

About This Book

This collection of folk songs is designed to:

- ▶ develop listening skills;
- ▶ keep kids singing folk songs;
- ▶ offer a new approach to the folk song repertoire for primary-grade students;
- ▶ teach correct techniques and names for a variety of instruments;
- ▶ introduce and reinforce musical concepts and vocabulary;
- ▶ prepare kids for more complex ensemble playing;
- ▶ engage students in watching a conductor and learning conducting cues; and
- ▶ foster cooperation and sharing in the classroom.

Regardless of how well or poorly stocked a music classroom is, there are usually at least a few non-pitched percussion instruments lying around, but some general music teachers struggle to find musically appropriate ways to use them. Without specific goals and set routines, getting the instruments out can be a classroom management nightmare. As a result, these teachers often focus entirely on singing while the instruments languish in boxes and cabinets, collecting dust. Their students may be able to sing quite well, but may lack the ability to play ensemble music and may struggle with rhythmic independence.

Conversely, music teachers who are themselves instrumentalists often feel uncomfortable with their own singing and assume that children would rather play instruments than sing. Because of a lack of experience, their students may find singing embarrassing or, worse yet, refuse to sing at all. These teachers' curricula may use lots of instruments, but the students may not develop inner hearing and may never know the joy of singing.

Whether your curriculum tends to focus on vocal or instrumental music, combining singing with complementary instrumental parts will engage a wider range of kids and will teach musical skills that are not possible to develop through either singing or playing instruments alone.

This collection offers strategies for teaching the folk songs that should be at the heart of our curriculum. It is my hope that the lessons and information in *Listen, Sing, Rattle, Ding* will be as helpful to the experienced teacher who is looking for new strategies as it is to the new teacher who needs a starting point for designing curriculum and planning lessons.



Using the Lessons

The lesson plans offered here progress from listening to singing to playing instruments. Each lesson should span two or three class periods. In fact, brain research demonstrates that repetition over several classes strengthens understanding and increases retention.

Listening

Both research and anecdotal evidence show that children sing best when they have the opportunity to hear a song several times before they are asked to sing, because they can internalize the song before they need to match pitch. The listening portion of each lesson offers a structured activity for the students so that they will hear several repetitions without losing their focus. Each listening activity is intended to teach at least one musical concept while reinforcing the melody and lyrics.

Ideally, you should sing the songs for your class. You could use recordings instead, but your students will be more enthusiastic singers when they see that you are enthusiastic about singing.

Singing

Singing should be the core of any music curriculum, particularly at the elementary level. Whether you see your classes daily or weekly (or less often), they should be singing in virtually every lesson. It is only with regular practice and concrete instruction that the students' singing will improve. When singing is not a consistent part of music class, students may feel frustrated or embarrassed and exhibit a negative attitude about singing. The only way to get our students to love singing is to do it regularly so that they feel confident.

Once you have completed the listening portion of a lesson, most of the children will have internalized the melody of the song and will be prepared to sing. That said, it is still worth taking the time to teach each song explicitly, both to solidify the melody and to clarify the lyrics. There are many techniques and strategies for teaching songs. Which strategy you use is less important than building a routine for learning new songs so that students can learn quickly without too much teacher talk.

In many cases, the instructions in this book invite the children to join you in singing the song. This goes against some pedagogical principles, which emphasize that the students and the teacher should never sing together because the students will rely on the teacher to keep their center of pitch rather than develop it on their own. This point is valid, and if it is a deal breaker for you, then you should stick with it; however, I also want my students to see singing as a community activity. You are part of the community in your classroom, but if you never sing with the children, they won't see you as part of their community. A balance is ideal, with the ultimate goal being the students' independence. By the middle of the lesson, you should be able to challenge the students to sing and play without you and they should do a wonderful job.

Our brains learn and retain information best when we use multiple learning modes. As you teach the song, simultaneously "play" the instrument parts with body percussion or movement that mimics the instrument technique. Once the parts are in your students' bodies, transferring them to the actual instruments should go smoothly.

Alison's Camel

Children love the musical joke at the end of this song and kindergarten teachers always appreciate extra opportunities for counting, whether forward or backward.

Listening

Draw a five-humped camel on the board. Label the humps with the numbers one through five. Sing the song for the students, and at the end of each verse, erase one hump and replace it with a straight line. At the end of the song, the camel will turn into a horse (of course!). Alternately, you can use the horse flip cards available on the CD-ROM.

Singing

Redraw the five-humped camel, and invite the students to sing with you. Let your students know that you will sing the song again and add some movements. Model the body percussion as you sing: pat your lap for the claves, clap for the tambourine, snap for the triangle, and tap your head for the drum. While these movements do not mimic the corresponding instruments, they are linear (moving up the body) and fit the song well. The rhythm of "Alison's Camel" is quite syncopated for the age group, but the students will not perceive it that way because they are really just patting the words of the song. Technically, the clave and tambourine parts line up to form a traditional Latin clave rhythm (which is why I chose claves for this part). While you do not need to give this information to the students, it can offer a reference point when you teach the pattern in later grades. (Fourth graders learning to play the clave pattern will happily sing this "little kids song" as they learn to play the rhythm.)

The "boom, boom, boom" at the end of the song can be sung as written or, if you prefer, just spoken. If students speak it, the song stays in a narrow vocal range right in the young child's tessitura. Adding the pitches as notated may reduce the quality of the singing by bringing the children's voices out of their comfortable range.

Playing Instruments

Because of the rhythmic complexity, let the rhythm settle in the children's bodies before moving to the instruments. When the rhythm has settled, introduce the instruments, showing your students how they correspond to the body-percussion parts. Distribute instruments, review parts, and let them go ahead and play.

Before the last verse, stop the song and teach the ending. Use the word *coda* to explain that the ending of a song is sometimes a little different so that it feels more finished.

Extension

Instead of following the written ending, give your students the opportunity to arrange the coda for themselves. Before the last verse, stop the students and ask them what instruments they think should play at the end of the song. Experiment with their ideas. Practice the ending the class has chosen until it is accurate, and then play the coda the students have arranged.

Instruments

- ▶ claves
- ▶ tambourines
- ▶ triangles
- ▶ drums

Concepts

- ▶ preparing for quarter rests
- ▶ introducing coda
- ▶ preparing for Latin clave rhythm
- ▶ arranging instruments

Teaching Resources

- ▶ horse flip cards

Alison's Camel

Arr. by Mari Schay



G

D

G

Al - i - son's cam - el has five humps. Al - i - son's cam - el has five humps.
 four three two one four three two one

Claves

Tambourine

Triangle

Drum

5

last time to Coda ⊕

Al - i - son's cam - el has five humps, so go, Al - i - son, go. Boom, boom, boom!
 four three two one

Cl.

Tamb.

Tri.

Dr.

CODA

9

G

D

G

Al - i - son's cam - el has no humps. Al - i - son's cam - el has no humps.

13

G

G

D

G

Al - i - son's cam - el has no humps, so Al - i - son's cam - el is a horse.

Ding, Dong, Digga, Digga, Dong

“Ding, Dong, Digga, Digga, Dong” is an excellent song for introducing or reinforcing the notation for beamed sixteenth notes. The nonsense words add some fun to the song. For the future wind players, it also teaches double-tonguing!

Listening

Sing the song two or three times as the class pats a light, steady beat. Review or introduce the notation for beamed sixteenth notes using the counting system you prefer. Sing the song again and ask the students to raise their hands when they hear the sixteenth notes. Then ask them to identify the text that is sung with the sixteenth-note rhythm. With the students' guidance, write the rhythm of the whole song on the board.

Singing

By the time you have completed the rhythm notation, the students should have internalized the song. Ask the students to sing the song as you point to the rhythm on the board. Review phrase by phrase, if necessary.

Let your students know that you will sing the song again, but that this time you will add body percussion to prepare for the instruments. Sing the song with the following movements: clapping for wood block, crossed fingers for triangle, stroking your arm for guiro, and touching fingertips for glockenspiels. The finger touches should mimic the notes D, E, C (middle, ring, index) to prepare the students for the glockenspiel part.

Ask the students to join you with the body percussion as they sing the song without your help.

Playing Instruments

Connect the body-percussion movements to the instruments they represent. Using the notation on the board, ask the students to identify which rhythms are played by which instruments and add this information to the rhythms on the board.

At this point, sing the song again, but replace “ding, dang, dong” with “D, E, C.” Repeat the song and movements until the students demonstrate the ability to do both themselves.

Distribute the instruments and allow the children a moment to practice their parts as they sing independently. The glockenspiel players will need time to work out their part. It may help to have some form of notation for them so they can remember the sequence of their notes.

Play through the song with all the instruments, then rotate. Because the song is so short, you can try singing it as the students rotate from one instrument to the next or pass the instruments. This would create an AB form in which A is singing only and B is singing and instruments.

Instruments

- ▶ wood blocks
- ▶ triangles
- ▶ guiros
- ▶ glockenspiels

Concept

- ▶ beamed sixteenth notes

Teaching Resources

- ▶ student worksheet

Assessment

Download, print, and copy the student worksheet for this song for your students to complete.

Extensions

The texture of the instruments works nicely without the vocal melody. Give your students the opportunity to develop a larger form that includes *a cappella* singing, accompanied singing, and instruments only. Allow the class the opportunity to suggest at least two different forms and try both, so that the students can compare and choose the one they like best. Giving your students the opportunity to make decisions about how they want their music to sound gives them ownership of the music as well as the freedom to make musical decisions. Even in early elementary school, students will usually choose the most musical form.

If you have time, you might even suggest the addition of an introduction and a coda (such as everyone saying, "Digga, digga, dong," four times). Encourage the use of dynamic contrast or even different tempos to create more variety.



Teachers often explain what is going to happen rather than allowing the students to analyze what has happened. Whenever possible, avoid explaining concepts and, instead, let the students experience the concepts and analyze what they experienced. Then you can give them the vocabulary for what they already know and understand through experience. This creates deeper understanding and longer retention.

Ding, Dong, Digga, Digga, Dong

Arr. by Mari Schay

C F C C G C G

Ding, dong, dig - ga, dig - ga, dong, dig - ga, dig - ga, dong, the cat, she's gone.

Wood Block

Triangle

Guiro

Glockenspiel

3 C F C C G C

Ding, dong, dig - ga, dig - ga, dong, dig - ga, dig - ga, ding, dang, dong.

WB

Tri.

Gui.

Gl.

Performance Option: This song can be sung as a round with entrances every measure.