

Chinese Ribbon Dance

6th grade

Kristen Helton (adapted from Artie Almedia)
Social Studies/Music

Core Curriculum,

Social Studies, Standard #:6.1.4

Identify cultural expressions that reflect the system of early Chinese civilization through artistic expression.

I work at a Chinese Immersion School and teach them this lesson around Chinese New Year.

Music, Standard #: 6.M.CO.3

Experience and explore music which connects us to history, culture, heritage, and community.

Objective: *In a 40 minute class, 6th grade students will connect to the music of Chinese culture by performing the “Chinese Ribbon Dance” based on instrumentation in the pentatonic scale and movement with ribbons reflecting the mood of the music.*

Materials:

Ribbon Streamers for half of the class

Barred Instruments set in a C Pentatonic Scale for half of the class

Temple Blocks

Gong

Mockup Demo: Display a poster of the bars of a mallet instrument on the board.

I teach this lesson over the course of two lesson periods because it takes some students awhile to become comfortable and fluent with the melody. Teach steps 1-9 the first lesson and then do a review of all those steps at the beginning of the next lesson before adding the ribbon dancing.

Lesson One:

1. **Demonstration:** Begin the activity by demonstrating the piece on a xylophone. Ask the students to close their eyes for the first performance, allowing you to just “put it in their ears.” Instruct students to open their eyes for the second playing and ask them to notice musical details (aurally and visually in your performance).



2. **Questioning:** Elicit comments from the students as to what they noticed in the piece. The comments might include such things as, “I heard a pattern,” “The music started off going in a downward direction,” etc. Direct their attention to the fact that you are playing a downward pattern, repeating it and then ending with a very short coda (only one measure in length).
3. **Mockup Demo:** Display a poster of the bars of a mallet instrument on the board and demonstrate the “Chinese Ribbon Dance” melody on the mockup. (While I demonstrate, I sing this to my students using note names).

4. **Soloist:** Choose a student soloist who thinks he or she would like to try playing this pattern for the class. Have the class sing the note-name to the soloist as he or she plays.
5. **Individual Practice Time:** Move students to the instrumentarium (glockenspiels, xylophones and metallophones only for the melody of this piece) and give them about five minutes of practice time on the piece.
6. **Group Practice Time:** Lead students through the melody together very slowly, singing the note names while they play. Work gradually to increase speed.
7. **Accompaniment Parts:** Bass Bars and Temple Blocks will play the following pattern for an introduction and then throughout the piece, resting on beat 4 of the coda. (If no bass bars are available, replace them with a bass xylophone.)



8. **Gong:** Add a strike on the gong on beat 4 of the coda (the other instruments rest).
9. **Repetition:** In preparation for adding the ribbon streamer dance to the music, instruct the students to perform the piece five times in a row without pause. The gong will strike the last beat and the melody will begin again immediately. Explain to students that when the ribbon dancers are performing they will need to play the piece ten times without pause! This takes concentration and endurance, and special attention to steady beat.

Lesson 2 – Ribbon Dance

One half of the class will play the mallet instruments and the other half will follow your patterns for the ribbon streamer dance. Perform a single motion for the length of one repetition of the piece (4 measures). For the following example, the mallet players will play ten repetitions of the song while you lead the following motions, one on each repetition.

1. Large circles in front
2. Figure eights in the air
3. Figure eights by the body
4. Right arm circles
5. Left arm circles
6. Lassos (hold ribbon just above ground, draw large circles on the floor)
7. Fire (hold ribbon stick pointing downward, make very fast, small circles)
8. Snakes (Start with ribbon stick high, bring downward quickly in a zig-zagging motion)
9. Free Style
10. Second Free Style

Each time the Coda occurs, the ribbon dancers give one shake of their ribbons (this will help free the ribbon from any tangles that are occurring) and then now on the gong strike. Dancers should freeze on the last bow.

Change student groups, rotate with ribbon dancers going to the mallet instruments and mallet players becoming the ribbon dance team.

Performance Extension

Consider beginning with a “sound cluster”. It could consist of slow, soft glissandos on the mallet instruments, rolls on the gong, windchimes ringing, and rainsticks and other effect instruments playing. As the sound cluster fades, all mallet instruments begin softly rolling an A. As they crescendo, cue the bass line to begin, at which time the piece starts and the ribbon dancers begin.

See attached Google Slide