

Composition is and should be a core component of any primary or elementary music program, and it is reflected as such in every curriculum around the world.

Grade 6 *COMPOSE* differs slightly from the previous grades in that it requires more technology. We use the technology of today, which students are already very familiar with to engage them in creative music making.

Students should be involved in music, and they must create their own. We cannot ignore the tools that students now have in their hands with technology, and it is getting easier every day to create amazing music.

Some of the marketing material which Apple has used for its GarageBand software in the last few years has included the headline: “Incredible music. In the key of easy.”

As music teachers we need to embrace this idea, and make the technical side of it easy, so that the creative side can come out.

With visual art we don’t set up lots and lots of rules for a child to paint. We give them an idea, we might give them some guidelines and instructions, but then we let them go for it!



Stock Image: istockphoto.com

That is what we need to do with music as well, as far as it is possible to do so.

Of course we should use students’ compositions as a chance to teach other things, like music theory and musicianship, however we must remember to always keep the focus on their creativity first.

The third content description of the Australian curriculum talks about *improvising, sourcing and arranging ideas and making decisions to engage an audience*, so that is exactly what we are doing in this program.

The US Common Core Curriculum the first three standards are all about *generating and conceptualizing, organizing and developing*, and finally *refining and completing* artistic work.

That is why *COMPOSE* is such a critical element, particularly at Grade 6 level. If you do nothing else in this program, use this unit in full, as it has the potential to really inspire and motivate children into a life of music making, which can be sparked off at this critical stage of development.

So enjoy this program - let us know what you think about it and how we can improve it. As always email our creative director personally: janice@funmusicco.com. Of course we would also love to hear any of your students work which has been created as a result of this program.

Grade 6 Lesson 1



COMPOSE

Students will record an improvisation using a sequencing application.

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Composition is about...
creating our own music

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In this first lesson of the Grade 6 *COMPOSE* program we begin by looking at what composition is and making sure that students are aware that they can create their own music.

Students need technology for this part of their lessons in grade six, so much of this lesson will be about organising and working out a process for using that technology.

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Once the students have got themselves organised, you will need to distribute the backing track for improvisation, which is linked on the page after the video.

Download the mp3 file by right clicking it, and use your normal process for distributing an electronic file to the student devices.

Alternatively you can have students go to:

<https://funmusicmembers.com/compose6-1>

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A simple scale which will sound good for your improvisation over the 'hip hop' track provided today:

D E F G A C

Basically any white note except 'B'

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to download the file themselves. That page does not require a login.

The students then need to import that into their sequencing applications. We demonstrate how to do that on the video using GarageBand, and the process will be similar on any application.

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Improvisation
Today's task:
Record an improvisation using a sequencing program.

Recommended scales:

Optional: download this link and distribute to your class for importing into your individual computers and devices.
Download mp3
* RIGHT click the link above and choose 'save as' to save it to your computer. Then import it to your software using your software's 'import audio' feature.

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You can display this screen after watching the video, which shows the scale to use for the improvisation and also has the mp3 file linked.

Students should not log into the Fun Music Company teacher account, instead direct them to

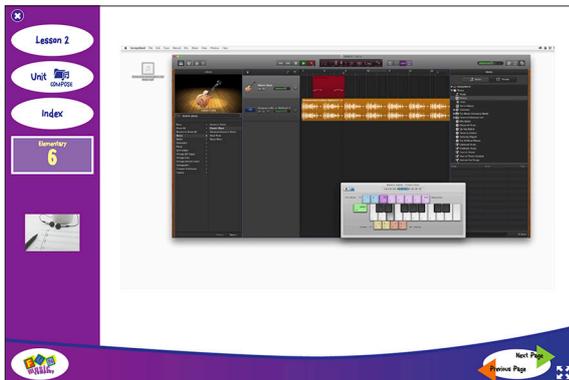
<https://funmusicmembers.com/compose6-1> if they need to download the file.

Grade 6 Lesson 2



COMPOSE

Students will record a one-bar improvisation and make it into a repeated riff in their sequencing application.



In this lesson we expand the ideas we have been working on with our improvisation and encourage the students to refine them into one bar riffs that can be repeated and turned into a piece of music.

We use the C pentatonic scale today, but students could choose another scale if they would like to. This may depend on how much of this they have done before, as we have used the pentatonic scale a lot through Grade 4 and Grade 5 *COMPOSE* programs, so if they have done those you may wish to experiment with alternative scales.

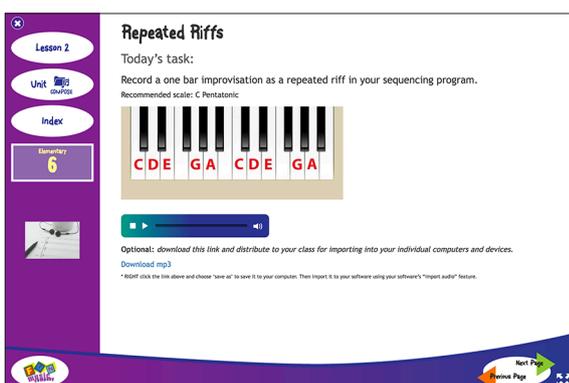
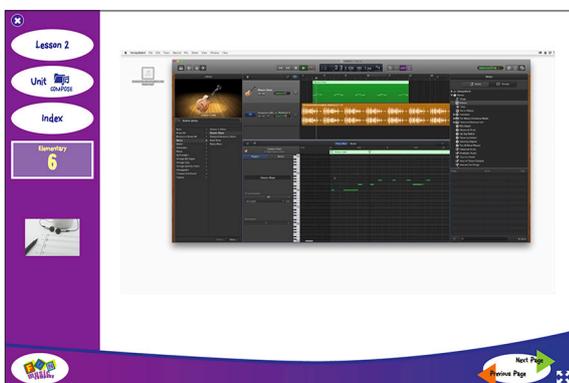
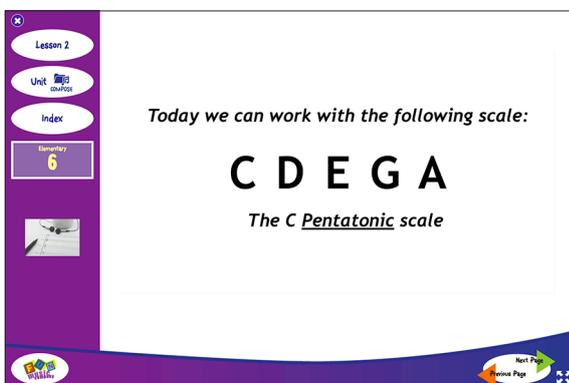
They will need to go through the same process as last time, importing the mp3 file of the backing track into their software.

You can use your normal process for distributing an electronic file to student devices, or you can have them go to:

<https://funmusicmembers.com/compose6-2>

to download the file. That page does not require a login.

Once they have recorded a single-bar riff or two, encourage them to repeat it and experiment with a few different instruments to make a more complete piece of music.



Once you have watched the video, click through to this screen to see the scale for improvisation and also you can use the track here as a class if you wish to.

Students should not log into the Fun Music Company teacher account, instead direct them to

<https://funmusicmembers.com/compose6-2> if they need to download the file.

Grade 6 Lesson 3



COMPOSE

Students will record something using more than one track or instruments in their sequencing application.

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When composing, choosing instruments is like choosing colours when painting.

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In this lesson students will expand their compositions by experimenting with the palette of instrument colours available to them in their software application.

It is first important for students to understand the concept of tracks in the software, where students can add as many instruments as they wish.

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Tracks are like the musicians in our band, and we can decide which instrument each track plays.

This composition has four tracks

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Choosing an instrument can often be the starting point, the inspiration for a composition, so it is a great way to explore their creativity, allowing them to look through the vast array of instruments available in most software applications.

If the students need the one-bar improvisation track to get started, they can again download it from here:

<https://funmusicmembers.com/compose6-2>

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This lesson really has quite a lot of freedom of choice for the students, so it should encourage their creativity.

The only specification for the achievement record task is that they must present something to you with more than one track or instrument recorded.

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Instrument colours

Today's task:
Record something using more than one track or instrument in your sequencing program.

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We have provided a blank screen with our whiteboard tools enabled in some of these composition lessons, so you can make notes as a class if you need to.

Grade 6 Lesson 4



COMPOSE

Students will create a four-line spoken chant that can be performed rhythmically.

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Start with a subject that interests YOU.

Here we go a slightly different direction, and have the students compose a four-line chant or poem that can be performed rhythmically.

This lesson could be done away from technology if desired, as they are just working on the words today.

We encourage them to start with a subject that is of personal interest. This is actually quite important, as we are wanting to show connection and composers' intention in the work, so having personal connection to the subject is one way of doing that.

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Three starting points for the first line...

- 1) "I like (subject) "
- 2) "(subject) is/are (something) "
- 3) Use repetition

We give some starting points in the video for the chant, but it is not absolutely necessary that they use our ideas, they are only guidelines.

Here are a few other simple guidelines, which are all articulated on the video:

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Criteria:

- It must be able to be said 'in rhythm'
- It could rhyme but it doesn't have to!
- It should be able to be written down

- The first line should make the subject clear.
- The second line should contrast from the first, so if the first used only few words, the second should use more.
- The third line can be the same as the first, but it doesn't have to be.
- The fourth line should tie it together and give a sense of completion.

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Hip hop, hip hop, hip hop, yeah!
Bass and drums and DJs scratch
Hip hop, hip hop, hip hop, yeah!
Take me to the club!

This is our completed demonstration chant.

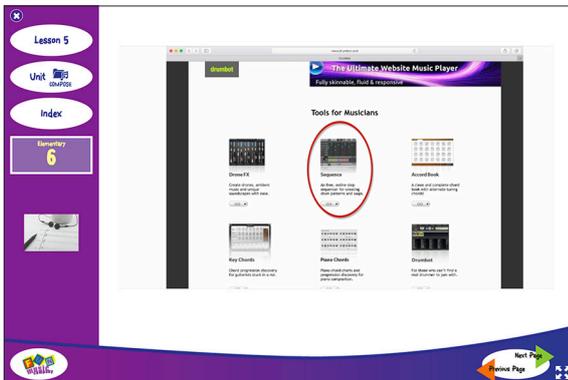
The final point that you may need to reinforce with Grade 6 students is that their chant should be positive and empowering to others.

Grade 6 Lesson 5



COMPOSE

Students will create a backing drum beat for their chant using an online drum sequencing tool.



In this lesson students can use a free online drum rhythm creation tool called drumbot.com to create a backing beat for their spoken chant.

If you are going to use the online tool, then instruct students to go to drumbot.com then click the sequence tool which is in the middle of the screen.

You may choose to have the children do this in their offline sequencing application instead, that works just as well.



Once in the sequencing tool, you will see a screen like this. The students can play around adding and removing the little blue squares which make sounds.

If they click on the track name, they can change the sounds.



This little drum sequencing tool is actually quite a bit more complex than we explain in the video. It has facility for playing more than one pattern in a sequence, which is what those coloured squares with letters along the bottom are for. You may choose to experiment with having the students create more than one pattern and putting them in sequence with that tool if you have time.



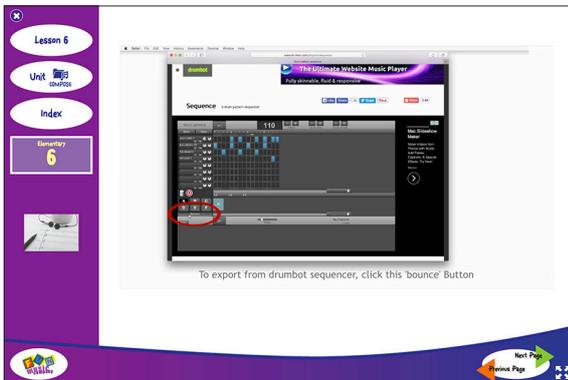
Once they have completed a beat they are happy with, there is a button on the bottom left named 'bounce'. Have the students click that button to save their work.

Grade 6 Lesson 6



COMPOSE

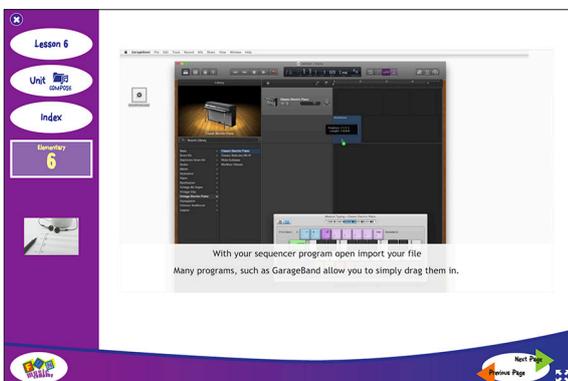
Students will record their chant in their sequencing application and enhance it with backing music.



Here the students need to record their chant into their software on top of a backing beat.

Students begin by importing their beat, or creating a new beat in their software.

If you used the drumbot.com creation tool, then click the 'bounce' button on that to export the beat as a .wav file. You can then import that into your software in its normal way. For many applications, such as GarageBand, you can simply drag it into the window.



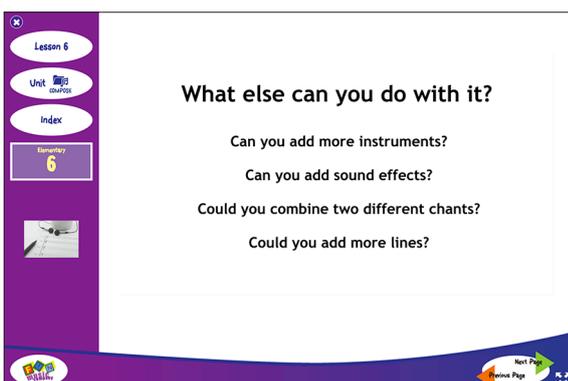
You're going to need to develop a classroom management process for this lesson, as students need to record their voices into their application in audio. This obviously is going to be a challenge, as students can't all do this simultaneously and have a nice quiet classroom environment!

Have all the students work with headphones: this is desirable in all of these lessons, but particularly important in this one.



If you're using tablet devices, you could choose a designated area of the room where they go to record the audio, and someone being in that area is a signal for everyone else to be quiet and respectful.

If you're on computers, then you may need to develop an auditory or visual signal that a student is about to record something.



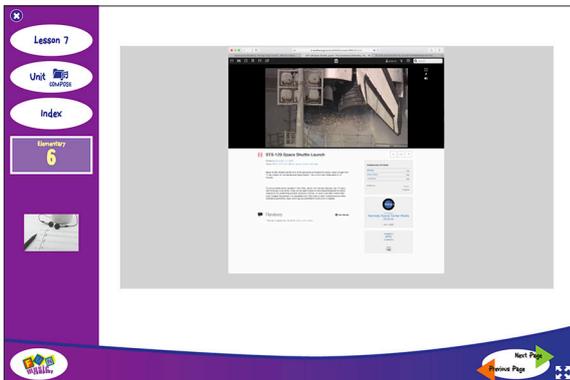
Once they have done that, again encourage their creativity with it and see if they can add some more instruments or sound effects to enhance the music.

Grade 6 Lesson 7



COMPOSE

Students will choose a short public domain movie clip and import it into their software application.



In this lesson the students begin a composition project that will last them for the rest of this *COMPOSE* unit.

Today they need to choose a public domain video clip to create a soundtrack. This is also a good opportunity to discuss copyright and being respectful of other peoples' artistic work.

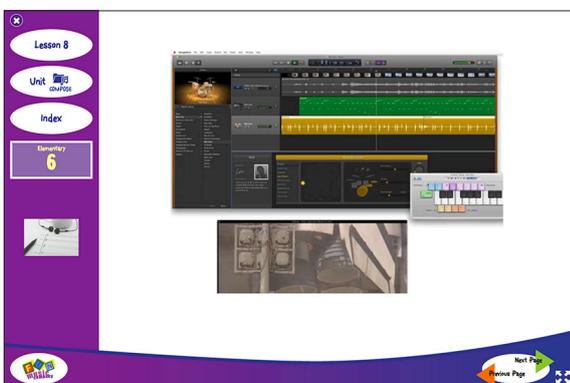
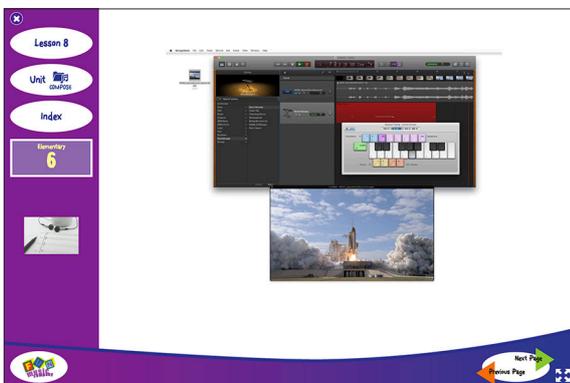
We have provided a number of links to public domain movie sources, including the moving image archive and the open video project.

We believe that most material on these sites is suitable and appropriate for school use, **but we cannot guarantee it.**

If you don't wish your children to go looking through public domain movie libraries during class, then spend the time yourself to search through and download suitable and appropriate movies to the school server and direct them to that collection.

Today all the students have to do is find their movie and import it into their software.

However if they have done that, then do encourage them to start playing with musical ideas, and discussing what sort of music they may wish to create for their movie.



Lesson 7

The Film Score Project

Today's task:
Choose a short public domain movie clip, import it into your software and think about the soundtrack you would like to create for it.

External links:
The moving image archive
<https://archive.org/details/movies>
The open video project
<http://open-video.org>

On this page we have provided a few links for you to public domain movie sources.

The moving image archive
<http://archive.org/details/movies>

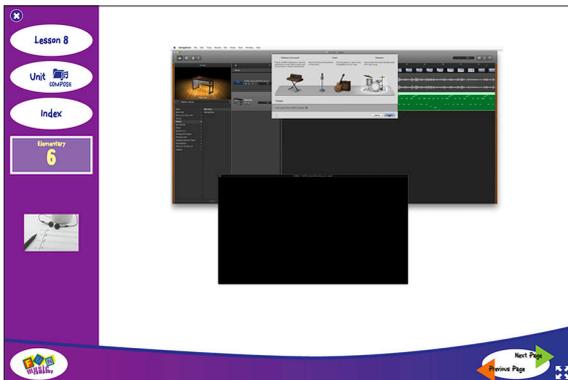
The open video project
<http://open-video.org>

Grade 6 Lesson 8



COMPOSE

Students will begin the process of creating music for their movie clip based on an emotion of their choice.

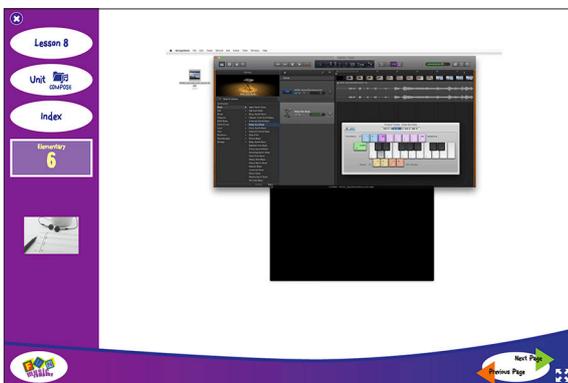


Today students begin the process of creating a music soundtrack for their movie clip.

We begin by asking the key question:

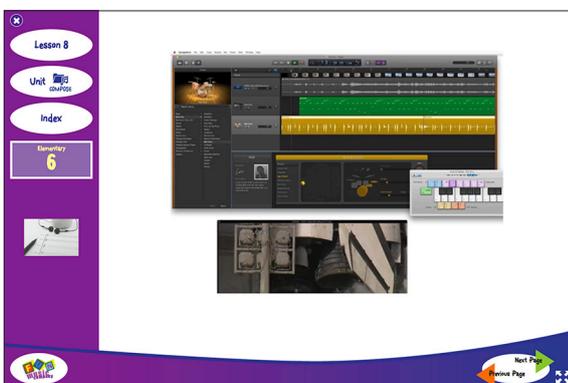
“What emotion would you like your audience to experience while watching this movie clip?”

Are you trying to make them feel scared, worried, or happy and joyful?



This question is key as if we can start with that question then we can directly connect with our curriculum outcomes in a very clear and direct way.

In the Australian curriculum we are looking to *making decisions to engage an audience*, and the US curriculum talks about *expressing intent, and explaining connection to purpose and context*.



Composing in this way is a very great way for students to connect the elements of music with clear connection to purpose and context.

On the video you’ll see us go through the process of creating some music to go with the clip.



Here you will see our demonstration ‘space shuttle’ clip, where we chose two different emotions to show how music can be added in the scene.

Grade 6 Lesson 9



COMPOSE

Students will continue working on their movie clip projects, and also complete a listening assignment for homework.

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Concentrate on the soundtrack of the movie. Listen to the music score in detail and answer the questions on the handout.

Movie soundtrack assignment

In this lesson students will continue working on their movie clip assignments, so there is relatively little additional instruction that they need at this point.

If they are unclear what to do, then review the video from Lesson 8, where they choose an emotion that they want the viewer to experience and start creating music to go with that emotion.

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Watch the movie with the picture off or look away from the screen.

Students should work quietly and productively with headphones on.

In the video for this lesson what we do suggest a homework assignment: that they go home and watch a movie!

We encourage them to watch a movie with the picture off, so they can just concentrate on the soundtrack.

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Movie soundtrack assignment

Assignment: Watch a movie and listen only to the soundtrack. Listen to every aspect of it in detail and answer the following questions.

- 1) What is the name of the movie: _____
- 2) What would you say its genre is (e.g. Drama, Comedy, Action etc): _____
- 3) What is the name of the film score's composer: _____
- 4) What approximate percentage of the time could you hear music: _____
- 5) What instruments did you hear prominently throughout the movie: _____

This is an interesting question to answer for most movies, as generally you don't even notice all the music - because you're concentrating on the action of the film. If you watch the movie paying special attention you should hear it all. Remember: one sustained note is music, so even if you hear a single high violin scream or single bass note - that's music!

It doesn't matter if you don't know the names of all the instruments you hear - use words to describe them if you want. You may hear electronic sounds created by a synthesizer, so do your best to describe them to the best of your ability.

Print out the movie soundtrack assignment handout and give it to the students for homework.

The question of 'how much time was music being played during the movie' is important. This helps children develop awareness and respect for music in the activities they are engaged in.

Alternatively you may choose to develop your own questions

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Students should continue to work on their movie clip assignments during this lesson, preparing to present it to the class in the last lesson.

COMPOSE Listening Assignment

Name: _____

Watch a movie and listen only to the soundtrack. Listen to every aspect of it in detail and answer the following questions.

- 1) What is the name of the movie? _____
- 2) What would you say its **genre** is (eg drama, comedy, action etc)? _____
- 3) What is the name of the film score's composer? _____
- 4) What approximate percentage of the time could you hear music? _____

This is an interesting question to answer for most movies, as generally you don't even notice all the music, because you're concentrating on the action of the film. If you watch the movie paying special attention you should hear it all. Remember: one sustained note is music, so even if you hear a single high violin screech or single bass note, that's music!

- 5) What instruments did you hear prominently throughout the movie?

- 6) Were there any fast action scenes? _____ Describe what the music did at those times. What instruments were used at this time?

- 7) Was music used to convey tension at any point? How did the composer do that? What instruments were used? How fast were the notes being used?

- 8) What about during quieter moments, such as connection scenes between two characters? How was the music used then?

- 9) Did you think the music score helped your enjoyment of this movie? Why, or why not?

- 10) What would you do differently if you were writing the music for this movie?



Students will present their work to the class and answer the self-evaluation questions.

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Today's task:
Complete your movie score project and present to the class

Here we expect that the students have created some sort of movie score and can present it to the class.

We ask students to introduce their clip, and say what they hoped to achieve with their movie.

What emotion did they want the audience to feel?

For example, good responses might be:

“I wanted to make this movie seem scary.”
“I wanted to make this seem exciting.”

Then we ask students to explain what instruments they used and how they did it.

This is also a key question, as it relates to the **elements of music**. How did they use timbre (instruments), texture, dynamics, pitch, rhythm etc?

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Before sharing your movie tell the class...

- What you hoped to achieve with the music you wrote for the movie.
e.g. “I hoped my music would make the movie seem scary”
- What instruments you used, and how you did it.
e.g. “I used the string sounds with lots of long notes”

Good answers might be:

“I used the jungle-sounding drums to add drama.”
“I used the xylophone sound to lighten the mood.”

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Finally evaluate your own work and decide how you might change or improve it

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Present Composition

Today's task:
Present your final composition to your teacher and your class. Discuss and reflect on the composition.

Review questions:

- What is the purpose of this music?
- Where could this music be played?
- How could you communicate this music to other people?
- What other forms of music could this inspire?

Finally we ask them to evaluate their work.

You can use our review questions on this slide or make up your own.

We hope that self-evaluation can inspire future work, and encourage them to go home and continue experimenting and **creating their own music**, which is what this whole process has been about!



We suggest you develop your own rubric for assessment of your students' work, based on your particular assessment needs. Here is a starting point for this, for Grade 6:

Needs work *Awesome!*

<p><i>Melodic and rhythmic writing</i></p>	<p>Melodies and rhythms are unstructured and don't flow.</p> <p>Melody doesn't start or begin on the tonic or have any sense of key.</p>	<p>Melody has some melodic contour and interest.</p> <p>The rhythm has a little variation.</p>	<p>Melody has a good sense of flow and direction, and notes chosen fit the overall structure, while the rhythm shows some variation.</p>	<p>Melody has excellent flow and rhythmic interest.</p> <p>Melody is well centred in the key and starts or ends on the tonic note.</p>
<p><i>Arranging</i></p>	<p>Instruments are chosen with no apparent reasons and parts do not work together well.</p>	<p>Suitable instruments are chosen, but not necessarily working well together at all times.</p>	<p>Suitable instruments are chosen and they work together relatively well.</p>	<p>Excellent instrument choices and parts written so that they work well together to enhance the composer's intention from the piece.</p>
<p><i>Use of form and structure in compositions</i></p>	<p>The student's composition shows little in terms of thought out structure.</p>	<p>The piece shows some thought behind the structure, eg it has a beginning and end.</p>	<p>The piece has a good sense of structure with variation between sections.</p>	<p>The piece has a well defined structure in AB or ABA form, and uses this well to express artistic intent.</p>
<p><i>Connection to intent and communication to audience.</i></p>	<p>The student cannot articulate any reasons or intent behind the composition.</p>	<p>The student has some reason and intent behind their work, eg they have a <i>title</i> for their work, but it is not really showing through in their use of the elements of music.</p>	<p>The student has a clear reason and intent behind their work, and some listeners can identify with this through their use of the elements of music.</p>	<p>The student can clearly articulate the reasons and intent behind their work, and the audience can clearly see their intent through their use of the elements of music.</p>