

British Folk Music

Lesson Plan KS2

Teaching objective – to be completed over several sessions:

1. Students to develop their knowledge and history of British folk music and what is its role in society.
2. Ability to identify the musical elements of the music.
3. Understanding of how drones are used in folk music to form accompaniment and perform one to 'Only Remembered'.
4. A look at the most common forms of folk music.
5. Knowledge of instruments used in folk music.
6. Knowledge of folk music from other countries/cultures.

1. Students to develop their knowledge of British folk music.

- Discuss with students 'what is folk music'?
- Discuss what is its role in society?

Folk music is a type of traditional and mainly rural style of music that was originally passed down through families and other small social groups. Typically, folk music, like folk literature, survives through an oral tradition; it is learned through hearing rather than reading. It is functional in the sense that it is associated with other activities (dance, storytelling etc.)

2. Ability to identify the musical elements of the music.

- Listen to a selection of folk songs - Scarborough Fair, Danny Boy, The Water is Wide and The Year Turns Round Again (folk song from War Horse)
- Discuss the rhythm, mood and tempo of the music and lyrics with the students.

Acoustic instruments denote traditional folk music. Or sung acapella. Simple melodies are used. The structure of the melody is usually fairly short.

The rhythm and metre largely depend on the metre of the poetry in the folk song.

Pentatonic scales (i.e. consisting of five notes to the octave), usually using minor thirds and major seconds, are used throughout European folk music, especially in songs that are not strongly influenced by the popular music of the cities.

3. Understanding how drones are used in folk music to form accompaniment. Perform 'Only Remembered' and add a drone.

- Discuss what a drone gives to a piece of music.
- Listen to some examples.
- Teach the class to sing 'Only Remembered'.
- Split the class into two, half singing the words, and half humming to the tonic drone base note.

What is a drone?

In music a drone is a [harmonic](#) or [monophonic](#) effect where the [note](#) or [chord](#) is held on throughout the piece. The word *drone* is also used to refer to a part of a musical instrument that is only used to produce this effect, for example, a [bagpipe](#), the [pedal point](#) in an [organ](#) etc.

Folk song with Drone

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEa4zueeAoo>

'Only Remembered' from War Horse

Faded away like the stars in the morning,
Losing their light in the glorious sun—
Thus would we pass from this earth
and its toiling,
Only remembered for what we have done.
Only remembered, only remembered,
Only Remembered for what we have done.
Thus would we pass from this earth
and its toiling,

War Horse Learning

War Horse drawings by
Rae Smith

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Only remembered for what we have done.
Horses and men, plowshares and traces,
The line on the land and the paths of the sun.
Season by season we mark nature's graces.
Only remembered for what we have done.
Only remembered, only remembered,
Only remembered for what we have done;
Season by season we mark nature's graces.
Only remembered for what we have done.

Arranged By Adrian Sutton

4. Knowledge of instruments used in folk music

- Students to listen to a selection of folk songs while noting down instruments they hear.
- Discuss typical instruments used in folk music.
- Re-listen to the folk songs and point them out to students.

Instruments

There are lots of instruments associated with British folk music.

Instruments vary in the range of notes they are capable of playing. Some are fully chromatic and able to play tunes in a variety of keys. Others instruments are limited to one or two scales, restricting the choice of tunes available to the player. However, the limitations of some instruments encourage the musician to be inventive and be more creative in their composition. A variety of instruments associated with playing English folk music are described below:

Fiddle

Tuned the same as the classical violin, it is the technique and style of playing folk music on it that makes it a fiddle. The fiddle has been associated with folk music for centuries.

Piano accordion

A set of bellows with a piano keyboard on the right hand side, and buttons offering bass notes and chords on the left hand side. All the notes sound on the push and pull of the bellows.

Pipe and tabor

These are usually played by one person. This combination has been used in folk music since medieval times. The pipe has mouthpiece and has only three holes at the end of its length. This allows the musician to hold and play the pipe with one hand, whilst beating out a rhythm on the tabor (drum) with the other hand.

Bagpipes: There is evidence that bagpipes were played across England from the thirteenth century.

Northumbrian Pipes: Developed in the North East towards the end of the eighteenth century.

Lowland and Border Pipes: Played in the North of England and the lowlands of Scotland from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.

Percussion

Many different instruments are used to add and enhance rhythm within folk music. Some of these instruments include spoons, bones, drums, triangle, and tambourine.

Other popular instruments include:

Recorder, flute, banjo, whistles, mandolin, guitar, harp, harmonica.

5. A look at the most common forms of folk music

- Discuss the different forms of folk music.
- Listen to an example of each.

Folk music is often combined with dance, so these are also known as dances as well as musical forms.



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Here are some examples of common forms:

- **Jig** - a lively dance in compound time (usually 6/8 or 9/8)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ZxAVUUsuE4Y>
- **Reel** - also lively, but in simple time (usually 2/4 or 4/4)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XMWjN3o5gok>
- **Hornpipe** - usually in simple time (often 4/4), but uses swing rhythms
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfJ9QLIYIXU>
- **Polkas and Waltzes** - usually for paired dancing (2/4 and 3/4)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wf1aj_XCRpQ
- **Ceili** (Ireland) or **Ceilidh** (Scotland) - lively social dance events using folk music
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mvlMxDp_xL0

6. A knowledge of folk music from other countries/cultures

- Discuss styles of folk music from across the world.
- Play examples of some folk music from other countries.
- Note the differences/similarities between the cultures.

Africa:

- Its vast continent has distinct musical traditions.
- Songs and music are used in rituals and religious ceremonies, to pass down stories from generation to generation, as well as to sing and dance to.
- In Sub-Saharan African music traditions, it frequently relies on percussion

instruments of every variety, including xylophones, drums, and tone-producing instruments such as the mbira or "thumb piano."

- One of the best-known African drums is the West African djembe (pronounced zhem-bay). It is shaped like a large goblet and played with bare hands. The body is carved from a hollowed trunk and is covered in goat skin.

African Folk Music:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzvI6NNHlck>

Australia:

- Folk music was taken to Australia by settlers from England, Scotland and Ireland and was particularly popular in the rural [outback](#).
- The rhyming songs, [poems](#) and tales or [bush ballads](#) relate to the rebellious spirit of the bush, and the composers and singers are often referred to as bush bards.
- The nineteenth century was the main age of bush ballads.
- The typical subjects of the lyrics included; mining, raising and droving cattle, [sheep shearing](#), wanderings, war stories, the [1891 Australian shearers' strike](#), class conflicts between the landless working class and the [squatters](#),
- [Indigenous Australian music](#) includes the music of [Australian Aborigines](#) and incorporates a variety of distinctive traditional [music](#) styles.
- Music has formed a key part of their [social](#), [cultural](#) and ceremonial practices.
- The most famous bush ballad is "[Waltzing Matilda](#)", which has been called the unofficial national anthem of Australia.

War Horse Learning

War Horse drawings by
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Waltzing Matilda:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwvazMc5EfE>

Aboriginal Folk:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1pDPuetPdg>

China:

Chinese folk music dates back 7000 years; it is largely based on the pentatonic scale.

Pentatonic Scale:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qPgTG51YjQ>

Percussion instruments (especially yunluo gongs) are popular in northern villages. This music comes from the imperial temple music of Beijing, Xi'an, and Tianjin.

Yunluo gongs:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REkQD8d07_M

In southern Fujian and Taiwan, Nanyin or Nanguan is a genre of traditional ballads. They are sung by a woman accompanied by a xiao and a pipa, as well as other traditional instruments. The music is generally sorrowful and typically deals with a love-stricken woman.

Nanyin Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-YitjAPis8> -

Sizhu ensembles use flutes and bowed or plucked string instruments to make harmonious and melodious music that has become popular in the West among some listeners.

Traditional Sizhu ensembles

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5O A8HFUNfik> -

Jiangnan Sizhu (silk and bamboo music from Jiangnan) is a style of instrumental music, often played by amateur musicians in teahouses

in Shanghai; but has become popular across the world

