



Instruments of the Orchestra

This is a collection of activities appropriate for grades 2-5 that familiarize students with the instruments in the orchestra.

- The lessons build from grade to grade.
- There are similar activities at each level that can be adjusted to use at different levels, depending on the experience of your students.
- The primary lessons focus on instrument families, where as the intermediate lessons focus more on the individual instruments within the families.

These activities are just a starting point. There are many great activities out there on the Internet.

Grade 2

- Listening Activity
 - “Peter and The Wolf” - video
- Reading
 - Make a mini-book.
 - Here is a link to a free coloring book download.
<http://www.mamaslearningcorner.com/orchestra-coloring-pages/>
 - The pages in the coloring book are organized by instrument families. Distribute one family at a time. Review the characteristics of the family as students work on the pages.
 - Listen to music that features the orchestra family while students work on their pages.
 - When the book is done, watch “Peter and the Wolf” again (perhaps a different version). Have students hold up their book and point to the appropriate page when they hear the instrument.
 - Read Aloud or Reading Corner
 - There are many great books about the orchestra and related to the orchestra. These books can be used as read alouds or put in the classroom library for students to discover on their own.
 - Here are some of my favorite titles:
 - *Welcome to the Symphony* by Carolyn Sloan.
 - This book features Beethoven’s 5th Symphony. It has an interactive touch pad that plays excerpts from the symphony, and clips of various instruments playing their section alone.

- It would be an especially great read aloud if you do the 2nd grade history/music integration lesson “Beethoven Through Time.”
 - *I Know a Shy Fellow Who Swallowed a Cello* by Barbara S. Garriel
 - *Meet the Orchestra* by Ann Hayes
 - *The Carnival of the Animals* by Jack Perlutsky (The hardback version comes with a CD of the Symphony)
 - *The Philharmonic Gets Dressed* by Karla Kuskin
 - *Don’t Play Music Next to the Zoo* by John Lithgow (includes CD)
- Games
 - Online Games
 - These games could be options for computer lab time, or time on a class computer, or you can send the links home for students to use as an extension activity on their own.
 - <http://www.sfskids.org/classic/templates/instorch.asp?pageid=3>

Grade 3

- Listening Activity
 - “Peter and The Wolf” – audio
 - As a review of the instruments of the orchestra, listen to an audio-only version.
 - My favorite is Eugene Ormandy & The Philadelphia Philharmonic, narrated by David Bowie.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL5A4871BCD99ABE5F>
 - The album is broken into 4 parts. You can listen to them in bits, or all at once.
 - Give students the instrument family coloring pages found here:
 - <http://www.lancastersymphony.org/CommunityEngagement/ClassroomResources/ActivitiesforChildren.aspx>
 - As students listen they can color in each instrument as they hear it. They may need some guidance with some of the lesson known instruments.
 - As an alternate activity give students a map of the orchestra such as this one:
 - http://bp2.blogger.com/_quNQWGkAJ7o/RntFnzeeJWI/AAAAAAAAAKk/afy0v8YBP3U/s1600-h/orchestra.jpg
 - Students can highlight or circle one member of the orchestra each time they hear it. For example, there are three French horns on the map. Each time the wolf



theme is played they can highlight one. Or, students can make tally marks in each section as they hear the instruments play.

- Make a Book
 - Here's a template that you can use as a beginning of an orchestra notebook.
 - <http://www.tlsbooks.com/mymusicalinstrumentbook.pdf>
 - The template includes tabs for each family of the orchestra and is illustrated with the members of that family.
 - The sections of the booklet can contain notes on the family. Some ideas for the sections include:
 - Thinking Maps
 - Each section could contain one of each of these maps, or different maps could be used in different sections.
 - A circle map could be used to brainstorm information about the instrument family or one specific member of the family. The information could be:
 - Adjectives describing the look and/or sound of the instruments
 - Songs that feature the instrument
 - Occasions the student/class has seen the instrument
 - Facts gathered about the instrument
 - A tree map could be used to collect information about all the members of the family, with one section for each member of the family
 - A bubble map could describe one member of the family that the student has chosen or been assigned.
 - A double-bubble map could compare/contrast two members of the family, or the family in one section against a family of instruments in different section. It could also be used to compare/contrast the experience of playing the instrument vs. hearing the instrument.
 - A bridge map could be used to show how instruments in one family are related to another. For example, the relating factor could be size or pitch, and the analogy would be, a piccolo is to woodwinds and a violin is to strings.
 - At the end of the book, a brace map could be used to show the parts of the orchestra to the whole.
 - Research

- The book could be used to fulfill ELA Common Core Writing Standard 3.7:
 - Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.
- The research could even incorporate some of the Thinking Map ideas above, or be expository paragraphs giving information about the instrument.
- Research topics could include:
 - How to play the instrument
 - History of the instrument
 - Pieces of music featuring the instrument
 - How the instrument is made
- Games
 - Here's a do-it-yourself bingo game you can play using a YouTube video. Students create their own bingo card. The teacher randomly clicks the video timeline to choose instruments
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAF5ZFROz2k>
 - This version doesn't give the name, students must identify them by sound alone:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dps6ru-aOZM>
 - Listening games
 - While listening to different pieces of music students can identify the instruments in different ways.
 - If you make the book described above students can hold up the book, turned to the family tab, and point to the instruments.
 - Students can use cards to identify the instruments.
 - One variation of this is to give each student one instrument card. When their instrument is heard the student holds up the card or stands up.
 - Students could work in groups. Each group is in charge of one family. They have the cards for each member of the family. The group together holds up the card for the specific instrument when it plays.
 - In groups students can have a deck of all the cards. The deck is passed out to each member of the group. As the piece of music plays students discard the card for any instrument for which they hold the card for. The first student out of cards wins. This game can also be played whole class. Give each student a random stack of cards.



The teacher should keep track of the instruments played with a complete set of cards.

- Here is a link to free instrument cards:
 - <http://www.mamaslearningcorner.com/3-part-cards-orchestra-cards/>

Grade 4

- Listening Activity – Choose one of the videos below
 - “Young Person’s Guide to The Orchestra” by Benjamin Britten, live performance
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-WrlwY-Kjp4>
 - The video is nice because it gives students a chance to see the instruments being played.
 - “Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra” by Benjamin Britten, pictures of instruments set to audio recording.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjOiZReM7m4>
 - While listening students take notes on each section of the piece.
 - Create a tree map with a category for each instrument family.
 - While listening students make notes on any/all of these ideas (have students make a list of the ideas they will take notes on to keep ready on their desk):
 - What instruments they hear/see
 - How the sound is created in the instrument
 - What the instruments look like
 - What the sounds make remind them of
 - Adjectives describing the sound
 - Share out notes after the piece is finished (or on another day)
 - Extension idea
 - Assign or have students choose one family of instruments.
 - Have students go back over their notes and highlight the words in their notes that best create an important idea about the instrument.
 - Create a “found poem” using the 10 best words.
 - A found poem is written as a list
 - The first word should be the name of the instrument family
 - Arrange nine of the words to create the poem
 - Found poems are best written on skinny strips of paper such as spelling test paper or tags.
 - Have students create an illustration for their poems. Glue the poem and illustration to construction paper.
- Online Listening Games



- These are good choices for computer lab or classroom computer time. Headphones are a must!
 - “Instruments of the Orchestra”
 - <http://www.thirteen.org/publicarts/orchestra/>
 - This game comes from WNET, Channel 13, PBS station in New York City. The game requires the player to listen to an instrumental audio clip then choose from pictures of 4 instruments. After the player makes their choice, additional information is given for the student to read.
- Class Games
 - Here’s a do-it-yourself bingo game you can play using a YouTube video. Students create their own bingo card. The teacher randomly clicks the video timeline to choose instruments students must identify the instrument by its sound.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dps6ru-aOZM>

Grade 5

- Here is a link to a free download of an activity booklet.
 - http://www.musicfun.net.au/pdf_files/instruments.pdf
 - This booklet, “Musical Instruments” has many great pages that can be used for different activities. Activities below that use pages from this booklet are indicated with (MI_) . The blank will have the page number.
- Listening Activities
 - “Carnival of the Animals”
 - Give students the instrument quiz (MI3). As they listen to the selections from “Carnival of the Animals” have them written in the name of one of the pieces in which they hear the instrument.
 - As students hear the instrument, they should mark the answer for the family to which it belongs.
 - As the end of the section, check to see which instruments students marked.
 - They may use more than one instrument in any particular selection.
 - Pause after each section to discuss how the piece captures the characteristics of the animal
 - Make a bridge map to show the relationship of the instrument to the animal.



- Videos
 - Audio with visuals of sheet music
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LOFhsksaYw>
 - With marionette show
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdDe7-o3Jk0>
 - Student orchestra from The Stanisław Moniuszko Music School in Wałbrzych, Poland
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SjagpXeNhM>
- There are many good videos of individual selections from “The Carnival of the Animals.” “The Swan” has been used in ballet. There are quite a few good animated videos, and some incredible performances by famous classical musicians.
 - As an extension, and to keep information fresh in students’ minds, search YouTube for some of the videos just of one selection.
 - Poet Ogden Nash wrote poems to go along with each section of the suite. (A video of the suite, that includes his poems can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyaQM351So>)
 - Have students create poems for one or more of the sections.
 - As a challenge, have students try to create a poem that not describes the animal, the music, and/or the featured instruments.
 - Collect the poems in a book. Students can illustrate their poems.
- Review the Instruments of the Orchestra
 - Video
 - “Families of Instruments”
 - If you have access to a computer lab with headphones, this would be a good activity students can do individually.
 - As students view the video they can take notes on the various instruments. (Good SBAC practice!)
 - A tree map with categories for each instrument family would be one option for organizing notes.
 - This can also be done whole class with the video shown on the TV/Monitor with students taking notes.



- This can even be done only listening to the audio.
 - A bingo card such as the one here (<http://kidsinglish.com/music-resources/website-music-resources/picture-bingo.gif>) can be used as a note sheet.
 - Or the diagram of the orchestra (MI9) can be used as a note sheet
- Video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDRiRzip9ks>
- Musical Instruments Booklet
 - Use the activities in this book at your discretion as review or assessment of student understanding of the instruments of the orchestra.