

Nutcracker Unit Teaching Ideas

Grades-Kindergarten-5th (Middle or High can do Create Instrument & Compose)

Length of Unit- 1 month (4-8 music classes)

Goals:

Students will create a story and show it while moving to music

Students will actively listen, analyze and describe musical forms from the Nutcracker:

-listening maps with movement activities

-learn about and describe Tchaikovsky's compositional techniques-lead to discover that he flips the instrumentation in Waltz of the Flowers (What instruments do you hear now? Which is playing the melody? Harmony? Write down, what happened?)

Students will learn about musical form

Students will create a new instrument/ sound to be played in a short melody

Multiple modes of learning in each lesson-movement, listening, playing instruments

Introduce the Nutcracker (all grades):

- Read Nutcracker Storybook-ask different questions to each grade
- Show my Nutcracker
- What do you think a Nutcracker was used for?
- Possibly video of Nutcracker being hand made in Germany

Learn about Ballet:

- Partner Activity: create a scenario where you tell a story with movement and no words
- Videos of ballet-short clips, ask questions and answer afterwards
- Ballet study guide
- Go to see the ballet itself!

Standards:

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Form:**Standards:**

- Nutcracker Listening Maps by Sing To Kids (TPT)- March, Chinese, Russian (Trepak)
Dances-form with movement, create movements and perform with and without teacher, teacher points and students look at board and follow along, students follow along with finger on map, teacher chooses student to point at board and students follow along with finger on map
- March from the Nutcracker Form Poster (TPT)
- The Nutcracker Suite Power Point by Music and Technology (TPT)

Move to music:**Standards:**

- Create choreographed movements to different sections of piece-Overture, March, (ties in with form)
- Cup passing game with March (Pinterest)

Standards:

- Create a scenario (beginning): Student stands up and with movement and no words. Class tries to guess what it is.
- Create a scenario (end): create a story and act it out with the chosen movement, its music, and no words. Extra credit if you include dance!

Explore Rhythm:**Standards:**

- Drumming with Trepak from the Nutcracker (Pinterest)
- Rhythm Basketball (Pinterest)
- March from the Nutcracker and 1 Beat Patterns (Pinterest)
- My Nutcracker Rhythm (Pinterest)

Guided close Listening to Compositional techniques:

Standards:

Orchestration: Excerpt from Waltz of the Flowers-3rd Grade

Make a chart on board (draw here):

- What instruments? -Listen, then answer
- Which instrument plays the melody? - Listen, then answer and write on board
- Which instrument plays the harmony? - Listen, then answer and write on board
- Listen to next excerpt-now which instrument plays the melody? - Listen, then answer
- Which instrument plays the harmony- Listen, then answer
- What happened? (Instruments switched) What does this do for the music?

New Instrument-

The celeste

- Intro
- Listen to Waltz of the Sugar Plum Fairy-Which instrument is the celeste?

Surprising Instrument Combinations:

- Excerpt: Which 2 instruments do you hear?
- What is unique about these 2 instruments being paired together? (How does it sound different than other parts of the Nutcracker we have listened to?) → High and low
- Describe the timbre of the timbres of Bass Clarinet, Celeste

Composition/ Project-Based Learning

Standards:

- Design, Invent and Build your own instrument
 - Do the Sound Engineering (TPT) unit earlier in the year and this time, build an instrument with a new sound -or-
 - Combine instrument sounds that don't usually go together (using Garage Band or classroom instruments) -and-
 - Compose a short (4 measure) melody
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Activities by Song:

Overture:

- 3rd-Form from Nutcracker Suite Smart Board

March:

- 2nd-Bucket Drumming
- Cup passing game

Waltz of the Flowers:

- 3rd-Guided Close Listening

Chinese Dance:

- K- Play on my flute-what happens to the sound? Starts here, does it go higher or lower?
- 3rd- Compare and contrast with Arabian Dance-make a chart with musical vocabulary (movement activity first or maybe draw or write a short story that goes with this music)

Trepak:

- K- Like dancers-choreographed routine with the music
- 3rd-Bucket Drumming

Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy:

- (Tiptoe to the rhythm of the dance, rhythm exploration (How many times did you tip toe to during this rhythm-play melodic excerpt)
- Look at music, live celeste and bass clarinet play
- 4th grade and up-Celeste activities, Design your own instrument and compose a short melody

Middle/High School: Project Based Learning Unit-research, design, and create your own instrument