



**Introduction to Music Unit for grades K-2 on  
*Variations on “Ah vous dirai-je, maman”*  
by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
Dr. Kay Edwards, Miami University**

**Unit Length**

There are 3 lessons in this unit for grades K-2. Lesson plans are designed for class periods of approximately 30-40 minutes. Teachers will need to adapt the lesson plans to fit their school resources and the individual needs of their students.

**Lesson Use**

These 3 lessons are designed for use by general music teachers. However, portions of the lessons could be used by classroom teachers as well.

**Standards**

[National Standards for Music](#) are indicated on each lesson. The 3 lessons combined address 7 of the 9 National Standards (all except #4 and #5).

[The Ohio Standards for Music](#) are indicated on each lesson also. Music teachers in other states can easily match their standards to those in this Unit. The 3 lessons combined address all of the 5 Ohio Content Standards.

**Multiple Intelligences**

These lessons facilitate musical, bodily-kinesthetic, linguistic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligence, 4 of the 7 intelligences originally identified by Howard Gardner.

**Overview**

Music Concepts and Objectives/Outcomes are indicated on each lesson. Over the 3 lessons, the Concept Areas of Rhythm, Melody, Harmony, Form, and Tone Color are used. Skills developed over the 3 lessons are Singing, Moving, Listening, Playing Instruments, Creating, and Analyzing/Relating music to other subject areas such as history and literature.

Lesson #1: Move to the Music of Mozart

Lesson #2: Melody and Harmony

Lesson #3: Moving to Mozart's Variations

**Prior Knowledge**

No prior knowledge on the part of the student is needed, although it is helpful to have had experience keeping a steady beat, movement, or experience playing unpitched percussion instruments.



## **Materials and Equipment**

Each lesson indicates the required materials and equipment. Whenever playing a recording, it is important to have a high-quality sound system and use a high-quality recording. The Classics for Kids CD or Website is very helpful in this regard! *Special Note: Our recording uses the main theme and two variations only. If using another recording of this work, you may need to cue the recording to the specific variations used.*

## **Instructional Plans (Lesson Plans)**

Each lesson plan has been designed specifically for the grade K-2 age group, although music teachers may have to adapt portions of each plan. The plans have been "teacher-tested" and are easy-to-follow, set up in a format similar to many music series textbooks. Step-by-step guidelines are given under the "Sequence" portion of each lesson.

## **Supplementary Materials**

Some lessons include a listening map or other teacher resources. By clicking on the highlighted, underlined link at that point of the lesson plan, you can read the handout with Adobe Acrobat Reader and print it out for use in your classroom. You may wish to make an overhead transparency in addition to student copies.

## **Assessment/Evaluation**

Assessment strategies are included with each lesson. For grades K-2, simple rubrics tied to the specific objective/outcome of each lesson are sometimes included. Teachers may find it helpful to collect assessment on individual students over longer periods of time, assessing perhaps 8 students during each class, or whatever is practical to maximize instructional time for children to be actively involved.

## **Extensions**

Each lesson includes strategies for extending the lesson either that same day or on a separate day. Teachers may devise their own lesson extensions as they take advantage of the "teachable moments" that occur in their classrooms!



**RHYTHM (Steady Beat), FORM (Same/Different)  
MOVING, LISTENING, SINGING, ANALYZING**

**grades K–2**

**Lesson Plan #1: Move to the Music of Mozart**

- National Std. #6:** • Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.  
**National Std. #8:** • Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.  
**National Std. #9:** • Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

- Ohio Standards:** • Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts. (Recognize how music and sounds are/were used in daily life; demonstrate knowledge and understanding of musical expression or events; experience/identify music from various historical periods and composers.)  
• Creative Expression and Communication. (Perform using simple note values, rests, and rhythms in 2/4 time.)  
• Analyzing and Responding. (Listen to varied repertoire and respond by analyzing and describing music using correct terminology: same/different.)  
• Connections, Relationships and Applications. (Identify similarities and differences between music and other arts disciplines.)

**Multiple Intelligences:** Musical, Bodily-Kinesthetic

**Concept:** *We can move in ways that go with (show) the music's beat and form.*

**Objective/Outcome:** Students will move to the music and compare two similar musical selections, demonstrating same and different sections. Students will learn about the composer Mozart.

- Materials:**
- recording of *Variations on "Ah vous dirai-je, maman"* by Mozart (available on the [Classics for Kids CD](#) or the [Classics for Kids](#) website)
  - [Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star](#)
  - [tapping page for Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star](#)
  - [tapping page for Variations on "Ah vous dirai-je, maman"](#)
  - [biography of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart with photo](#)
  - [picture of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart as a child](#)
  - [pictures of 18<sup>th</sup> century dress and hairstyles](#)
  - [streamers for dancing \(optional\)](#)



## Sequence:

1. Tell students that today is special because they might get to dance (with streamers—optional) later in the lesson and that you have some well-known music to play for them now while they are sitting down; as they listen they will get to move their hands to the music.

2. Play the recording of *Variations on "Ah vous dirai-je, maman"* (theme only, 0:00-1:02 on the *Classics for Kids* CD) as you open and close your hands in front of you like “twinkling stars” to the macro-beat of the music (quarter note~60). Invite students to join in. As the first phrase of the melody repeats softer, repeat the same action (0:11-0:20). For the third (different) phrase, put your hands together in a diamond shape in front of your chest and “open and close the diamond” to the same beat of the music (beginning at 0:21); students follow. When the melody sounds like the beginning, do the “star” motion again. When the “diamond” phrase returns, use that motion, followed once again by the “star” phrase. Stop the recording after the main theme (1:02).

3. Ask students if this music sounds very *similar* (almost the same) to a famous song they all probably know; if they are having trouble identifying the tune, you can tell the students that the motions they were making—star and diamond—are clues. (Yes, it is similar to “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” but also uses the same tune as “The Alphabet Song” and “Baa, Baa Black Sheep.”) Sing the song [Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star](#) beginning on the pitch middle C, inviting students to join in singing and making the star and diamond hand motions.

4. Distribute copies of the [tapping page for Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star](#) (or use an overhead transparency). Demonstrate how the students will tap to the beat of the music at a medium speed (quarter note~60) once for each beat. Ask, “Which lines are the same?” (the first and third lines are both stars, to match how the melody is the same for those lines). “Which line is different?” (the middle line uses diamonds, because that melody is different). Invite the students to tap the page as they sing the song. If necessary, try it again.

5. Play the recording of the theme again (0:00-1:02) and invite the students to make the star and diamond motions as they listen, without your help. Ask the following questions to guide students in comparing the two versions: “What was *the same* or almost the same (*similar*) between the recording and the “Twinkle” we know?” (the overall melody). “What was *different* between the recording and the “Twinkle” we know?” (the melody had notes added to it to make it fancier; it was played on piano, not sung; it was longer than “Twinkle” – the first line was repeated, softer; the “diamond” line came back again later, too). Guide first and second grade students to describe how a tapping page for this version of the song would look to match the way the music goes on the recording (2 rows of stars, a row of diamonds, a row of stars, another row of diamonds, and a row of stars). To figure this out will likely require another hearing.



6. Distribute the [tapping page for Variations on “Ah vous dirai-je, maman”](#) (theme only). Demonstrate how the page will be used in the same way as the one for “Twinkle,” but that it shows the same and different parts of the melody to match the recording. Make a visual comparison of the two tapping pages. Tap the new page as you listen to the recording of the theme (0:00-1:02). [Note: The second line of stars is shaded lighter to indicate the change to softer.]

7. Tell students that “Twinkle” is very similar to a French folk song called “Ah vous dirai-je, maman” which means, “Mother, I have something to tell you.” Ask students to raise their hands if they have heard of the famous composer named Mozart (if time permits, have students share what they already know); tell them his full name was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and that he was born in the year 1756 and died in the year 1791. He lived mainly in Austria around the time that settlers in America were fighting with England to become our own country (the years leading up to 1776). Ask if anyone in the class can figure out how old Mozart was when he died (35) and how many years it has been since Mozart was born (this may be for second graders only; subtract 1756 from the current year; 2006 marks 250 years since Mozart was born).

8. Share the [biography of Mozart](#). Explain that Wolfgang was a *prodigy* (genius) who toured Europe with his sister Nannerl who was also a gifted musician and composer. If you wish, use an age-appropriate biography (see Extension below). Share [pictures of Mozart](#) as a child and an adult. Share pictures of [18<sup>th</sup> century dress and hairstyles](#) for men and women with the class. You can also go to <http://www.costumes.org/history/100pages/18thlinks.htm> or use the following books: *Clothes Through the Ages* by Piero Ventura, Simon & Schuster Young Books, 1993 and *Historic 18<sup>th</sup> Century Clothing* by Bobbie Kalman, Crabtree Publishing Co., 1993) to see how elegant some people looked back in the Classical period when Wolfgang and Nannerl played music concerts; ask students to raise their hand and describe what they see (powdered wigs for men, fancy outfits, big and full length dresses for ladies, etc.). If available, show pictures of children in period dress, like miniature adults. Tell students that this is what men and women dressed like 200 years ago, if they could afford it. Since there were no radios or stereos they would hear live music when they could; one place you might hear live music is at a party or ball, where people would be dressed in fancy clothes to dance elegantly to music played by an orchestra or other group. Since cars were not yet invented, people often traveled by stagecoach.

9. Invite students to think of 2 ways to move their whole bodies—one way for the “star” part of the melody and a different way for the “diamond” part of the melody. Ask students to spread out throughout the room. While remembering your rules for movement, have them demonstrate their first movement (it does not have to depict a star, but can be called Movement 1); have them then demonstrate their second movement (Movement 2). Next, play the recording of the theme (0:00-1:02) while all students move to the music and show the parts of the melody that are the same and different. When they are finished, tell them that we call figuring



out the sections of the music that are the same and different the *form* of the music (the structure or plan of the music).

**Closure/Questions:** What words (opposites) are used to describe one line or section of music to another? (same/different) What word describes two things that are *almost* the same? (similar) Today we compared a French folk tune played on the piano to what famous song we all know? (“Twinkle”).

Tell someone standing or sitting next to you something you learned today about the famous composer named Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart...now have that person tell you something different that he/she learned about Mozart.

What do we call the structure or plan of music, when we figure out the sections that are the same and different? (the *form*)

**Assessment/Evaluation:** Check for understanding and demonstration of steady beat and form, noting whether individual students were able to do so successfully  
“all/most of the time,” “some of the time,” or “not yet”.

Peer evaluation: Have half of the class evaluate the other half of the class after their movement “performance” by indicating a **thumbs up** if the person they watched showed the same and different sections correctly, or a **thumbs sideways** if they didn’t make the form very clear; switch.



**Extensions:**

(1) Share books about Mozart with the class, such as:

- Rachlin, Anne. *Mozart*. Chicago: Children's Press 1992. Ages 4-8  
There are also books of fiction involving Mozart for grades K-2:
- Costanza, Stephen. *Mozart Finds a Melody*. New York, Henry Holt and Company: 2004. 31 p.  
Mozart is desperate. He has to compose a new piano concerto by Saturday and he's out of ideas. Then his pet starling chirps a melody that he thinks is just perfect and a walk around the city of Vienna produces more ideas that he uses to create his *Piano Concerto No. 17 in G Major*.
- McCully, Emily. *The Orphan*
- Austin, Patricia. *The Cat Who Loved Mozart*. New York, Holiday house: 2001. 29 pages  
How can Jennifer earn the love of a stray cat she has befriended who is named Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart? By playing the piano for him! In turn, the cat inspires Jennifer, who is preparing for a music competition. (1991).

(2) Move or dance to other classical pieces written by Mozart. ([Classics for Kids radio programs about Mozart](#) feature a variety of his music.)

(3) Listen and move to the rest of the recording featuring the *variations* on the melody or theme.

(4) Listen to [Classics for Kids programs about Mozart](#).



## MELODY, HARMONY, TONE COLOR SINGING, PLAYING, LISTENING, MOVING

grades K–2

### Lesson Plan #2: Melody and Harmony

- National Std. #1:** • Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
- National Std. #2:** • Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
- National Std. #3:** • Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
- National Std. #6:** • Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
- National Std. #7:** • Evaluating music and music performances.

- Ohio Standards:**
- Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts. (Identify and demonstrate basic music forms; identify and respond to music of historical and cultural origins.)
  - Creative Expression and Communication. (Sing and/or play instruments, alone and with others, demonstrating a variety of repertoire, using proper technique, accurate rhythm and pitch and appropriate expressive qualities; read, write, improvise and compose melodies and accompaniments.)
  - Analyzing and Responding. (Identify the sounds of a variety of instruments including orchestra, band and classroom instruments.)
  - Valuing Music/Aesthetic Reflection. (Reflect on their own performances and the performances of others.)

**Multiple Intelligences:** Musical, Bodily-Kinesthetic, Linguistic, Interpersonal

**Concept:** *Music can have a melody (main tune or single line) or harmony (more than one part). We can play a harmony part that goes with (accompanies) the melody. We can make up (improvise) different rhythms for a part. A piano has a unique sound (tone color).*

**Objective/Outcome:** Students will play a harmony part for “Twinkle, Twinkle.” Students will melodically improvise in a pentatonic key and rhythmically improvise on the harmony part. Students will describe the improvisations of others. Students will identify the sound of a piano.

**Materials:**

- recording of *Variations on “Ah vous dirai-je, maman”* by Mozart (available on the [Classics for Kids CD](#) or the [Classics for Kids](#) website)
- [Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star in D Major](#)
- [Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star in D Major, with Chords](#) and Harmony
- [Twinkle, Twinkle in F Major](#)
- [Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star in F Major with Chords](#) and Harmony
- [Twinkle, Twinkle \(words only\)](#) [overhead transparency]
- Orff mallet instruments (or keyboards) available (may use resonator bells or chromatic bells for particular tonalities)
- unpitched percussion such as triangle, finger cymbals, chime tree, or wind chimes
- pictures of [keyboard instruments](#) such as grand piano, upright piano, organ, harpsichord, clavichord, spinnet, cembalo, and fortepiano (for Extension).
- [“Star Light, Star Bright”](#) (for Extension)

**Sequence:**

1. Tell students that today is special because they will get to guess a famous melody (a “secret song”) on the instruments and then get to play a part that goes with it on the instruments
2. Ask students to be “music detectives” to figure out what your secret song is by hearing you sing a part of it. Tell them that you’re going to try to trick them by not singing the words and not starting at the beginning of the secret song; you are going to start in the middle somewhere. Sing the phrase of the song *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* that goes, “Up above the world so high, like a diamond in the sky” on a neutral syllable such as “loo.”
3. After students guess the song, note other songs with the same melody (“Baa, Baa, Black Sheep” and “The Alphabet Song.”) Sing the song [Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star in D Major](#) beginning on the pitch D. Review the term *melody* (a song’s tune, or a series of individual pitches or notes). If you wish, have students sing the other songs that share the same melody or tune, too.
4. Accompany the class by playing the D, G, and A7 chords on the piano. Explain that you are playing *harmony* (more than one part) to go with the *melody* (only one part) that they sing. Next explain that you are going to play a simpler harmony part to go with their melody (use [Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star–Harmony in D Major](#).) Have them indicate they hear the *harmony* added by raising their hand; have them indicate they hear the *melody only* by keeping their hand down. Switch back and forth and assess their understanding. If you wish, have students



walk around the room alone when they hear *melody only*, then with a partner holding hands when they hear the *melody AND harmony* (idea from S. Stauffer).

5. Teach the [first and second grade] class to play the harmony part by first using *patchen* (patting their right leg with their right hand for the Ds and patting their left leg with the left hand for the C#s); assist them in finding the patterns to the harmony part and which words have the left hand/leg (“what,” “high,” and “sky”). If you wish, use an overhead transparency of [Twinkle, Twinkle \(words only\)](#) and circle these words with a colored marker. Have class sing the melody while patting. Transfer this part to resonator bells or chromatic bells (or small keyboards) and have students play the harmony part. If you are using standard Orff mallet instruments without C#, use [Twinkle, Twinkle in F Major](#) and [Twinkle, Twinkle—Harmony in F Major](#).

6. Next, assist the class in finding the rhyming words at the end of each phrase; circle them on [Twinkle, Twinkle \(words only\)](#) Add unpitched percussion instruments such as triangle, finger cymbals, or wind chimes for color at the end of each short phrase (after the words “star,” “are,” “high,” and “sky.” (All K-2 students can do this step.)

7. Second grade classes can rhythmically improvise on harmony part; lower grades can melodically improvise in D or F Pentatonic during an added pause placed after each main phrase. (In F Pentatonic, remove B and E bars; in D Pentatonic, remove G and C bars, but keep F#; in C Pentatonic, remove F and B bars.) Evaluate students’ improvisations and/or use peer evaluation (see Evaluation/Assessment). Introduce “variation” (a different way of doing something using the same main idea that is usually planned out and can be done again) and “improvise” (to make up a different way of doing something on the spot, without writing it down). Think of variations on subjects such as shoes (have students find examples worn by classmates) or pizza.

8. Listen to part of the recording. Ask students to identify what instrument was played (piano). Ask students to describe the *variations* (changes to the melody) they heard. Tell students that “Twinkle” is very similar to a French folk song called “Ah vous dirai-je, maman” which means, “Ah, Mother, I have something to tell you.” Ask students to raise their hands if they have heard of the famous composer named Mozart (if time permits, have students share what they already know); tell them his full name was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and that he was born in the year 1756 and died in the year 1791. He liked this famous tune too, and wrote these variations for it (although he did not write the main tune or the song we know as “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star”).

9. If possible, listen to other precursors of the modern day piano (see Extension).



**Closure/Questions:** Review the meaning of the terms *melody*, *harmony*, *improvise*, and *variation*. Ask students questions such as: Today we compared a harmony part to what famous song we all know? (“Twinkle”). What instrument was played on the recording we heard? (piano) What famous composer wrote the variations? (Mozart)

**Assessment/Evaluation:** Check for understanding and demonstration of proper instrument playing technique and improvisation, noting whether individual students were able to do so successfully “all/most of the time,” “some of the time,” or “not yet”. Describe improvisations using musical terms such as loud/soft and short/long.

Peer evaluation: Have half of the class evaluate the other half of the class after their “performance” by indicating a **thumbs up** if the person they watched used proper instrument technique, or a **thumbs sideways** if they didn’t; switch.

**Extensions:**

(1) Optional for advanced second grade: learn to *play the melody* in C, D, or F Major; for proper mallet technique, this involves alternating mallets and is tricky.

(2) Sing other songs about stars such as [“Star Light, Star Bright.”](#)

(3) Listen to other variations of the “Twinkle” melody in other musical styles such as jazz. Listening examples of each can be found on iTunes (free, short examples can be played through a laptop computer).

(4) Listen to examples of early keyboard instruments and display pictures of of keyboard instruments such organ, harpsichord, clavichord, spinet, cembalo, and fortepiano. Listening examples of each can be found on iTunes (free, short examples can be played through a laptop computer).



**RHYTHM (Steady Beat), FORM (Same/Different)  
MOVING, LISTENING, SINGING, ANALYZING**

**grades K–2**

**Lesson Plan #3: Moving to Mozart's Variations**

**National Std. #6:** • Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.

**National Std. #8:** • Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.

**National Std. #9:** • Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

**Ohio Standards:** • Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts. (Recognize how music and sounds are/were used in daily life; demonstrate knowledge and understanding of musical expression or events; experience/identify music from various historical periods and composers.)

• Creative Expression and Communication. (Perform using simple note values, rests, and rhythms in 2/4 time.)

• Analyzing and Responding. (Listen to varied repertoire and respond by analyzing and describing music using correct terminology: same/different.)

• Connections, Relationships and Applications. (Identify similarities and differences between music and other arts disciplines.)

**Multiple Intelligences:** Musical, Bodily-Kinesthetic

**Concept:** *We can move in ways that go with (show) the music's style, especially the rhythms used.*

**Objective/Outcome:** Students will move to the theme and variations of the recording to highlight the style (emphasizing differences in rhythm and meter). Students will learn about the composer Mozart.

**Materials:**

- recording of *Variations on "Ah vous dirai-je, maman"* by Mozart (available on the [Classics for Kids CD](#) or the [Classics for Kids](#) website)
- [Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star](#)
- [star streamers for moving](#)



**Sequence:**

1. Tell students that today is special because they will get to dance (with streamers—optional) to some well-known music by a famous composer; as they listen the first time they will get to “walk” their fingers to the music, on their palm or arm.
2. Play the recording of *Variations on "Ah vous dirai-je, maman"* (theme only, 0:00-1:02 on the *Classics for Kids* CD) as you “walk” your index and middle fingers of one hand on the palm of the other hand, then “walk” up and down one arm, to the macro-beat of the music (quarter note~60). Invite students to join in. Stop the recording after the main theme (1:02).
3. Ask students if this music sounds very *similar* (almost the same) to a famous song they all probably know; if they are having trouble identifying the tune, you can provide clues. (Yes, it is similar to “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” but also uses the same tune as “The Alphabet Song” and “Baa, Baa Black Sheep.”) Sing the song [Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star](#) beginning on the pitch middle C or D, inviting students to “walk” their fingers while singing.
4. Ask students to think of other ways to walk. Brainstorm various ideas (tiptoe, with legs apart, standing tall, squatting down low, backwards carefully, marching, quickly/slowly, etc.). Explain that these are all *variations* on walking and that there are variations in music, too.
5. Play a few seconds of the recording of the first variation (beginning at 1:06) and ask students how they would change their “finger walking.” Do the same with the second variation (beginning at 2:02). Note that this variation is in a meter of 3.
6. Listen to the part of the coda or “special ending” (beginning at 3:11). Tell students that this can be their “grand finale” and encourage their creativity to come up with something really special for their “finger walking” ending.
7. Now students will get to use their whole bodies to move to this music, and they get to hear the whole piece (*Note to teacher: This recording is actually an abbreviated version of the entire piece.*) Have students stand and find a place in the room to move. Review your rules for movement in the classroom. Tell them that first they will walk to the music during the theme, then do variations on walking for the variations of the theme in the music. Play the recording and guide students in moving.



(Teacher resource for approximate time on CD player):

0:00-1:02	Main theme
1:06-2:00	Variation #1, with “running notes” in the right hand
2:02-3:11	Variation #2, in a meter of 3, with “running notes” in the left hand especially prominent for a portion of the variation
3:11-3:22	Coda (special ending)

8. Tell students that “Twinkle” is very similar to a French folk song called “Ah vous dirai-je, maman” which means, “Ah, Mother, I have something to tell you.” Ask students to raise their hands if they have heard of the famous composer named Mozart (if time permits, have students share what they already know); tell them his full name was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and that he was born in the year 1756 and died in the year 1791. He lived mainly in Austria around the time that settlers in America were fighting with England to become our own country (the years leading up to 1776). (2006 marks 250 years since Mozart was born.)

9. Discuss the movements that students came up with; encourage the class to evaluate themselves and to describe their own and others’ movements. If time permits, listen and move again, making improvements and using star streamers (optional).

**Closure/Questions:** Review terms “theme” and “variation.” Review term “coda.”

**Assessment/Evaluation:** Check for demonstration of theme and variation, noting whether individual students were able to do so successfully “all/most of the time,” “some of the time,” or “not yet”.

**Extensions:**

(1) Move or dance to other classical pieces written by Mozart. ([Classics for Kids radio programs about Mozart](#) feature a variety of his music.)

(2) Listen and move to other theme and variations such as “Variations on ‘America’” by Charles Ives, “Russian Sailors’ Dance” by Gliere, or “Appalachian Spring” by Aaron Copland.