

CRAFT IN AMERICA

HISTORY AND IMPROVISATION: MAKING AMERICAN MUSIC EDUCATION GUIDE

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students watch Craft in America's MUSIC episode which examines the skilled craftwork required to make musical instruments such as the banjo, guitar, ukulele, trumpets, and timpani mallets as well the connections between musicians and their instruments and music in American history.

Students will hear from various musicians talk about their personal connection to their instruments, the processes and materials for making an instrument, and listen to interviews and performances with world-renowned artists who play the instruments.

After viewing the episode, students will discuss the history, politics and heritage of the various instruments such as the guitar, banjo and ukulele. Students will learn about the materials used to make the instruments, why instruments are decorated and how hand-crafting instruments makes them special.

Key Concepts:

- American music traces the history and politics of the nation.
- Musicians have a personal connection to their instruments.
- Musical instruments can be made from everyday materials.
- Hand crafting can be used to refine the function and beauty of musical instruments.

Critical Questions:

- In what ways does American music trace the history and politics of the nation?
- How do musicians demonstrate a personal connection to their instruments?
- How can musical instruments be made from everyday materials?
- Why is hand crafting important in the creation of many musical instruments?

Objectives

Students will:

- Trace connections between American music and American history and politics illustrated in the MUSIC episode.
- Analyze the personal connections musicians have to their instruments.
- Experiment to design a musical instrument from recycled materials.
- Describe how handcrafting techniques can refine the function, beauty, and meaning of a musical instrument.



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National Standards for Visual Arts Education

This lesson addresses the following standards. The performance standards listed here are directly related to the lesson's goals.

- Document the process of developing ideas from early stages to fully elaborated ideas. (VA:Cn10.1HS1)
- Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors. (VA:Cr1.1HSI)
- Appraise the impact of an artist or a group of artists on the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a society. (VA:Cn11.1HSIII)

Student Worksheets

- *Musical History*
- *Innovative Instruments*

Interdisciplinary Connection

- Music: The study of various aspects of music is embedded throughout the lesson.
- Technical Education: The maker space movement brings together art, design, and technology to form an interactive, experimental space in which creation can happen. Technical Education teachers may help to provide expertise about materials, equipment, and tools that make for a rich and productive maker space.
- History/Social Studies: This lesson contains an investigation of minstrel shows in 19th century America, and also looks at the history of the ukulele in Hawaii, the origins of jazz, and the role of the guitar in political protests.
- Science/Physics: Students will be experimenting with acoustics and the ways in which altering materials affects changes in sounds. A physics teacher can help students investigate the science behind those changes.

Materials

- Access to online resources for research
- Drawing paper
- Pencils, erasers, rulers, and other drawing tools
- Maker Space: A maker space is an area outfitted with tools and materials for experimentation and exploration with a design purpose. In this lesson, the maker space is inspired by Scotty Barnhart's description of jazz, and the constant innovation within that musical form. In the maker space, students will innovate and transform recycled finds into instruments that produce sound. Developing a maker space, whether on a cart or in a devoted area of the art room, will prove continually useful. Consider hand tools and equipment such as glue guns, staple guns, hand drills, small saws, screwdrivers, a variety of

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fasteners, screws, nails, cords, twine, zip ties, awls, glues and tapes, and paints. Collect scrap materials including recycled scrap such as old CDs, pieces of wood, metal, plastic tubing, plastic parts, old toys that can be dismantled, construction materials, fabric and textile scraps, corks, clothespins, and similar materials.

- Note: More materials are listed with the banjo instructions. For banjos, cardboard candy chocolate boxes, metal cookie tins, and wooden cigar boxes are all useful. There are examples online of each of these used to make banjos.

About the Artists

MUSIC focuses on finely crafted handmade instruments and the world-renowned artists who play them, demonstrating the perfect blend of form and function. By exploring how various instruments are perfected, MUSIC also offers viewers a unique journey through our country's past, detailing the contributions of jazz and Appalachian roots music to the American cultural landscape, as well as the intersection of the guitar and political activism, and how the legacy of West African instruments is embedded in the American banjo. MUSIC features interviews and performances from Joan Baez, Rhiannon Giddens, Director of the Count Basie Orchestra Scotty Barnhart, banjo master Tony Ellis, L.A. Philharmonic timpanist Joseph Pereira, and virtuoso ukulele player Jake Shimabukuro. Instrument makers featured are Martin Guitar, Hartel Banjos, Monette trumpets, Stelling banjos, and Kamaka ukuleles.