

# Building Musical Knowledge one Book at a Time

Using children's literature to teach music standards

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When a story goes along with a lesson many magical things can happen. That story helps cement the skills that we are teaching by allowing us to repeat the skills on each page and also watch those skills develop as the story develops. Stories not only help us teach music skills, but also inherently help with many SEL skills that will help you continue to build a community in your music classroom.

Book Time! With my students each time we have a book time in my primary grades (K-2) we always begin by singing the book time song. This is an auditory alert to my kiddos to start moving towards the book time carpet. With my intermediate kids sometimes I'll start with the book time song but we usually don't move to the carpet (they don't fit very well anymore.) :)

Book time, book time, mu - sic and a book.

Book time, book time, let's stop and take a look!

## **Steam Train, Dream Train, By: Sherri Duskey Rinker:**

**Objectives:** Dynamics, Rhythm

- Warm-up with triplet rhythms for your students. This book could be used as an introduction for this rhythm or extra practice.

- Each page introduces a new type of train car and students will perform the refrain after each set of pages that introduce a new train car. Boxcar is actually done twice at the beginning.
- I like to use an UPP that would use two hands to play, such as, Tubano, hand drum on the floor with mallets, 2 shakers, or Orff!
- My favorite set-up is having half the class on tubanos and the other half on Orff. Depending on the class, I have students in a pentatonic scale and some classes do the rhythm on one pitch. Then perhaps we do 2 pitches; one for the first measure and then one for the second measure. Depending on the class, perhaps you can create a melody as a class to play on the refrain.
- I have one rhythm I use with my 3rd graders when we are just beginning to learn about the triplets. Then I have a challenge rhythm that I use with my 5th graders and sometimes advanced 4th.

#### Beginning Rhythm:

Clic - ke - ty clack clic - ke - ty clack **Box - Car** com - ing down the track

#### Challenge Rhythm:

Clic-ke - ty clack clic-ke - ty clack Here comes the **Box-car** down the rail-road track

### Rosie's Walk, By: Pat Hutchins

#### Objectives: bar basics, hands together vs. alternating

- This book has a great pattern of Rosie walking through the farm and the fox getting hurt while trying to catch her.
  - Put the Orff instruments in a pentatonic scale.
- Students will play alternating notes that are far apart when Rosie is walking through the farm
- When the page is turned students will play 2 notes that are neighbors together to show that the fox has run into something.
- Add the word “bump” to everytime something happens to fox and then as you turn the page give the students a “then the fox went . . .” so that students know that the hands together part is coming back.

## **Change Sings: A Children's Anthem, By: Amanda Gorman**

**Objectives:** melodic direction, arranging a melody

- Before I do this lesson we have a few lessons on intervals, discussing that notes can move in step, skip and repeat.
- We use that knowledge to then discuss our refrain that we have for Change Sings that Mrs. Miller wrote. Teach the refrain to students so that they feel confident with the melody. Read the book one time with them just singing the refrain after every other page for practice.
- Then have students take off the B's on the instrument or have them replace the B's with B flats if you want your children to use the diatonic scale. In some classes I kept the B's on and they made some changes to that note and actually really liked the dissonance.
- Practice playing the refrain on the Orff instruments. I play the original refrain with the first few pages and then we start making changes.
- As the first example I move the 2nd note in the refrain that is originally an A to the 3rd space C and we try that change. Then we ask students to change one note in the melody as the book progresses. I like giving the students time to explore with the other side of their mallets and then play the changes 2-3 times then ask students for another change.

## **The Squiggle, By: Carole Lexa Schaefer**

**Objectives:** On pitch singing, creating movement to go with a story

- I went to Joann's with a coupon and found a cheap red material and then cut it into strips for 8-10 groups for my class.
- Read the book and each time the squiggle turns into something sing the following refrain

♩ = 120



Squi - ggle Squi - ggle to and fro Squi - ggle Squi - ggle off you go!

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of ♩ = 120. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The lyrics are written below the staff: 'Squi - ggle Squi - ggle to and fro Squi - ggle Squi - ggle off you go!'.

- Use the squiggle visual to review what the squiggle turned into from the child.
- Use a squiggle material with some students to "Create" something that is NOT in the book as an example to the class.

- Then students will be given something from the book to create with the squiggle and then read the book again. Each group should “perform” their squiggle while the class sings the refrain. If you have time to do it again, you could ask students to make something out of the squiggle on their own!

### **Hush!, A Thai Lullaby By: Minfong Ho**

**Objectives:** rhythm practice, sound vs. silence, I and V chords, singing

- Begin by reading the book and singing the refrain each time it comes up for each animal. Talk to students about a lullaby and what dynamic we should use to sing it and play it.

don't come ba - by's sleep - ing?

don't you cry, right near - by

- You could bring out the beat buddies so students can sing the lullaby to their “babies.”
- Each page gives the opportunity for play and sing and then time to listen.
  - Young friends can use UPP with a pattern like *shake-shake-tap-tap* with egg shakers.
  - Older friends will focus on the closed bordun or challenge crossover with the I and V chords. Process with them how they will figure out when to play the I chord and when to play the V chord.
- A fun addition is to add an unpitched percussion instrument to each animal and discuss with students what dynamic you should use with each animal.

Melody

don't come      ba - by's sleep - ing?

Xylophone

don't you cry,      right near - by.

### **Let's go for a Drive By: Mo Willems**

**Objectives:** 4 Voices, Speaking, Singing, Whisper, Shouting

- Students love these familiar characters and there are many opportunities to practice all 4 voices in this particular story.
  - Singing Voice - On a So-Mi pattern sing with students each time that Elephant and Piggie find something else to bring "Drive, Drive, Drivey-drive-drive!"
  - Shouting Voice - Every time that Elephant exclaims to Piggie "GET THAT \_\_\_\_" students will shout that part while pumping a fist in the air! You can also shout on "WAIT!" Sometimes my students catch onto that part and sometimes not.
  - Whisper Voice - I tell the students they are in charge of being Piggie and I'm elephant because Piggie always answers Elephant. So if I say "We need \_\_\_\_" they just have to answer in their

whisper voices “I have \_\_\_\_\_” so they are already prompted. They love this part because even though in the book there are exclamation points, I pose it like we are telling each other a secret and then the shouting voice comes directly after so it’s great for them to hear the difference.

- Speaking Voice - The rest of the book should be spoken as you read.

**Don’t call me Bear By: Aaron Blabey**

**Objectives:** Pairs of eighth notes, quarter notes and crescendo

- Teach the refrain below to your students and have them play it on a UPP. (Rhythm sticks are my favorite choice)

Black bear, po - lar bear, grizz - ly bear, Ko - a - la!

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- Play the refrain at each page turn with a crescendo, then discuss with students at the end of the book why our refrain had to end with a quarter rest.