

Griot Storytelling As Inspiration For Personal Reflection & Composition

Lesson plan written by Leslie Roberts

Overview

In this lesson, students will learn the significance of the West African griot/jeli oral tradition and will be introduced to musical examples from Senegal. After an interview with their own family members, students will reflect on their personal story or histories and will perform an original composition as if they were passing down information to their future descendants.

Grade Level

3rd-5th grade

Intended Content Area

General Music

STEM & Language Arts Connections

- STEM connection with Chrome Music Lab's [Song Maker](#) (or any other digital composition aid of your choice)

Essential Questions

- How do the other arts, other disciplines, contexts, and daily life inform creating, performing, and responding to music?
- How can expressive qualities of music help connect a song to its story?
- How can those expressive qualities help the story evolve?

Standard Alignment with NC Standards

(while the standards listed below are for grade 3, you may adapt as needed for grades 4 and 5)

Performance Based Objective- Students will be able to compose and perform an original piece that expresses their own personal histories.

MU:Cn11.0.3a

Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

MU:Cr1.1.5a

Improvise rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic ideas, and explain connection to specific purpose and context (such as social, cultural, and historical).

MU:Cr2.1.3a

Demonstrate selected musical ideas for a simple improvisation or composition to

express intent, and describe connection to a specific purpose and context.

MU:Cr1.1.3b

Generate musical ideas (such as rhythms and melodies) within a given tonality and/or meter.

MU:Cr3.1.2a

Interpret and apply personal, peer, and teacher feedback to revise personal music.

MU:Cr3.2.3a

Present the final version of personal created music to others, and describe connection to expressive intent.

Materials

1. [Google Slides](#)
2. Family Interview/Self-Reflection Questions [Google Form](#)
3. Performance Rubric (in google slides)
4. Classroom Instruments (optional)
5. Chrome Music Lab's [Song Maker](#)

Duration

4-5 Day Unit (approximately 50 minute lesson each day)

Procedures

Lesson 1

- Teacher uses Google Slides presentation to lead discussion and show examples of the griot/jeli tradition.
 - Present Slide 1 and allow students to share their ideas with the group
 - Use slides 2-17 to introduce griots to class (**note the presenters' notes below the slides for context and background information**)
 - TURN + TALK: Slide 18
- Assignment: Imagine you are a griot/jeli. What stories of your own would you tell through music?
 - Google Form for students to use as an interview guide
 - What traditions do you have in your family?
 - What is culturally important to you that you would like to preserve for future generations in your family?
 - Google Form can be printed to give students without access to internet or devices

Lesson 2

- Review discussion on griots/jelis (slides 1-18)
- Write a poem/story of your own history and experiences using the family interviews for inspiration (slide 20)
 - Students may choose to write a poem in a format with which they are comfortable. Teachers may want to collaborate with homeroom/English teachers for help with this. Students can choose: limerick, haiku, or free verse poem (teacher may even provide a template to help students to get started)
 - From the information you know about your family, what would be the most memorable or noteworthy? What kind of legacy would you want to leave behind?
- Compose a song using pentatonic scales to accompany your poem/story
 - Students may choose to read their poem over their accompaniment music or sing an original melody with their own lyrics
 - Teacher may choose to create demonstration of their own composition and poem as a demonstration for students to refer to
- Create musical accompaniment for your poem on classroom instruments or use technology (Chrome Music Lab's [song maker](#) or some other digital composition aid) (Slide 21) **Note: Chrome Music Lab can also be set up in a pentatonic scale when you change the settings.**

Lesson 3

- Edit composition and reflect on work (slides 22-24)
- Teachers may display an arts design cycle for guidance on the process of editing and creating.
 - Imagine, Plan, Create, Refine, Share
 - Teachers may ask their students the following questions as they are composing: Does your composition match the mood of the poem? Does it help get your point across? Is it adding to or distracting from your lyrics?

Lesson 4

- Perform compositions for class

Optional Extension Ideas

Add movement and props for self expression