

WONDERS OF GEOGRAPHY: A MUSICAL ATLAS OF AMERICA

DESCRIPTION: These lessons are based on 30 minutes classes. They are designed to enhance your students' connection with the Virginia Chamber Orchestra's program entitled *Wonders of Geography: A Musical Atlas of America*. Your students will have the opportunity to practice and perform music from three of the five regions of the United States, and these lessons can be supplementary to the other geography lessons on this site. The Virginia Chamber Orchestra's streaming video and further information can be downloaded at <http://www.virginiachamberorchestra.org/>

Lesson Plan Title: SIMPLE GIFTS

Lesson Plan #1 of 3

Objectives of this Lesson Plan:

1. The students will learn to sing *Simple Gifts* based on the Shaker tune as composed by Aaron Copland and performed by the Virginia Chamber Orchestra.

Materials Used:

1. *Simple Gifts* song sheet

Prior Knowledge and Experiences/Curriculum Content:

1. Students will have some basic knowledge about the region in which the Shakers lived (as referenced in the GEOGRAPHY & MUSIC lesson plans also in the Virginia Chamber Orchestra Education Series. See "[More Information and Student Resources.](#)")

Connections to the National Standards of Music:

(Choose as many Connections as this lesson accommodates. Keep the given number.)

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
5. Reading and notating music
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music

8. Understanding relationships between music, and the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture

Procedures:

1. Tell your students the ballet “Appalachian Spring” and “Simple Gifts” portray the frontier life story of a 19th century Shaker couple. Shakers were from the northeast region. They lived non-violent and simple lives and were religious. They were respectful of nature and their style was unadorned.
2. Tell your students they will learn to sing the Shaker tune called *Simple Gifts* featured in Copland’s ballet “Appalachian Spring.”
3. Distribute *Simple Gifts* songs sheets (or teach by phrases by rote) and have them learn to sing the song.
4. Have your students identify the different phrases by raising their hands. (Phrase 1: Ends with “. . . where we want to be;” Phrase 2: Ends with “. . . of love and delight;” Phrase 3: Ends with “. . . we shant be afraid;” Phrase 4: Ends with “. . . turn round right.”
5. Sing *Simple Gifts* several times until they memorize the lyrics and are able to follow you as you conduct them.

Indicators of Success:

1. Your students will be able to sing *Simple Gifts* with ease from memory and identify the four phrases. They will be able to share information about Aaron Copland’s ballet and identify the region of the United States to which it refers.

Assessment:

Subjective, Informal Assessment

1. You may wish to check your individual student’s ability to follow the score, match pitch and sing with expression.

Comments and Additional Material:

You will want to share the book “Ballet for Martha: Making Appalachian Spring” by Jan Greenberg, Sandra Jordan and Brian Floca. It is a beautiful book that will entice your students to want to see and hear Copland’s ballet.

Lesson Plan Title: Let’s Play SIMPLE GIFTS on Our Soprano Recorders

Lesson Plan #2 of 3

Objectives of this Lesson Plan:

1. The students will learn play the melody of *Simple Gifts* on the soprano recorder.

Materials Used:

1. Soprano recorders
2. *Simple Gifts* song sheet (song may be taught by rote)
3. *Simple Gifts* recorder fingering chart (song may be taught by rote)
4. (optional) teacher made recorder fingering chart or interactive recorder fingering website on whiteboard
<http://www.hrs.hampshire.org.uk/finger/cfinger.html>

Prior Knowledge and Experiences/Curriculum Content:

1. Students will be able to share facts about Copland’s *Appalachian Spring* and be able to sing *Simple Gifts*. They will be able to recall the beginnings and endings of the four phrases.

Connections to the National Standards of Music:

(Choose as many Connections as this lesson accommodates. Keep the given number.)

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire
5. Reading and notating music

6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
8. Understanding relationships between music, and the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture

Procedures:

1. Have your students review singing *Simple Gifts*.
2. Tell your students they will learn to play *Simple Gifts* on their soprano recorders.
3. Distribute the recorder fingering sheets . (A few students may notice the fingering chart begins and ends on D and there is no sharp on C. This is because you will be playing in the key of G. This is the easiest key in which to play *Simple Gifts* on the soprano recorder. This will also enable your students to accompany themselves on the soprano recorder in the future lesson's Orff arrangement.)
4. Model playing the recorder fingerings and have the students echo you.
5. Have your students either read the music or follow your modeling to learn how to play *Simple Gifts*.
6. Have your students alternate singing and playing the melody. (You may wish to have some students sing while others play and vice-versa. You may also wish to accompany your students on keyboard or guitar with G and D chords.)
7. After playing the song, have your students identify the four phrases of *Simple Gifts*.

Indicators of Success:

1. Your students will be able to sing and play it *Simple Gifts* on their recorders.

Assessment:

Subjective, Informal Assessment

1. You may wish to check your individual student's ability to follow the score, correctly execute the fingerings and sing and play with musical prosody.

Formal Objective Assessment (optional)

1. A soprano recorder fingering test is included with this lesson. In a future lesson you may wish to use it to check if individual students have mastered the material and will be able to transfer what they have learned to future lessons.

Comments and Additional Material:

Unless your students are especially adept at playing the recorder, you may wish to review and re-teach some part of this lesson in future lessons. I would assume this *Simple Gifts* would take several practices for them to perform at their best.

Encourage them to practice their recorder lessons at home. This additional practice helps them to teach to transfer this and new music and performance skill. It furthers one's own interest and enhances their ability to play musically.

Encourage your students to view the Virginia Chamber Orchestra's streaming at <http://www.virginiachamberorchestra.org/>

Consider sharing *Simple Gifts* (and other repertoire selections) with your students' classroom teachers, administration, families, etc. It is always good to promote your students' successes and helps promote the importance of the performing arts in your students' lives.

Lesson Plan Title: A Simple Dance to SIMPLE GIFTS

Lesson Plan #3 of 3

Objectives of this Lesson Plan:

1. The students will learn a simple dance to perform with the song *Simple Gifts*.

Materials Used:

1. Copy of Dance instructions as listed below (and also included on the *Simple Gifts* Orffestration attachment)

Prior Knowledge and Experiences/Curriculum Content:

1. The students will be able to identify the four phrase groups of the song *Simple Gifts*.

Connections to the National Standards of Music:

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture

Procedures:

1. Inform your students they will be learning a circle dance to *Simple Gifts*.
2. Ask your students to sing *Simple Gifts* from memory.
3. Tell your students they will need to form a circle and hold hands.
4. Have your students sing the first phrase of *Simple Gifts* and walk in a circle to their left. Stop at “. . . where we ought to be;”
5. Tell your students to sing the second phrase of *Simple Gifts* and walk in a circle to their right. Stop at “. . . love and delight;”
6. Have your students sing the third phrase of *Simple Gifts* and step forward with joined hands on “When,” “true,” “sim - ,” “gained”
7. Have your students continue to sing the third phrase of *Simple Gifts* and step backward with joined hands on “bow,” “bend,” “shant,” “shamed”
8. Tell your students to sing the last phrase of *Simple Gifts* and walk in a circle to their left for four beats and then to their right for four beats.

9. (optional) Have your students dance the full dance as written on the *Simple Gifts* Orffestration included in this lesson series. Include the variations and coda. This is an easy dance and can be used with any grade level.

Indicators of Success:

1. The students will learn to be able to dance *Simple Gifts* and perform the dance confidently as they sing.

Assessment:

Subjective, Informal Assessment

1. You may wish to check your individual student's ability to sing and perform the dance simultaneously.

Formal Objective Assessment

1. You may wish to design a dance rubric and grade your students based on how you taught this particular lesson or (if you taught all the lesson in this series) a culminating activity that assesses all the new material learned.

Lesson Plan Title: An Orff Arrangement of Simple Gifts

Lesson Plan #4 of 4

Objectives of this Lesson Plan:

1. The students will learn to play an Orff arrangement of *Simple Gifts* based on the Shaker tune as composed by Aaron Copland and performed by the Virginia Chamber Orchestra.

Materials Used:

1. Orff arrangement of *Simple Gifts* (if you cannot download the Orff arrangement at this site, please contact DebraK.Lindsay@fcps.edu for an electronic copy).

Prior Knowledge and Experiences/Curriculum Content:

1. The students will be familiar with the Aaron Copland's ballet called "Appalachian Spring."

Connections to the National Standards of Music:

(Choose as many Connections as this lesson accommodates. Keep the given number.)

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments
5. Reading and notating music
8. Understanding relationships between music, and the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture

Procedures:

1. Teach each individual part by first patting and then having your students play the part on their instrument.
2. (Although it is difficult and an acquired skill through practice,) Have your students learn both to sing and play their part simultaneously.
3. Follow the directions above and learn to play each part. Add the parts one at a time. (This procedure may take place over a few class periods.)

Indicators of Success:

1. The students will be able to sing and play *Simple Gifts* on the Orff instruments.

Assessment:

Subjective, Informal Assessment

1. Assessment in this lesson will be based on each individual student's contribution to the entire group performance.

Comments and Additional Material:

Consider sharing *Simple Gifts* (and other repertoire selections) with your students' classroom teachers, administration, families, etc. It is always good to promote your students' successes and helps promote the importance of the performing arts in your students' lives.

This series of lesson and arrangements were written and arranged by Debra Kay Robinson Lindsay, a Fairfax County, Virginia Elementary General Music educator and National Board Certified Teacher (EMC). Her latest book "Lessons in American Music, Volume II" was released in March 2011 by Rowman & Littlefield.

You may wish to download the Virginia Chamber Orchestra's "The Musical Side of Thomas Jefferson also at this site. The streaming video may be downloaded at <http://www.vemea.org/> .