



Lesson: Music and the Movies

OVERVIEW

Alex Shapiro spent the first 15 years of her career creating movie soundtracks. Her BandQuest piece, *Paper Cut*, uses a pre-recorded electronic track that reminds the listener of a movie soundtrack. In this lesson, students will think about how role music has in the movies and how it impacts what is on the screen.

Students will watch three movie clips, listen to three musical excerpts, then select the music they perceive as the best fit for the film. They will present their rationale for their choices.

LEARNING GOAL

The long- term goal is for students to become more aware of how music serves multiple categories of media; to notice the music as they watch TV and movies, use video games, work on the web, and access other forms of media.

RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- Paper for note-taking, or copies of the Viewing/Listening forms included with the lesson
- 3 DVDs with highlighted clips selected ahead of time. They might be from your private collection, the school media center, or from the web. Or select 3 film clips from a web site that features clips such as **Wing Clips**, <http://www.wingclips.com/>. If the movies are well known, select clips that do not include the familiar music from the film. Or select lesser known movies.
- Make an audio recording of the 3 clips (optional).

PROCESS

1. Give an overview of the lesson activities. It is a simple experiment where students will use critical thinking skills to match film clips with film score musical excerpts.
 - They will watch 3 short film clips without sound and take notes about what they see.
 - They will listen to the sound clips from the same films without the video images and take notes on a worksheet about what they hear.
 - Their task is to use their understanding of music, story, and the movies to match each film clip with its music, then write the reasons for their choices.
 - Tell students that this is not a quiz, but that you want to know what they are thinking as they make choices. You will read their worksheets to learn more.
2. Distribute the note-taking sheet and read the prompts at the top.
 - Students will watch each clip without the music. Encourage them to take notes in order to remember details of each except. Suggest that they imagine what kind of music *might* fit the movie action.
 - After watching three film clips, allow a few moments for them to finish processing their impressions.

3. Repeat the same process with the 3 musical excerpts for the same clips. Either play the pre-recorded music you've prepared, or run sound only for the same clips. Again, encourage them to take notes and begin imagining the links between music and film.
4. With their notes in front of them, run the 1st clip and find out what musical choices the ensemble made. Ask individual students to share their rationale for their choices. Repeat with the second and third clip. Encourage a lively discussion.
5. Finally watch each clip with the actual music score for the clip.
6. Open a student discussion about the role of music in a movie; why do movies have a sound track?

ASSESSMENT

Read the student notes on film clips and musical excerpts and observe discussions to find evidence of musical thinking. Note their reasons for selecting the music/video clip matches.

EXTENSIONS

- Ask students to 1) select an interesting film clip then 2) search for a musical excerpt that is not from the actual film score. Their task is to match the scene with an alternate musical score, then write a paragraph about why the new audio works with the content of the film clip.
- Listen to *Paper Cut* and imagine the movie scene that it might accompany. Write a scenario for the scene including setting, characters, and action sequence.
- Video games are another genre of film score music that you and your students might be interested in investigating. A place to start is Classical MPR's new podcast, *Top Score*, hosted by Emily Reese. Each installment explores the music created for games such as Dragon Age II.
<http://minnesota.publicradio.org/radio/programs/top-score/>

TEACHER RESOURCES FOR MUSIC & FILMS

- Lesson Plan from Read, Write, Think site, Lights, Camera, Action...Music: Critiquing Films Using Sight and Sound <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/lights-camera-action-music-863.html> Summary: Films can be much more than entertainment; they can also help students better understand themselves, their culture, and other forms of media. In this lesson, students view a scene from *Good Morning, Vietnam* in which the visuals and the music contradict each other. They then use a scene analysis framework to explore why the director chose the setting, camera angles, and music and what these choices do to create the scene's tone. Students reflect on the scene individually and in groups and then create their own scene to be presented to the rest of the class.
- The Media Resource Clearinghouse – many lessons, resources on film technology, teaching topics, and resources. Though none are specifically focused on film music, there are dozens of links to sites specifically focused on film. Great links to useful sites http://www.frankwbaker.com/film_links.htm
- Wing Clips is a very useful site if one intends to do more work on film and video. The site provides access to hundreds of short film clips organized thematically, alphabetically, etc. All are appropriate for school use since the site is also advertised to churches and corporations. <http://www.wingclips.com/> Wing Clips. Basic subscription is free.
- Naxos hosts a resource on their website that lists movies alphabetically, then provides the full titles of classical music used in the score. <http://www.naxos.com/musicinmovies.asp?letter>

THOUGHTS ABOUT EACH FILM CLIP

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE MUSIC EXCERPTS

I saw..., I noticed that..., I wondered about these things.	I heard..., I noticed.... I wondered about these things.
Clip #1	
Clip #2	
Clip #3	

Conclusions: Which film clip do you connect with each music clip? WHY?

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