, dark soil in the Southeast

**Region** – defining an area of sameness; finding physical characteristics and cultural characteristics that are similar

*How many regions will we cover in Wonders of Geography? \_\_\_\_\_*

**C. Create Your Own Region** assignment (attachment)

1. In class preview of assignment: Teacher may write student answers on white board/chalkboard.

Where do we live? (physical features) What is our climate? Two most popular sports in our region? Regional foods (3)? Eye color of most residents? Hair color? Main industry to bring jobs? Style of music loved by most?

**Example: valley – cold climate – skating and luge – potato soup, apple pie, oatmeal – green eyes, blond hair – tourism - jazz**

As students offer suggestions, discuss and make aware of how the physical characteristics of where we live often determine our clothing, food, sports, jobs, and many other factors.

2. Groups of 3.

*Use a combination of your first names to create the name of **your** region!*

*Use the worksheet provided to make this “new” region. Print your answers with marker on the large newsprint provided. Work for 15 minutes.*

**Lesson Two**

- A. Teacher posts newsprint “Regions” around the room as students enter
  1. A representative from each group can read the physical and cultural characteristics of their region aloud.
  2. Review the kinds of characteristics that make up a geographic region in the United States.
- B. Pass out the map of the Continental United States. Students should have colored pencils for marking their own maps.
  1. This map shows some of the physical characteristics found in the US. *As the video continues, you will mark places mentioned on your own maps.*
  2. See minutes 4:20 as review, (“How can geographers break down areas into regions?”)  
Southwest Region – 26:08 end of Northwest Region

Pause each time for students to mark their maps where the physical features are found (Grand Canyon, Mt. St. Helen's)

3. Post Musical Vocabulary list and Musical Characteristics list

MUSICAL VOCABULARY	MUSICAL CHARACTERISTICS
Suite	tempo (presto, allegro, moderato, andante, lento)
Symphony	dynamics (piano, forte, crescendo, decrescendo)
Hymn	legato-staccato thoughtful, peaceful, happy, strong, serious, floating
Shaker hymn	light, heavy, energetic, smooth, bouncy,
Chamber Orchestra	dramatic, lively, dense, sparkly, others...

**Teacher Notes:**

**Suite** – collection of short musical pieces in the same or related key

**Symphony** – name of a group of instrumental players; an instrumental composition in several movements

**Hymn** – religious song sharing the faith and dreams of people; a song of praise to God or to a nation

**Shaker Hymn** – American religious folk music by the Shaker people

**Chamber Orchestra** – a small orchestra, usu. 25-40 players depending on how the composer writes piece, as opposed to a symphony orchestra which is a large group with up to 100 players

4. Review the vocabulary, giving information when needed. Ask students to describe some of what they heard using their own words or words printed in the Musical Characteristics list.

Tell students they are going to finish the video and three more regions in the next lesson.

### Lesson Three

- A. Pass out student maps (Continental United States) and colored pencils. Instruct students to find the Mississippi River and to mark it in color. Tell them that they will continue to mark other important geographic features shown on the video. Have the Musical Characteristics list available for reference.
  1. Begin streaming video at 26:08 –Midwest Region
  2. Stop 30:44 and discuss qualities/characteristics of *Father of the Waters*. What instruments did the composer use? What happened to the dynamics/volume? Tempo?
  3. Continue at 30:44 (narrator comments) –Southeast Region
  4. Stop 33:34 and discuss *Lil' Scamp*. How long do you think that song was? (6 seconds!) What are some of the characteristics in the music? What did the guest speaker mean when he said, "This is a postcard rather than a painting?"
  5. Continue viewing. Stop at 36:46. What instruments are soloing in *Brown Girl*? (How does the music sound? What does Black Belt mean?)
  6. Continue listening to *Clap Yo' Han's*. Stop at 38:06. What are some words that describe the character of that piece?

7. Continue at 38:06 (Narrator, "And now our final destination.") – Northeast. Be prepared to write down and share 5 musical characteristics you hear/descriptive words. *The piece is about 4 minutes long and has several sections, so allow time to write down appropriate vocabulary.*

Ask students to tell where in the piece they heard those characteristic sounds. Ask if anyone recognized the final portion of *Appalachian Spring*? (*Simple Gifts*)

8. Tell students they have been getting much better at descriptive vocabulary and using musical terms to describe music.

## Lesson Four

### WRAP-UP DAY

- A. Show the following lists on whiteboard/chalkboard:

▪ Appalachian Mountains	Northwest Region – NW
▪ Grand Canyon	Southwest Region – SW
▪ Mount St. Helen's	Midwest Region – MW
▪ Black Belt	Northeast Region – NE
▪ Mississippi River	Southeast Region – SE

1. Ask students to look at the lists and correctly visualize the physical feature (on the left) in its proper geographic location. (or use mini-whiteboards for quick individual assessment)
2. Student identifies by pointing or marking for the class to check their answers.
3. Pass out student copies of Continental US maps (optional **The United States-Region** map) and ask them to copy the music titles and composer's names right next to the proper geographic region. (see attachment *Musical Examples*)

- B. **You Are the Composer** activity. (Teacher print out activity sheets for individual groups)

1. Groups of 3 (as in Lesson One)

You may select either Activity One or Activity Two. Fill in the blanks by discussing your options. Be imaginative, share ideas. Turn in your project to show understanding of composer techniques.

#### Activity One – **You Are the Composer**

- a) What "musical characteristics" will you use to show an **ocean**?  
(include tempos and dynamics)
- b) How about when the water is calm?
- c) How about when the water is stormy?
- d) Which orchestral instruments might best describe the ocean?

e) How many ways could a composer show this? (discussion)

### Activity Two - **You Are the Composer**

a) What “musical characteristics” will you use to show **tall mountains**? (include tempos and dynamics)

b) How about when the mountains are sunny and filled with wildlife?

c) How about when the mountains are icy and cold?

d) Which orchestral instruments might best describe the mountains?

e) How many ways could a composer show this? (discussion)

### ASSESSMENTS:

- A. Lesson One – Group completes the “Regions” questionnaire assignment and uses appropriate connections between geographic characteristics and cultural characteristics to show understanding

Student demonstrates good citizenship by taking turns and sharing ideas

- B. Lesson Two – Student shows appropriate markings on his/her map of the United States; Student participates in discussion “Music Vocabulary” and “Music Characteristics”

- C. Lesson Three – Student shows appropriate markings on his/her map;

Student participates in discussion of musical characteristics;

Student shares 5 written musical characteristics that describe *Appalachian Spring*

- D. Lesson Four – Student shows the 5 regions of the United States and one important geographic feature about each

Student places the music titles and composer names near the appropriate geographic region on his/her map

Student participates in group “Composer” assignment by using appropriate vocabulary to describe a musical composition; students discuss how a composer communicates ideas by using elements of music

Student demonstrates good citizenship by taking turns and sharing ideas

### EXTENSIONS:

- A. Students conduct the pieces they heard. Work on patterns. Work on technique that shows the **character** of the piece.

- B. Learn to sing *Simple Gifts*.

- C. Read Supplemental Material found in *Wonders of Geography: A Musical Atlas of America* [www.virginiachamberorchestra.org](http://www.virginiachamberorchestra.org). Write an article about what they learned.

- D. Invite a pianist to play *Sunken Cathedral* – Debussy. Listen to Dominic Piers Smith play this piece on YouTube. Discuss how he used the piano to provide so many descriptions.
- E. City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra plays *The Moldau* – Smetana on YouTube; find Prague on a European map; did you visualize more than the river? What could the music be expressing?
- F. Ask students to find other pieces that have been written with a geographic idea in mind.

#### LESSON PLAN RESOURCES:

- Virginia Chamber Orchestra – *Wonders of Geography: A Musical Atlas of America* streaming video and Student Resource and Activity Guide
- Teachervision.com (maps)

#### LESSON DOWNLOADS:

- Maps from [www.teachervision.com](http://www.teachervision.com)
- **Create Your Own Region** assignment (zip file)
- VCO-Musical Examples (zip file)

#### LESSON MEDIA:

Free streaming video: *Wonders of Geography: 'A Musical Atlas of America* at [www.virginiachamberorchestra.org](http://www.virginiachamberorchestra.org)

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