



PROGRAM THEMES

Each program can focus on a chosen theme using instruments from the culture or era, learning words and terms from the language or time, with games and activities appropriate to the subject. Elements from the Standard Program will be mixed into the themes as fillers. Instruments that are not “theme-based” may be used in order to accommodate larger groups.

A group may choose to focus on a specific theme for their program. The choices offered below can be added to the main lesson plan. If there is a topic you would like to concentrate on that is not listed, please let me know and I can customize a program to fit your curriculum.

Standard Program

The standard, introductory program provides a taste of each of the themes that can be offered in subsequent programs. The standard program is ideal for a first-time visit or single presentation. A detailed description can be found in the Lesson Plan (attached or on the website)

Early America

When farms were abundant and country life was the norm, and before people had easy access to purchasing instruments from a store or online, we made our music makers with what we had available. Participants will play washboards, try out a washtub bass, learn about the banjo (“a drum with strings attached”), hambone, Cajun/zydeco, and more.

West Africa

Some of our earliest, most primitive instruments came from this continent. Djembes, ashikos, along with various bells and shakers will be used to play traditional rhythms from West African nations such as Guinea, Senegal, and Ghana.

Latin America

Congas, bongos, cowbells, and guiros are only a few examples of the multitude of instruments participants will get to try as we delve into a basic salsa beat, use Spanish terms, and discover the African roots of these rhythms and instruments.

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Brazil

This fascinating country in South America with a rich history (some of which parallels that of the U.S.) and culture provides an abundance of learning opportunities. Latin instruments will be used for the hands-on portion whereas the *cuica*, *berimbau*, and others will be demonstrated. Portuguese terms will be learned along with the introduction of the martial art of *capoeira* and how it relates to the instruments and culture.

Middle East

Rhythms from this region are quite different from other areas of the world (and are quite fun to play!) The *doumbek* and *darbuka* drums will be used along with an instruction of the proper position and technique. The instruments are very reflective of the climate and terrain of the region (clay, metal, and porcelain) leading to a discussion of being able to identify a region or culture simply by studying the physical features of their instruments.

What is sound?

Everything noisy is caused by vibration. The drumheads vibrate from our hands hitting, bells shake when the sticks make contact, etc. Various instruments such as the vibratone, gong, etc. will be passed around allowing participants to easily see and feel vibration.

The Civil War

Drums played a significant role as a communication tool during our nation's historic conflicts. Boys were recruited as drummers whose roles were to relay the commands throughout the battlefield. Using drumsticks and pads, participants will learn the rudiments and basic stick technique while practicing commands such as reveille while incorporating flams and alternating hand use.

SCIENCE

ECOLOGY

"The Water Cycle"

Topics: *Evaporation, Precipitation, Condensation, Collection, Importance of Water, Watersheds*

- What role does water play in everyday life?
- Looking at the instrument in front of you, how did water play a role in its creation?
- Discuss the various stages of the water cycle.

Activity: "Rainstorm"

- Using the instruments, participants will simulate a rainstorm. As I walk around the circle, students will mimic my motions. Beginning with a controlled and light sound, shakers and slight rubbing of drumheads will create the effect of a light sprinkle. Sounds will continue to get harder and

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louder climaxing at a thunderstorm simulation then brought back down again.

GEOLOGY

🏆 “The 3 Rocks”

Topics: *Rock Cycle (Sedimentary, Igneous, Metamorphic), Plate Tectonics, Ice Age, Glaciation.*

- By picking up the various instruments, identify the area and describe the possible landforms and terrain found in that region. How did these areas form?
- What are the 3 types of rocks and how did they form? Name some specific examples of each type.

Activity: Students will be given an instrument that will represent one of the three types:

- *Sedimentary*=clay/ceramic drums and shakers (formed by collection of various materials).
- *Metamorphic*=metallic bodied drums, tambourines, chimes (formed by heat and pressure of materials).
- *Igneous*=wooden and animal based instruments (these materials are easily overtaken the presence of lava and magma)
- A simple beat will be taught and practiced by all. Once everyone is comfortable playing the rhythm, I will hold up one of 3 signs naming the type of rock. Only those whose instrument represents the rock-type will play. As instruments get exchanged, students must process what characteristics of the rock type their instrument resembles, and focus on playing when the correct sign is displayed.

BIOLOGY

🏆 “The Human Body”

Topics: *Heart, Pulse, Circulation, Cardio-, Vein, Artery, Oxygen*

- What is the heart? What is its purpose? How does one keep it healthy?
- How does breathing and air relate to our heart?
- How does rhythm relate to these processes?

Activity: Everyone will be handed an instrument. A standard heartbeat will be practiced by everyone. To simulate blood and oxygen passing through the circulatory system, the “heartbeat” will start at one end and move from person-to-person. A healthy heartbeat is one that is in perfect rhythm as it travels around the circle (“body”).

Continued →

🏆 “The Evolution of Instruments”

Topics: *Charles Darwin, Hominid, Survival of the Fittest, Galapagos Islands*

- What is evolution? What evidence is available to support the theory?
- As with humans, instruments “evolved” as well:

Clapping, Voice, Stomping



Stick against a log, Clicking rocks together, Shaking dried gourds



Use of dried animal, fish, and reptile skins placed over hollow logs



Discovery of metal



Machine-made precision instruments

- Activity: *Survival of the Fittest* – a “Simon Says”-type game. After a brief discussion of Darwin’s idea, shapes will be placed upon the floor. Each shape will represent a class of instruments (SQUARE=bells, CIRCLE=drums, TRIANGLE=shakers). A participant will be chosen to step within each shape. As the step makes contact, only those instruments will play. If a participant plays on the wrong shape, he or she will be “out” until the next round.

DISCUSSION: The “fittest” or “survivors” are the ones who listened, watched, and showed patience. This applies to Darwin’s idea of the dominance of species in nature who exhibit a keen awareness of their senses.

SOCIAL STUDIES

REVOLUTIONARY WAR / CIVIL WAR

🏆 TOPICS: *Reveille, Saratoga, Crusades, Cadence*

- What role did instruments play in the military?
- Where/when did the concept of using instruments for signals arise?

ACTIVITY: Students will be taught to play a “flam”—a technique used by drummers for emphasis. Volunteers will be selected to be the soldiers. The selected soldiers will be instructed how to perform “Right Face” and “Left Face” maneuvers. Once the soldiers are properly trained, the drummers will perform the traditional “right face” and “left face” rhythms for them to follow.

AMERICAN INDIANS

- What role do drums play in traditional Native American life?
- How did primitive Indians use their surroundings to make instruments?
- Story: *How the first drum was created.*

ACTIVITY: A traditional, non-sacred beat will be taught and practiced.

GLOBAL STUDIES

- Teachers may pick a country or region of focus.

TOPICS: *History, Language, Culture & Customs, Geography.*

ACTIVITY: A traditional rhythm from that particular culture will be taught and practiced.