



Lesson for Grades K–5 “Troika” from Lieutenant Kije by Sergei Prokofiev

National Standards

#6–Listening, describing, and analyzing music

#8–Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts

#9–Understanding music in relation to history and culture

Conceptual Learning

Music can depict an event, such as a sleigh ride. People in different areas of the world enjoy sleigh rides and music for the winter season. There are folk dances from many different places and people all over the world.

Common Core Connections (vocabulary for Word Wall): sleigh ride, sleigh bells, horses, saxophone, trombone, violin, trumpet, bassoon, troika, pizzicato, orchestra

Objective

Students will (“I can”) identify same and different sections of a listening map visually, then aurally, using a listening map. Students will become familiar with a troika. Younger students (grades K–2) will move to the music in a small group of three people. Older students (grades 3–5) will learn the dance steps to a Russian troika folk dance, using a group of three people.

Materials

1) Listening map for “Troika” from Lieutenant Kije by Sergei Prokofiev

Sequence

1. Display the listening map on a large screen and tell the class that this goes with some music we are about to hear, and in this way it is a “map” of what is going on in the music. “From looking at the map, what do you think the music will be about?” (horses, winter, a sleigh ride). Ask more questions and guide the students to notice the snowflakes by each number; that there are three horses together; that there are pictures of various instruments (saxophone, sleigh bells, trombone, violin, trumpet, bassoon).
2. Go over the main words that appear on the map: “troika” (a Russian word for a sleigh drawn by three horses, similar to our word “trio,” meaning “three”); carol-like melody (like a Christmas carol’s tune); “pizzicato” (plucking the strings, instead of using a bow); “brass ending” and “brass honk” (that brass instruments such as the trumpet, trombone, horn, or tuba will be used at the end of a section, or to sound like a ‘honk,’ maybe to tell someone to get out of the way of the sleigh!); “Prokofiev” (the famous Russian composer of this piece); and “with whole orchestra” (that the entire orchestra will play together).
3. Ask the children how many numbers appear on the map (10). Explain that each number represents (stands for) a certain place in the music, and the pictures show some of the things happening in the music at that certain place; note that the map shows a pathway of where the sleigh will be going. “What numbers have the same pictures?” (share answers) “Do you think this will mean that the music will sound the same, or very similar, at those points?” (yes) “Do you



think that places where the pictures are completely different will sound different?” (yes) “Let’s test our theory as we listen.”

4. Display the map (and pass out individual copies to older students, optional), and point or say each number while listening to the recording, having students tap on the snowflake and number back and forth to the steady beat, either in the air or on their own copy, corresponding to the recording times for this piece from the Classics for Kids website listed below. (Note: Recording times may vary slightly on different playback systems, and will vary if a different recording is used entirely.)

Teacher Resource

1	(0:00–0:26)	
2	(0:27–0:44)	
3	(0:44–0:59)	[trombone occurs at 0:53]
4	(0:59–1:13)	
5	(1:13–1:38)	[bassoon occurs at 1:23; trombone occurs at 1:35]
6	(1:39–1:52)	
7	(1:52–2:01)	["honk" occurs at 1:59]
8	(2:02–2:24)	[bassoon occurs at 2:09; trombone occurs at 2:21]
9	(2:25–2:38)	[adds piccolo, not pictured]
10	(2:39–2:52, end)	

5. Engage the class in a follow-up discussion with questions such as: “How did the music sound like a sleigh ride? What do you think the driver was honking at? Were we correct that the sections that looked the same or similar on the listening map also sounded the same or similar? Was the tempo (speed of the steady beat) slow, medium, or fast? (medium or medium-fast)” Come up with a reason to listen and follow along again, having students keep the steady beat on their bodies quietly while listening.

6. “Who remembers what the word ‘troika’ means?” (three of something, like a sleigh drawn by three horses) “Let’s dance to the music in groups of three.” Review the rules for movement in the classroom.

Grades K–2: Have groups of three students join hands, first dancing in their own circles. If that goes well, have them form lines of three each, like spokes on a wheel, all facing counter-clockwise. Have students move creatively to the beat of the music, or, devise simple steps for them.

Grades 3–5: Have the students learn the authentic troika folk dance steps. Directions are found in various collections such as Teaching Movement and Dance by Phyllis Weikart, or from various troika dances on youtube found below. (Note: Some links may be taken down periodically. Always watch video clips beforehand to make sure you have the correct one; cue the clips past the ads and in a way that blocks any possible inappropriate comments posted below the main screen.)



Troika Dance on youtube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WoRZ7cFUNqU>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qg-YL0X7YhA>

<http://www.rrojas.com/5/pe/troikadance>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CiQ8bKU4bw> (Russian dancers in concert)

Questions/Closure

1. "What does 'troika' mean?" (a Russian word for a set of three, or a sleigh drawn by three horses)
2. "What were some instruments of the orchestra that had special parts to play?" (refer to those in the listening map)
3. "How did the map tell us what was happening in the music?" (with numbers, words, and pictures)
4. "Do people in other parts of the world enjoy sleigh rides, winter music, or dancing?" (yes)
5. "Can music sound like events or objects?" (yes)
6. "The composer of this piece was from which country?" (Russia)

Assessment/Evaluation

Check for demonstration of ability of each student to keep a steady beat "all of the time," "some of the time," or "not yet."

Extension

Listen to another famous piece by Prokofiev available on the Classics for Kids website, such as Peter and the Wolf.

Additional Teacher Resources

Video (stills) to this piece:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GUzJ7fQBtg>

Greg Lake's song, which uses the "Troika" theme at 0:54:

<http://www.whosampled.com/sample/129883/Greg-Lake-I-Believe-in-Father-Christmas-Sergei-Prokofiev-Lieutenant-Kijé-Troika/>



From Wikipedia – Popular music

- Troika
- The Free Design jazzed up and added lyrics to the Troika theme in their song “Kijé’s Ouija”.
- A part of the Troika movement is used in the 1974 song “I Believe in Father Christmas” by Greg Lake, which was subsequently covered by U2 in 2008.
- Danny Elfman used an excerpt from the Troika theme for the Mystic Knights of the Oingo Boingo song “The Rocketmen”.
- The melody from the Troika was quoted in “Russia” by Black Tape for a Blue Girl on their album As One Aflame Laid Bare by Desire.
- Wii Music uses the Troika as one of its many songs.
- The Simpsons uses the Troika in the episode “Pranks and Greens”.
- General Public incorporated the Troika into the instrumental section of their live version of The English Beat’s “Save It For Later”, which was recorded during the holiday season.
- Bill Finegan wrote an arrangement of the Troika for his jazz group, Sauter-Finegan Orchestra, under the name “Midnight Sleighride”.
- Arranged by Sherrie Maricle. For percussion ensemble (12 Players). Percussion Large. Grade 5. Published by Kendor Music Inc (KN.20245).
- Troika featured on the 1984 Album “Cadmium” by British band Sky and was released as a single.