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Sound Reflections: Introduction to Musical Journaling

Objective

Students will understand the purpose of musical journaling and begin their journey of musical analysis and reflection.

Spark Conversation

Begin with a class discussion on the benefits of keeping a music journal: developing listening skills, fostering personal reflection, documenting growth, enhancing creative expression, and building a musical identity.

- How do you think writing down your thoughts about a performance or recording could change the way you listen to music in the future?
- How might journaling your ideas for lyrics, melodies, or rhythms help you as a musician or songwriter?
- What would you want to include in a music journal to make it meaningful and fun for you?
- If you had a music-related job, how do you think journaling could help you? Which career interests you the most?
- What's one thing you've noticed or felt while listening to music that you've never shared with anyone? How might writing it in a journal help you explore it more?

Explore the Idea

Share examples of how famous musicians have used journaling in their creative processes. Find images online of the notebooks and journals to show the class.

Ludwig van Beethoven

Beethoven would jot down musical ideas, fragments, and even fully developed compositions in sketchbooks. These records provided insight into his creative process, showing how he developed and refined his ideas over time. There are numerous drafts of *Symphony No. 9 (Ode to Joy)* in his sketchbooks, demonstrating how he transformed initial ideas into a masterpiece.

Taylor Swift

Taylor Swift uses journaling to capture her experiences, lyrics, and song ideas. She often draws on these journals to write her deeply personal songs. She has shared excerpts from her journals in the deluxe editions of her albums. The entries show the evolution of her lyrics; her song "All Too Well" was developed from a long, detailed journal entry recounting a past relationship.

Kurt Cobain

Kurt Cobain, the lead singer and guitarist of Nirvana, was known for his raw and emotional songwriting. His journals contained song lyrics, personal thoughts, and drawings. Published after his death, they revealed the depth of his creative process and the personal struggles that influenced songs like "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and "Come As You Are."

Bob Dylan

Bob Dylan, a Nobel laureate in literature and all-around legendary musician, has been known to keep notebooks filled with lyrics, poems, and ideas. His notebooks from the 1960s and 1970s reveal the evolution of songs such as "Like a Rolling Stone" and "Blowin' in the Wind," showcasing his poetic influences and stream-of-consciousness writing style.

A World of Sounds: Comparing Genres and Styles

Objective

Students will explore and compare different musical genres and styles, understanding their unique characteristics.

Spark Conversation

Define genre as a category or style that groups pieces of music based on shared characteristics such as instrumentation, form, rhythm, melody, cultural origin, or thematic content. Discuss what students know about genres, and how they can be identified.

- What are some of your favorite types of music or musical genres? Why do you like them?
- Can you think of a song or artist that represents a specific genre?
- How do instruments change the feel of a genre? For example, how does a rock band sound different from an orchestra?
- Do you think genres change over time? Why might a genre sound different today than it did 50 years ago?
- How do you think cultural and historical influences shape a genre? Can you think of a genre that has evolved due to social or technological changes?

Explore the Idea

Introduce several genres, providing a brief overview for each. Ask students to describe what they hear using musical terminology. Discuss the characteristics that define each genre.

Classical: “Eine kleine Nachtmusik” by Mozart

Uses traditional instruments like violins, pianos, and flutes, and often follows specific rules to create complex pieces, from symphonies to operas.

Jazz: “So What” by Miles Davis

Lively and expressive style that often features improvisation, swinging rhythms, and instruments like saxophones, trumpets, and pianos.

Rock: “Smoke on the Water” by Deep Purple

Energetic and loud, often featuring electric guitars, drums, and strong beats, with themes that can be rebellious or emotional.

Folk: “If I Had a Hammer” by Pete Seeger and Lee Hays

Tells stories about people and places, often using acoustic instruments like guitars and banjos, and is connected to traditions and cultures.

Pop: “Firework” by Katy Perry

Catchy and made for everyone to enjoy, with simple lyrics, fun melodies, and a focus on current trends.

Hip-Hop: “Glory” by Common and John Legend

Features rhythmic spoken lyrics, or rap, over beats and often reflects social and personal themes, with influences from urban culture.

Electronic: “Strobe” by Deadmau5

Made using synthesizers, computers, and other technology to create unique beats and sounds for dancing or listening.

Blues: “Cross Road Blues” by Robert Johnson

Deeply emotional, and stems from African American work songs and spirituals. Features soulful melodies and lyrics about hardship, resilience, and hope.

Music's Hidden Message: Understanding & Interpreting Intent

Listen and Respond

Title _____

Composer/Artist _____

1. What emotions or feelings did you experience while listening to this piece? Why do you think the music made you feel this way?

2. What mood do you think the composer was trying to create? (Check all that apply):

☐ Joyful ☐ Peaceful ☐ Sad ☐ Exciting ☐ Mysterious
☐ Others: _____

3. What musical elements (e.g., melody, rhythm, dynamics, instrumentation) contributed to the emotions you experienced?

After learning about the composer, their background, and the context of the piece, answer the following questions:

4. What was the composer's intent or message behind this piece? How does it compare to your initial interpretation?

5. What details about the composer's life, the historical context, or the events when the piece was created stand out to you?

6. How does understanding a composer's intent change how you listen to music?
