

Melodic Construction and Introduction to Notation Software©
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Intent

This lesson is designed to teach children how to construct a melody and then learn to develop it.

Example (s) of Student Work: (posted at <http://www.vtmidi.org/resources.html>)
See Snowshoe composition example.

Standards Addressed:

National Standards for Arts Education (1994) all below paraphrased from grade 4 and 8

Standard #4, Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines

- a. compose short pieces within specified guidelines,
- b. demonstrate how the elements of music are used to achieve unity and variety, tension and release, and balance

Standard # 5: Reading and notating music

- a. use standard symbols to indicate pitch, rhythm, dynamics and tempo appropriate to grade level curriculum

Standard #6: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music

Standard #7: Evaluating music compositions

Vermont Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities (2000)








1.16 and 5.23 Reflection and critique

Students critique their own and others' works in progress, both individually and in groups, to improve upon intent.

Prior Experiences and Knowledge:

The students will have learned rhythmic notation (whole notes, half notes, quarters, eighths, sixteenths and their respective rests). This could be their first introduction to notation software.

Procedure:


-  Students will see a melody written on the board (“Row, Row, Row Your Boat” works fine). Sing the song, following the notes with a pointer, then draw the contour above the notes.
 -  Choose another melody that the students know and sing that. Ask a student come up and draw a picture of the shape of the melody that they have just sung.
 -  Discuss elements that are the same in both songs that lead to an effective melody:
 - Step-wise motion or rising thirds- no big jumps
 - Flowing shape
 - The power of the tonic, the fifth and the octave
 - Write a C Major scale on the board, and discuss the tonal center.
 -  Divide the class into groups of two or three students. Each group will be given a mallet or keyboard instrument and a piece of staff paper with 12 measures in treble clef.
 -  Ask students to create a four measure melody using only the notes in the C scale (middle C being the lowest note) ending on the tonic. This is to be team-work and the students should use only note values that are familiar. Note: Some children will be more sophisticated musically due to private lessons or other reasons and you may wish to place them together. It has been my observation that if a child is musically very savvy then they often do all the work.
 -  Once the melodies have been completed on staff paper, collect them and play them for the class.
-  **Critique:** This is the time to explain about effective critique. Always keep a positive environment and during the performance of each piece insist on respectful listening. Leave time for discussion of each piece according the guidelines established in the initial discussion of melody. What are the qualities that you find most successful in the melody? Is this a melody that could be sung?


(More on next page)


Development: At this point, groups of students have written four measure melodies. Ask them what they could do with the material that they have already created to develop it into something new but connected. After they have offered ideas and suggestions then make a list including:

- reversing the shape of the melody (inversion)
- play it backward (retrograde)
- repeating it but start on a different note,
- condense the rhythm (diminution)
- expand the rhythm (augmentation).

That is probably enough information to begin with. I suggest giving examples using one of the melodies that you sang at the beginning.

 Ask your students to create four more measures on their staff paper, developing their original idea and using only that material.

 **Critique** as before the eight measures students have completed.

 Each group should now input its composition into notation software, then copy and paste the first four measures into bars nine through twelve. After this is completed discuss the form ABA and ask questions about how the B section contrasts with the A section. Play the final products from notation software, finishing the class by listening to all the completed compositions.

 Each group should then complete the assessment as a team.

Assessment:

- Is the melody singable?
- Did the melody end on the tonic?
- Did the development (B section) use material from the first melody?
- Did the team work well together and follow directions?

Comments and Extension:

I find this a good way to prepare students to use notation software, first doing the work with pencil, paper and live instruments and finally inputting their work into the program.

This lesson can be expanded to create a 24 measure piece. - See student example:(Snowshoe)

My next step is to introduce motif development and rhythmic accompaniment.