

Integrated subject areas:

- English Language Arts
- Social/Emotional Learning
- Fine Arts

Grade(s): 4-6

Lesson length: 40 minutes

Instructional objectives:

- Students will listen critically to expressive qualities *The Nutcracker* by Tchaikovsky and the *Nutcracker for Jazz Orchestra* by Duke Ellington.
- Students will compare and contrast two works of music.
- Students will perform both individually and in small groups.

“I can” statements:

- I can compare and contrast characteristics that I hear in music.
- I can describe elements of jazz.
- I can work with my classmates.

**Chicago Reading Initiative
Integration**

- Comprehension
- Word Knowledge
- Fluency
- Writing

Say: “Chai-COUGH-ski”

Two Versions of Tchaikovsky’s *The Nutcracker*

DESCRIPTION

In this lesson, students will use their critical listening skills to identify stylistic differences in an excerpt from Peter Ilytch **Tchaikovsky’s** classic ballet, *The Nutcracker*.

After becoming familiar with this excerpt, students will compare and contrast with an arrangement of the same work by American jazz composer Duke Ellington.

Students will identify the instruments that they hear and explore the differences between classical and jazz styles. Students will improve their ability to describe the differences between two musical examples using appropriate musical terminology.

Students will develop individual and ensemble performance skills by playing along with two excerpts: a slow excerpt and a faster, **syncopated** excerpt.



THE INSTITUTE

LEARNING | ACCESS | TRAINING

at the CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Music Activity Partnership

Copyright © 2008 by Cari Dinglasan and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Music Activity Partnership.
This document may be duplicated without cost for educational use. Duplication must include the above copyright.

Materials

- Hand percussion instruments separated by material type, for example: drums (frame drum, ocean drum, djembe, doumbek, etc), shakers (Eggz, tube shakers, wooden block shakers, maracas, etc), metals (agogo bell, cabasa, cowbell, guiro, triangle, etc.).
- CD player
- Recording of Peter Ilytch Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker Suite*
- Recording of Duke Ellington's arrangement of *The Nutcracker* (also included in *The Harlem Nutcracker*)

Supplemental Resources:

- For more information about The Nutcracker, visit http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/the_Nutcracker
- For more information about jazz, visit <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/jazz>
- For more information about syncopation, visit <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syncopation>

PROCEDURE

1. Listen to Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker Suite*, Movement II, *March*. After finishing listening, ask students if they have heard it before and if they can identify it.
2. Give them some background on the ballet.
 - Tchaikovsky was a Russian composer and wrote his fantasy ballet, *The Nutcracker*, in 1891-1892
 - The story revolves around a little German girl named Clara and the toy nutcracker she receives as a Christmas present from her uncle. At midnight on Christmas Eve, Clara goes on a fantastic adventure to save the Nutcracker from the evil Rat King.
 - *The Nutcracker* has become one of the most popular ballets, performed primarily around Christmas time.
3. Introduce the students to the vocabulary words **staccato** and **legato**.
4. Listen to the opening passage again and have students identify the notes as staccato or legato. Are all of the notes staccato? Listen again to be sure.
5. Inform students that they will listen to another piece of music. Their job is to compare and contrast this piece to *The Nutcracker*. Play *Peanut Brittle Brigade* from Duke Ellington's *Nutcracker Suite*.
6. Lead the students in a conversation about what they heard. Prompting questions may include:
 - What was the same (the melody, the harmony)?
 - What was different (it sounded like jazz, the instruments sounded different, it was louder, the rhythm was different, etc.)?
7. Introduce the students to the primary elements of jazz.

Instrumentation: Different instruments are used in a jazz ensemble than the symphony orchestra (ex. a drum set is used in *Peanut Brittle Brigade*). The instruments at the beginning of each piece are from the same family (woodwinds), but the way they are played is different. How? The brass instruments change their sound using mutes.

Rhythm: *Peanut Brittle Brigade* uses **syncopation**, a very common and important rhythmic device in jazz music, in which emphasis is played not on the strong beats, but on the weak beats. Tchaikovsky's *March* is played with straight rhythm.

Straight rhythm 

Syncopated Rhythm 

Form: While melodic and harmonic material is the same in both versions, the form of the jazz version is different, alternating between solos and full ensemble playing. The solos are improvised, meaning that the musicians make them up as they are being played.

8. Use the rhythm below as an **ostinato** and clap along with each of the pieces.

Ta ta ti - ti ta

Students will recognize the difficulty staying slow with the *March*, and staying on the beat with *Peanut Brittle Brigade*.

9. Use instruments to play the ostinato. Only use a few students at a time and one type of instrument. If there are too many different types of instruments, the sound will get muddy and it will be difficult to identify the rhythm.

Variations

- Divide the rhythm into parts as described below:

Group 1 Drums	<p style="text-align: center;">Ta ta</p>	
Group 2 Shakers	<p style="text-align: center;">ti - ti</p>	
Group 3 Metals	<p style="text-align: center;">ta</p>	
Group 4 Rain Stick/ Triangle	<p style="text-align: center;">Ta (hold) Ta (hold)</p>	

Students will have to listen to the music *and* each other to stay on the beat.

- Give the students a more challenging ostinato by making it two or four measures instead of one. For example:

<p style="text-align: center;">Ta ta ti - ti ta</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ti - ti ti - ti ta (rest)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Ta ta ti - bi ti - bi ta</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ti - bi ti - bi ti - ti ta (hold)</p>	

Extensions:

- The study of jazz is a great and lively way to introduce a history lesson. Discuss what was happening in the United States and the rest of the world when jazz was born.
- Listen to different types of jazz and compare to what you've already heard. Some examples are Dixieland, big band, Latin jazz and bebop.
- Listen to other movements of *The Nutcracker Suite* and *The Harlem Nutcracker*. Compare and contrast those movements.
- Read the story of *The Nutcracker*. Play any movement of the piece and have the students identify the part of the story based on what they are hearing.

VOCABULARY

Legato – Notes that are played without space in between so the notes sound smooth.

Movement – A section of a long piece of music, usually separated by silence.

Ostinato – A rhythmic figure that repeats over and over.

Staccato – Notes that are played with space in between each note.

Syncopation – A rhythmic pattern that places an emphasis on the weak part of the beat (with eighth-notes the emphasis is moved to the “and”). Syncopation is used frequently in jazz and helps contribute to the “swing” feel.

ILLINOIS LEARNING STANDARDS

FINE ARTS

Learning Benchmark 25A: Know the language of the arts—understand organizational principles of the arts.

Learning Benchmark 26A.3c: Describe the processes used in composing, conducting and performing.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Learning Benchmark 1.C.3c: Compare, contrast and evaluate ideas and information.

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Learning Benchmark 2C3b: Demonstrate cooperation and teamwork to promote group effectiveness.



THE INSTITUTE

LEARNING | ACCESS | TRAINING

at the CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Music Activity Partnership