

Middle school lesson
Expressing Poetry through dynamics and tempo

Grade Level: 6th

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to identify dynamic symbols.
2. Students will be able to identify tempo symbols.
3. Students will be able to define dynamic symbols.
4. Students will be able to define tempo symbols.
5. Students will be able to accurately perform tempo and dynamic symbols in their poem.

Materials:

- Hinckley, J.M., & Shull, S.M. (1996). *Strategies for Teaching: Middle-Level General Music*. Reston, VA
- “It's Dark in Here” by Shel Silverstein handout with expressive markings
- “Rain” by Shel Silverstein handout
- “Boa Constrictor” by Shel Silverstein handout

Procedures:

1. Remind students that they've been learning about expressive markings indicating tempo and dynamic changes (*p, f, mf, accelerando, rallentando, crescendo, decrescendo*). Review dynamics and tempo markings.
2. Tell students that we will be reading some poetry today and will be making use of our knowledge of these markings.
3. Have students listen to teacher read “It's Dark in Here”. While the teacher is reading the students should be following along with the written dynamic and tempo symbols.
4. Read the poem again asking the students to think about what dynamic and tempo symbols were being used. Ask students what kind of dynamics they heard. Were there any changes in tempo?
5. Divide students into groups of two or three and have them decide on how to interpret the poem “Boa Constrictor”. Have them place dynamic and tempo markings above appropriate words. List words and definitions on the board for them to use.
6. Have each group perform their expressive poetry while observing the dynamic and tempo symbols that they chose. Make sure that the students interpret the symbols correctly (i.e. that their *f* was loud and their *rall.* was gradually slower)

7. Discuss with students their interpretations. Why did they choose the symbols they did?
8. Give students another poem and ask them to do the same thing and choose different marking this time. Why did they choose these interpretations?

Wrap-up:

1. What do p, mf and f indicate when you see them in music?
2. What does rall. and accel. mean when you see them in music? What kind of terms are they?
3. Remember that next class we will applying these to songs that we know.

Evaluation:

1. Were students able to identify dynamic symbols?
2. Were students able to identify tempo symbols?
3. Were students able to define dynamic symbols?
4. Were students able to define tempo symbols?
5. Were students able to accurately perform tempo and dynamic symbols in their poem?

MENC National Standards Addressed:

- **Standard 5C. Reading and notating music:** Students identify and define standard notation symbols for pitch, dynamics, tempo, articulation, and expression.
- **Standard 8A. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts:** Students can compare in two or more arts how the characteristic materials of each art can be used to transform similar events, scenes, emotions, or ideas into works of art.
- Standard 6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.

NH Curriculum Frameworks: Grade 7 Reading:

- **R:F&A:7:1.3:** Fluency: reading familiar text with phrasing and expression, and with attention to text features such as punctuation, italics, and dialogue.

NH Curriculum Frameworks: Grades 5-8 Music:

- By the end of grade 8 students will be able to identify and define standard notation symbols for pitch, rhythm, dynamics, tempo, articulation, and expression; use standard notation to record their musical ideas and the musical ideas of others.

It's Dark in Here

by Shel Silverstein

p *cresc.*-----

I am writing these poems

-----*f*

From inside a lion,

decresc.-----*p*

And it's rather dark in here.

mf

So please excuse the handwriting

rit.

Which may not be too clear.

mf *Accel.*-----

But this afternoon by the lion's cage

rit.-----

I'm afraid I got too near.

mf

And I'm writing these lines

p

From inside a lion,

pp

And it's rather dark in here.

Rain

By Shel Silverstein

I opened my eyes

And looked up at the rain,

And it dripped in my head

And flowed into my brain,

And all that I hear as I lie in my bed

Is the slishity-slosh of the rain in my head.

I step very softly,

I walk very slow,

I can't do a handstand--

I might overflow,

So pardon the wild crazy thing I just said--

I'm just not the same since there's rain in my head.

Boa Constrictor

by Shel Silverstein

Oh, I'm being eaten

By a boa constrictor,

A boa constrictor,

A boa constrictor,

I'm being eaten by a boa constrictor,

And I don't like it--one bit.

Well, what do you know?

It's nibblin' my toe.

Oh, gee,

It's up to my knee.

Oh my,

It's up to my thigh.

Oh, fiddle,

It's up to my middle.

Oh, heck,

It's up to my neck.

Oh, dread,

It's upmmmmmmmmmmffffffffff . . .