

From the author

Dear music colleagues,

The first time I saw a book being used in a music lesson it was Robert Munsch's *Mortimer*, and I was hooked. I thought it was genius how much participation was involved and the way that repetition allowed students to practice their skills, and I craved more. During my internship, my supervising teacher encouraged me to try my own lessons and I found the book *Little Cloud* by Eric Carle. The movement lesson I put together with this book made such an impact on the students! And while they were exploring their movement it also helped them with their listening skills.



During my fourth year of teaching I did my Little Cloud lesson with my Kindergartners the second week of school. Months later, we did another movement lesson and one of my kiddos said, "Look, Mrs. Miller, my slow movement is like the sheep cloud!" Right then I knew the impact that these books had on students, and what a lasting impression they made. It made me excited to teach more musical elements using children's literature as a vehicle.

I hope that these lessons inspire you to take some time in your next book fair and read through some books to see how you can use them to teach your music students.



Yours in music,

Katie Grace Miller



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Good News, Bad News

Objective

Students will demonstrate and identify high and low sounds with their singing voices.

Materials

Good News, Bad News by Jeff Mack

How to prepare

Before this lesson, my students have had some experience singing songs with high and low pitches. This book is a great introduction to labeling those pitches as high and low.

"This lesson is incredibly simple and easy. It's such great practice for students identifying high and low pitches!"

Lesson

1. Discuss with students the emotions they feel when they get good news (excited, happy, etc.) and the emotions they feel when they get bad news (sad, upset, etc.).
2. Connect these emotions to pitches. I like to use the note C in an octave. My students show two thumbs up in the air for "good news" on high C, and two thumbs down near the ground for "bad news" on low C.
3. At the end of the book it wavers a bit from the pattern. Be prepared to continue with the high and low pitches with your kiddos.



Awesome Alert!

I know there are only two phrases in the book, but there is so much more going on with the pictures. When I read the book to my kiddos, I always describe what is happening on the page. For example, "The flagpole was struck by lightning! That is bad news!"

Next Time

This book reminds me a lot of *Fortunately* by Remy Charlip. At the beginning of my career, I saw that book used with speaking voices that showed high and low pitches, and I still use that lesson today in my classroom. You could also do this with *Good News, Bad News*, changing the pitch of your voice depending on whether something good or bad is happening.

Assessment Ideas

There is a ton of repetition in this book, and that makes it easy to look around the room while you're reading it. On each page, consciously pay attention to a different pair of students to see if they are understanding and demonstrating the difference between high and low pitches.



Chicken Little

Objectives

Students will understand and practice different the tempo markings *adagio* and *allegro* (or *presto*).

Students will experiment with different instruments to create sound effects.

Materials

Chicken Little by Rebecca and Ed Emberley

Rhythm sticks

Two unpitched percussion instruments (I prefer the vibraslap and ratchet, but anything will work.)

Before You Begin

Students should already have some experience with *adagio* and *allegro* and should understand that one is slow and one is fast. I teach this concept reading short poems while we move around the room at *adagio* and then at *allegro*.

I like to use the vibraslap and the ratchet for this lesson, but you can use any instrument. Try to pick instruments that have an awkward sound and that you don't usually use. You know those instruments kids always ask you about? The ones you can't ever think of a reason to use? This is it! Get those weird instruments out and teach students how to use them!

Lesson

1. Introduce your students to the instruments they will use. Practice saying the sound effect, “Bonk!” for one of them and “Eep!” for the other one.
2. Ask students to repeat after you. Say the phrase “Oh my goodness, oh my gracious” in a belabored way so that you're speaking in an *adagio* tempo. Ask your students to clap their hands to the beat as they say that phrase. (It happens four times in the book.) Practice this a few times.
3. The next phrase, “The sky is falling, the sky is falling, we must run for our lives” should be spoken at an *allegro*. Say it as if you are rushing. Ask students to pat the floor like they are running away.
4. Move to a circle or square formation.



Awesome Alert!

The great thing about this book is that these phrases come one right after the other every time they show up in the book. This helps students to really hear the difference between *adagio* and *allegro*.



5. Pass out rhythm sticks and ask students to play adagio and allegro just as they did with their hands when they practiced. During the adagio phrase, students will click their sticks together. For the allegro phrases, they will tap their sticks on the floor. They should continue speaking the words while they play the rhythm sticks. Practice each of the phrases a few times.
6. Have one student play each sound effect instrument on each allegro or adagio section. They can either pass them around the circle or move to a designated spot in the room when it's their turn. Either way, it's helpful to have your students arranged in a circle or square so they can tell when it's their turn. Hopefully each student will get a chance to play at least one instrument, but if some friends haven't had a chance when the book ends, call those students up and give them a chance to play while everyone else puts away their rhythm sticks.
7. At the end of the book, when the Fox sneezes, have both of the sound effects instruments play for the sneeze. This will allow one more chance for someone to have a turn. Then, as the animals run away, have them play allegro on their sticks.
8. Remember that this story is funny and the way the Emberleys wrote it is hilarious! Play it up as you read it. The kids will really get into the story!



Awesome Alert!

The sound effects words change on different pages, but I always say "BONK" and "EEP" so that the kiddos don't get confused, and they know when to play their instruments.

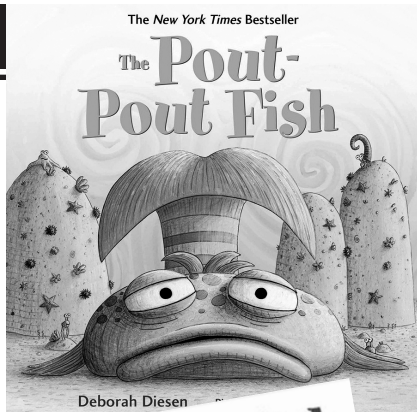
Performance Ideas

This would be a great story to act out at a parent performance (or "informance"). Have a couple of actors play the characters and the rest of that grade level can play the sound effects and rhythm sticks parts.

Assessment Ideas

The sound effects instruments allow for some easy individual assessment because you can see each student play alone. Watch the way that they play and also their ability to listen for their turns. The repetition of the rhythm sticks parts will also let you check on specific students to see if they are performing the correct tempos.





The Pout Pout Fish

Objectives

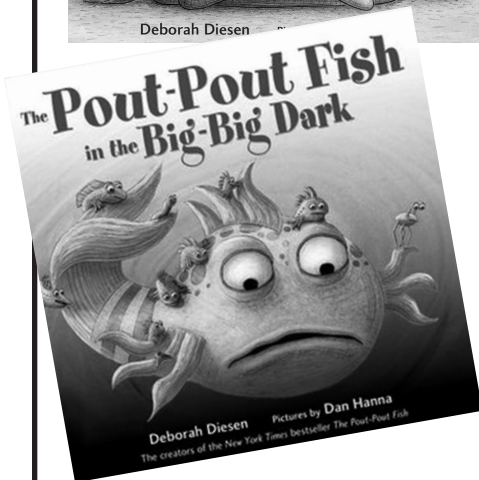
Students will identify the similarities and differences between the quarter, half, and whole notes.
 Students will aurally identify the differences between major and minor tonalities.

Materials

The Pout Pout Fish by Deborah Diesen
The Pout Pout Fish in the Big-Big Dark by Deborah Diesen
 Orff instruments

How to Prepare

I love puppets! And they just so happen to have a pout pout fish puppet! Of course, you can use any puppet you want. I start by just having the puppet do some rhythm echo with the students using all of the rhythmic notes that they know. Then I offer the students a challenge, using the puppet mouth to demonstrate a rhythmic pattern without any sound coming out of my mouth. Students have the pay very close attention to figure out the rhythm just by watching the puppet's mouth.



I adore these books! The built-in refrain already has a great rhythm to it and the pictures are hilarious. This is sure to be a favorite with your students.

Lesson 1

1. First, teach the refrain to the students and have them play a closed bordun on their laps while they sing. The last refrain will change the words slightly. Prepare your students for this change.

- When they feel comfortable with the refrain, explain to the students that when the pout pout fish “pouts,” he says a series of “blubs”. I describe them to my students as sighs, like when you shrug your shoulders and huff. Each one of the blubs will represent a note.



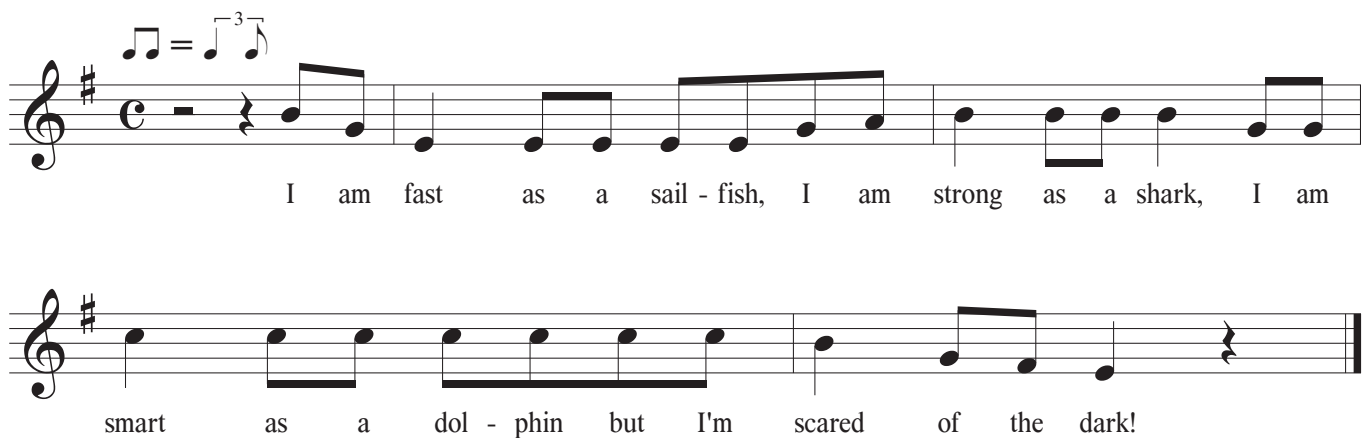
- I like to have my students show me the note on the blubs with their hands (using hand signals) on the first read.
- Read the book to the students, putting them in charge of the refrain and the blubs while you use body percussion to show them what their Orff instrument part will look like.
- On the second read, move your students to the Orff instruments to perform the closed bordun on F and high C during the refrain. The blubs will be played in this order:

Quarter note blub – tonic F
 Half note blub – third (A)
 Whole note blub – fifth (C)

- Focus with the students on the major tonality of the song and let them know that in the next lesson they will hear something different: minor tonality and another story about the pout pout fish.

Lesson 2

- Teach students the new words for the refrain in *The Pout Pout Fish in the Big-Big Dark*. Ask your students what they hear that is different between this week’s melody and last week’s melody. Lead them toward a discussion of the differences between major and minor tonalities.
- You will notice that in the books, the blubs have been taken away, but I add them back in after every refrain so that students get more exposure to the minor triad.



Thank you!

We all learn from the teachers we meet. I introduced this lesson to my wonderful colleague, Cindy Krulick. She came up with the idea of using minor tonality for most of the first book, switching to major at the point when the pout pout fish loses his pout and becomes cheery. When the second book came out, I decided to use minor tonality with the second book and major tonality with the first, so that the kiddos would be exposed to both major and minor tonality equally.

