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Composing with

Boomwhackers



Take your students through a sequential process that will enable them to compose with

- Boomwhackers
- Recorders
- Orff instruments

Songs
Activities
Reproducible
Worksheets



Performance/accompaniment CD

by Denise Gagné
Themes & Variations

Composing with Boomwhackers®

Songs, Activities Reproducible Worksheets

Take your students through a sequential process that will enable them to compose with Boomwhackers®, recorders or Orff instruments

Includes performance/accompaniment CD
by Denise Gagne

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Themes & Variations

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All About Boomwhackers

What are they?

Boomwhackers® Tuned Percussion Tubes are brightly colored plastic tubes that are tuned by length to musical notes. They were invented by Craig Ramsell of Sedona, Arizona. He was fooling around with cardboard wrapping paper tubes and discovered they were fun to play with. They can be used to play rhythms, melodies or chords. They are easy enough for very young children to play, but are intriguing enough to hold the interest of teenagers.

Boomwhackers are available for a reasonable price from most music stores. They are colored according to pitch - C is red, D is orange, E is yellow, F is lime green, G is dark green, A is purple, B is fuchsia and high C is a small red tube. The activities in this book can all be done with four sets of diatonic Boomwhackers (CDEFGABC). Four sets give you 32 tubes so that each child in the class can have one. (The Pentatonic set has 6 tubes - CDE GA C'.) One of the reasons that Boomwhackers have become such a big hit is that they are affordable enough for every child to have an instrument. Many elementary schools have only a few barred percussion instruments but every elementary school can afford a set of Boomwhackers.

The complete diatonic and chromatic scales are available in two octaves. You can add chromatics and bass Boomwhackers to your basic set. You can also purchase octavator tube caps that make any tube sound an octave lower. The bass Boomwhackers are quite long and somewhat difficult for younger students to play. My recommendation for younger students would be to use the octavator caps to create a bass sound rather than using the bass Boomwhackers.

How to play them:

Boomwhackers® will give the same pitch wherever you hit them. However, the timbre changes depending on how you hit them. You can hit them into your hand, on your knee, thigh, shoe, or on the floor. The best sound will result if you hit a few inches from the end of the tube. Experiment to find the best tone. If you want a much louder sound, grasp the tube in the middle and plunk it flat down on the floor. If you want to play faster notes, hold your hand above your thigh and rapidly alternate hitting the Boomwhacker between your hand and your thigh. You can also do this between your knees. You can hit the Boomwhacker with a rhythm stick or with another Boomwhacker. Use common sense if you choose to whack your body.

Boomwhackers are very durable and should last indefinitely with normal use. Avoid hitting abrasive surfaces which can scratch the tubes. Longer tubes may wrinkle in the middle if you hit them too hard or hold them incorrectly. The sound won't change if they wrinkle, but they don't look as nice. To avoid wrinkling your Boomwhackers, hold longer tubes in the middle - not at the end. The tubes will fade if exposed to sunlight. I've used Boomwhackers inside on carpet and outside on grass and cement. They scratched a little on the cement, but I've had no other problems. You can clean Boomwhackers® with a soft, damp cloth.

Begin with activities that involve the entire class doing the same thing at the same time. The songs and the ensembles that are given in this collection are to be played and sung by the entire class. Give your students lots of experience playing rhythm compositions in class before dividing them into groups to create their own. If your room is too small to have four or five groups composing at the same time, consider taking your students outside to the playground. Save the small group composition activities until the weather is nice enough to go out.

More information about playing Boomwhackers can be found at www.boomwhackers.com.

What are the Standards?

Standards refer to MENC list of what a quality music program should include. The standards are:

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

Visit www.menc.org for more information on the standards. This book addresses many of the standards.

Activity #1: Follow the Leader

Objectives: Standards: 1, 2, 3

- ♪ The students will be able to keep a steady beat.
- ♪ The students will be able to watch the leader and copy exactly what they do.
- ♪ The students will be able to demonstrate the routine for handing out Boomwhackers®.

Materials to use:

- ♪ Pentatonic Boomwhackers® - one for each student C D E G A C'

As soon as children have Boomwhackers® in their hands, they want to play. Instead of dealing with management problems trying to keep them quiet while handing them out, have the students follow their rows in a line, pick up a tube and begin keeping a beat. Ask the students to keep the beat exactly as you do. Chant the song as you begin.

Follow the Leader

CD #1

The image shows four staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. Each staff has two lines of lyrics below it. The lyrics are: 'Oh this class is look - ing fine! (Oh this class is look - ing fine!)', 'Row by row please make a line. (Row by row please make a line.)', 'Take a tube and keep the beat. (Take a tube and keep the beat.)', and '(Fol-low the lea der back to your seat! (Fol-low the lea - der back to your seat.)'. The music consists of simple eighth and quarter notes.

Begin with the beat in your hands, but move the beat around to explore many different ways of playing the Boomwhacker. Try playing on your elbow, shoulder, shoe, floor, thigh, or desk. If you want to end with flourish, bang the tube full length on the floor. This creates the loudest sound the Boomwhacker can make. While playing, experiment with different dynamic levels and different tempos. Try having the students play only when you hold up their color. Switch colors frequently. By changing the way that you lead the class, you give them a reason to watch you. The ability to watch you while playing a beat will help students in choirs and bands learn to watch and follow a conductor.

When you do want the students to hold Boomwhackers quietly, use this chant written by Danece Workman:

“If you play before I say, I’ll take your instrument away.”

If indeed someone forgets, take their Boomwhacker away until they demonstrate that they can wait quietly.

Activity #2: Improvisation

Objectives: Standards: 2, 3, 5

- ♪ The students will improvise rhythms while maintaining a steady beat.
- ♪ The students will play only when their color is held up.

Materials to use:

- ♪ Pentatonic Boomwhackers® - one for each student C D E G A C'
- ♪ Hand drum

Before beginning to create written compositions, students need many opportunities to improvise. There is a multitude of ways that you can have students improvise. Play a steady beat on a hand drum and ask all the students to improvise rhythms. Change meters. Play the beat in 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, and 6/8 meters. Try some improvisation in 5/4 and 7/4. Encourage the students to play the Boomwhackers® in a variety of ways - on hands, feet, shoes, desks, the floor, or elbows. They should use common sense when playing Boomwhackers on their body. I draw the line at playing the Boomwhackers on another student. (They are only allowed to play on their own body.) Have the students move to the beat while they play. They may find some interesting timbres around the classroom.

In the beginning, have everyone play at the same time. Then have students sit down and ask only those whose color is shown, to play. Place various color combinations on a music stand at the front of the room. If their color is on the stand, the student plays. If not, they rest. You could have students that are not playing Boomwhackers keep a steady beat using body percussion: In 4/4 use pat, clap, snap left, snap right. In 3/4 use pat, clap, snap. Challenge your students to find a different rhythm and timbre than those around them. If your students get stuck on ta ta titi ta, have them begin each measure with a titi.

Have students answer questions with the Boomwhackers®. Teacher says, "What is your name?" playing the words on the Boomwhacker. Student answers, "My name is Allyson". Encourage the students to use silly answers as well as real ones. "My name is macaroni" or "My name is Jessica, the greatest rock star ever". Have the rest of the class echo the answers. Make up questions with open ended answers. "What is your favorite food?"

Make overheads or charts of the Boomwhacker ostinatos that are given on page six. Choose an ostinato and assign a group to play it. Use other combinations of colors to improvise. You could create a rondo using this form: Theme A: ostinato 4x

B: Improvise on orange (D), yellow (E), and green (G).

Theme A: ostinato 4x

C: Improvise on yellow (E) and green (G).

Theme A: ostinato 4x

D: Improvise on green (G), purple (A), and small red (high C).

Theme A: ostinato 4x Decrescendo till the end.

As a class, create your own ostinato patterns. (This must be a teacher led activity.) Use colored, washable overhead markers to notate the suggested patterns in one of the blank ostinato templates that are given on page six. Ask students to suggest tones and rhythms to use. Try them and ask the students which they like the best. Write down the patterns on the overhead that the students prefer. Improvise with your new ostinato. If you have time, copy 10-15 blank ostinato templates. Divide the class into small groups and have each group write an ostinato pattern.

Ostinato Patterns to Accompany Improvisation

Ostinato #1

Musical notation for Ostinato #1, consisting of four staves in 4/4 time. The first staff has a whole rest followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The second staff has a quarter note G4, a quarter rest, and a quarter note G4. The third staff has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The fourth staff has a quarter note G4, a quarter rest, and a quarter note G4. Each staff ends with a repeat sign.

Ostinato #2

Musical notation for Ostinato #2, consisting of four staves in 4/4 time. The first staff has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note G4. The second staff has a quarter note G4, a quarter rest, and a quarter note G4. The third staff has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The fourth staff has a quarter note G4, a quarter rest, and a quarter note G4. Each staff ends with a repeat sign.

Create an Ostinato

Blank musical notation for creating an ostinato, consisting of four staves in 4/4 time, each starting with a treble clef and a common time signature.

Blank musical notation for creating an ostinato, consisting of four staves in 4/4 time, each starting with a treble clef and a common time signature.

Activity #3: Improvisation Within a Song

Objectives: Standards: 1, 2, 3

- ♪ The students will improvise rhythms at the appropriate place in the song.
- ♪ The students will sing the song.

Materials to use:

- ♪ Diatonic Boomwhackers® - one for each student. C D E F G A B C'

To Do:

1. Teach the song by rote.
2. Hand out the Boomwhackers and have the students sit in a circle. All the students with the big red (C) should sit together. All the students with orange (D) should sit next to them. Continue in this way so that the students can play a C scale. Practice playing the scale several times.
3. Sing the song. Have the big reds (Cs) play with the first measure and improvise for one measure after that. Have the oranges (Ds) play with the words "Two two lots to do" and improvise for one measure after that. Continue in this way until the end of the song.
4. Create movement to go with the song.

One One Time for Fun!

CD #2/3

The musical score is written on five staves of music in treble clef with a common time signature (C). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff contains the first two lines of the song. The second staff contains the next two lines. The third staff contains the next two lines. The fourth staff contains the next two lines, with a first ending bracket above the final measure. The fifth staff contains the final line of the song, with a second ending bracket above the first measure.

One one time for fun! Two two lots to do.
Three three on your knee. Four four on the floor.
Five five do the jive. Six six hit those sticks.
Sev-en sev-en up to heav-en. Eight eight don't be late.
Eight seven six five four three two one That's all!

Activity #4: Create a Rhythm Composition

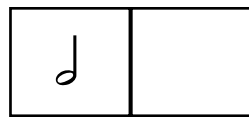
Objectives:

Standards: 2, 4, 5

- ♪ The students will create a 16 beat rhythm composition in 4/4 time.
- ♪ The students will perform their composition on Boomwhackers®.

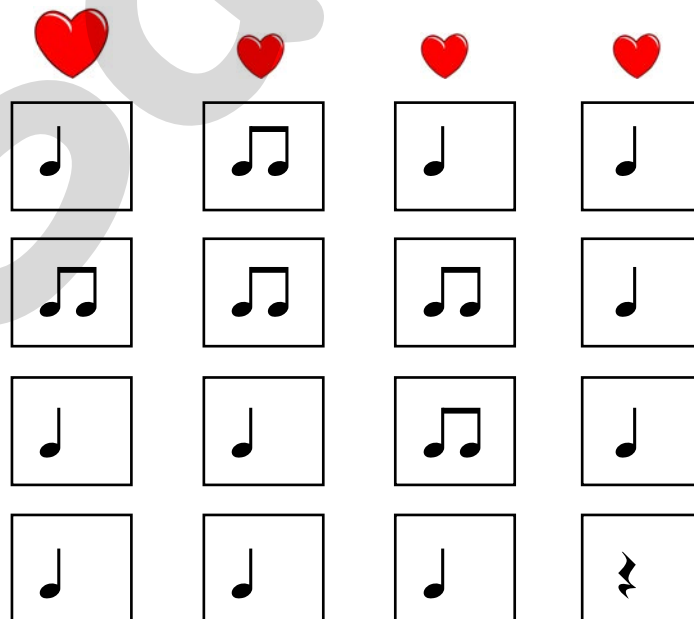
Materials to use:

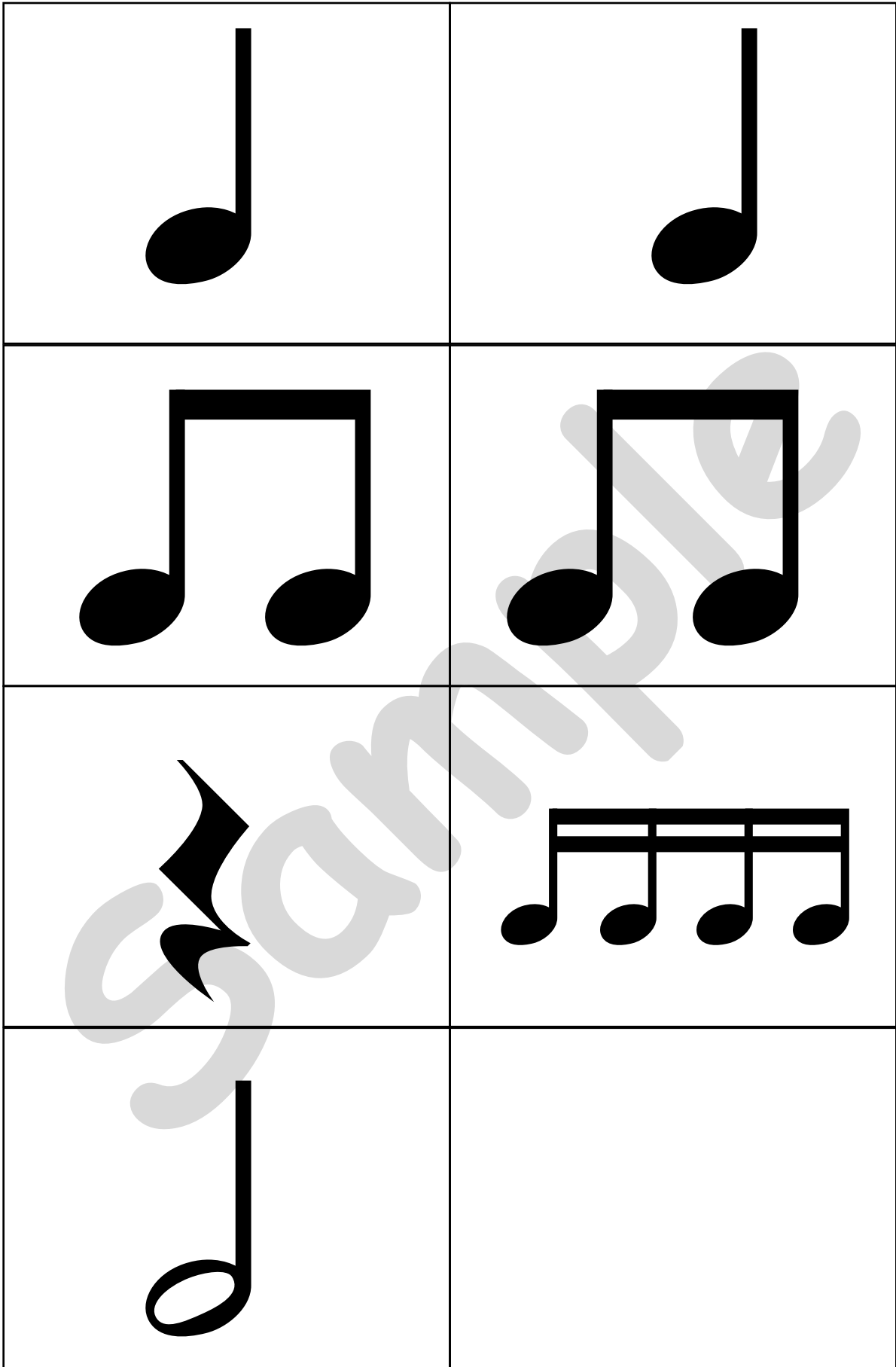
- ♪ Pentatonic Boomwhackers - one for each student
- ♪ Note cut-outs - use only ♪ ♪♪ ♪ the first time you do this activity. Photocopy 100 sets of the note cutouts that are given in pages that follow. Cut the notes up on a paper cutter. For a class set use 25-30 envelopes. In each envelope place 10 ♪ 10 ♪♪ and 5 ♪. Have some extra notes in a container in case students want more of any one note value. Mark on the outside of the envelope the notes used, so that this set doesn't get mixed up with sets using different note values. For note values longer than one beat, be sure to cut out the extra square or squares that indicate how many beats the note is held for. For example, for a half note you would cut out two squares.



Divide your students into groups and give each group (or each individual student) an envelope of notes. Tell the students that each square represents one beat. Individual students or small groups of students (2-4) will create a 16 beat rhythm pattern in 4/4 time. If they are in 4/4 time, they need four squares of notes to make one measure of music. Encourage them to create a final point in the music by having them always end with ♪ ♪ or with ♪ ♪. If they end with ♪♪ it will not feel like they are at the end. Make an overhead of the example below, or place the notes in a pocket chart and have students play it. Ten different ways to play this rhythm pattern are suggested on page 13. The students will have to decide in their groups how to play their patterns.

When students are competent writing patterns using ♪ ♪♪ ♪ extend their skills by making up note sets with more complex rhythms such as ♪♪♪♪, ♪♪♪, ♪♪♪, ♪ ♪ ♪ and ♪. These are given in the note squares for you to copy.





Two Sets of Tubes

Part 1

Part 2

Musical score for 'Two Sets of Tubes' in common time (C). Part 1 (top staff) starts with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody consists of eighth notes and quarter notes. Part 2 (bottom staff) also starts with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody consists of quarter notes and eighth notes. A large, faint watermark 'SAMPLE' is visible across the page.

Twice the Fun

Part 1

Part 2

Musical score for 'Twice the Fun' in common time (C). Part 1 (top staff) starts with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody consists of eighth notes and quarter notes. Part 2 (bottom staff) also starts with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody consists of quarter notes and eighth notes. A large, faint watermark 'SAMPLE' is visible across the page.

Syncopated Sounds

Part 1

Part 2

Musical score for 'Syncopated Sounds' in common time (C). Part 1 (top staff) starts with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody consists of eighth notes and quarter notes. Part 2 (bottom staff) also starts with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody consists of quarter notes and eighth notes. A large, faint watermark 'SAMPLE' is visible across the page.

Activity #7: Sing and Play a B Section

AABA Form

Objectives:

Standards: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7

- ♪ The students will sing the A section of a piece.
- ♪ The students will create and perform rhythm compositions to be the B section. Use C D E G A C'
- ♪ The students can add C chords as indicated in the music.

Whacky Kind of Sound

A: CD #12/13

It's a whack-y kind of sound and it's sure a lot of fun to play

You just make a lit - tle rhy - thm and play it all through the day!

If you're look - ing for some fun you can

play till day is done Mak - ing mu - sic sure is fun this way!

A: It's a whacky kind of sound and it's sure a lot of fun to play.
 You just make a little rhythm and play it all through the day!
 You don't have to leave your seat, you just have to feel the beat.
 Making music sure is fun this way!

B: Rhythm Composition (eight bars)

A: It's a whacky kind of sound and it's sure a lot of fun to play.
 You just make a little rhythm and play it all through the day!
 When you find a sound that's cool, play it all around your school.
 Making music sure is fun this way!

Perform this song as follows: **A A B A**

A: Sing verse one

A: Sing verse two

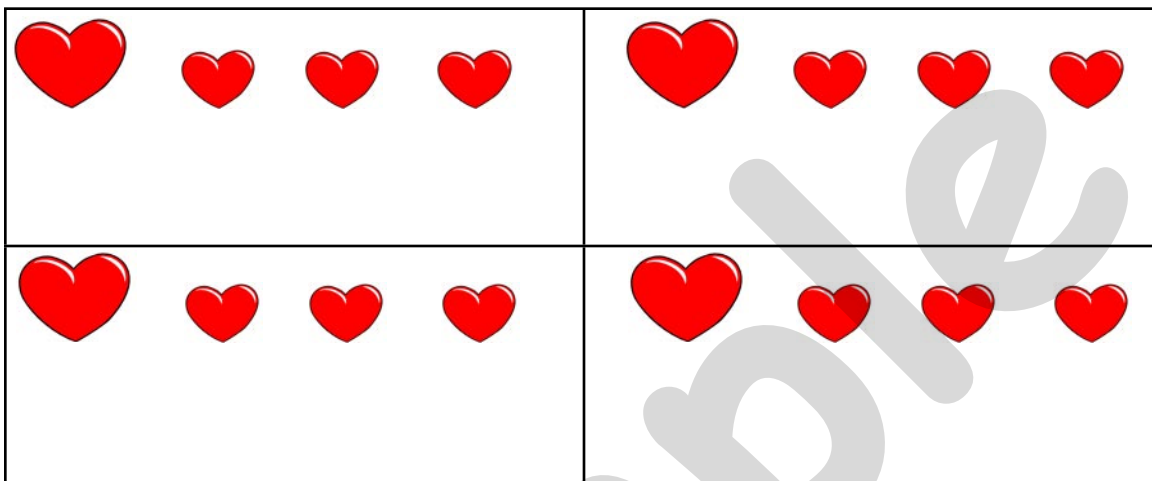
B: Perform eight measure rhythm composition (or two four measure compositions)

A: Sing verse three

Activity #9: Rhythm Composition with an Ostinato

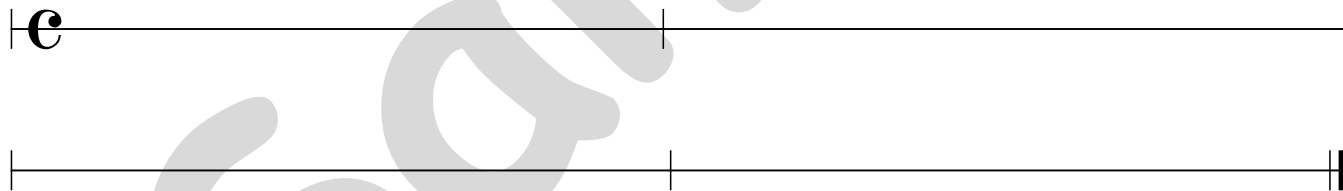
To do: Write a new rhythm composition using the beat chart. Then copy your rhythm onto the four measure staff below.

Beat Chart One - 4/4 time



Part One

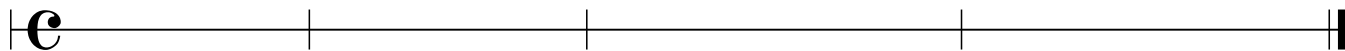
Composed by _____



To do: Write a four beat ostinato using the beat chart. Then copy your rhythm onto the four measure staff below. Copy it four times. This is because an ostinato is a repeated pattern.

Ostinato

Composed by _____



To do: Perform your rhythm composition with the ostinato. Decide what your form will be.

Chants and Poems to Orchestrate

To Do: Choose a poem to play on your Boomwhackers®.

1. Say your poem. Then say your poem playing it on Boomwhackers. Decide how you want to play it.
2. Try it. Do you like the way it sounds? If not, what would you like to change?
3. Create an ostinato to play with your poem. Use Boomwhackers®, body percussion or drums.
4. Try the poem with the ostinato. Do you like the way it sounds? If not, what would you like to change?
5. Add sound effects, accompaniment and movement.
6. Decide on a final form. Perform it for the class.

Doctor Bell

Doctor Bell fell down the well
And broke his collar bone.
Doctors should attend the sick
And leave the well alone.

Juba This and Juba That

Juba this and Juba that
Juba chased a yellow cat
Juba up and Juba down
Juba running all around

Once I Caught a Fish

One, two, three, four, five,
Once I caught a fish alive,
Six, seven, eight, nine, ten,
Then I let go again.

Why did you let it go?

Because it bit my finger so.
Which finger did it bite?
This little finger on the right.

Round And Round The Rugged Rock

Round and round the rugged rock
The ragged rascal ran,
Count the R's that are in that!
Tell me if you can.

Doodle Doodle Doo

Doodle, doodle, doo,
The princess lost her shoe;
Her highness hopped! The fiddler stopped,
Not knowing what to do.

Jelly in the Bowl

Jelly in the bowl,
Jelly in the bowl,
Wobble wobble, wobble wobble,
Jelly in the bowl.

Andy Spandy

Andy Spandy, sugar candy, I pop down,
Andy Spandy, sugar candy, I pop up,
Andy Spandy, sugar candy, I pop in,
Andy Spandy, sugar candy, I pop out.

Sitting in the Classroom

Sitting in the classroom
Chewing bubble-gum
In walks the principal
Out goes the gum!

Don't Say Ain't

Don't say ain't
Your mother will faint
Your father will fall in a bucket of paint
Your sister will cry and your brother might fly
And your grandmother won't bake an apple pie
And the dog and the cat will say goodbye.

Goblins and Ghosties

Goblins and ghosties
Beasties and bats
Show us a face
That looks like that!

The Turkey Got Away

Oh my goodness, the turkey got away!
What will we eat on Thanksgiving Day?

Here is the Chimney

Here is the chimney
Here is the top
Open the lid and
Out Santa pops!

As I Was Sitting

As I was sitting in my chair,
I KNEW the bottom wasn't there,
Nor legs nor back, but I JUST SAT,
Ignoring little things like that.

Here Comes the Teacher Yelling

















Here comes the teacher yelling
Wonder what I got in spelling?
Now he's coming up the path
Wonder what I got in math?

Motion

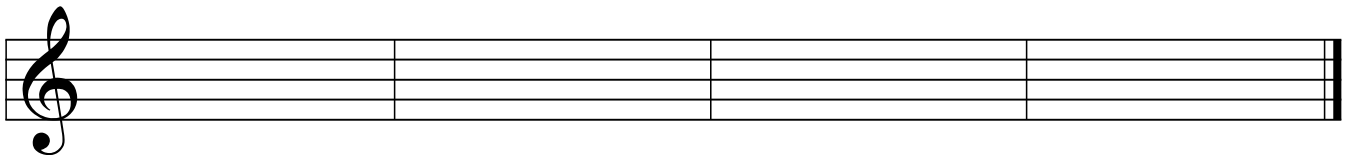
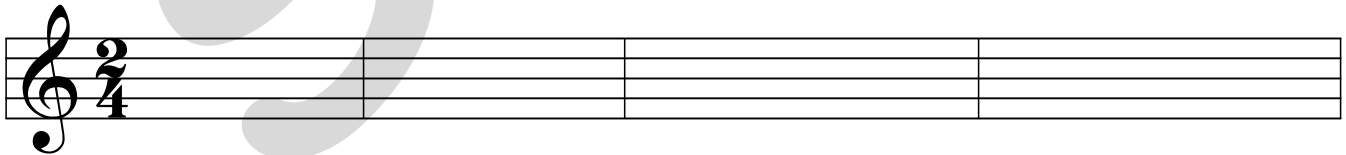
Fishes swim in water clear,
Birds fly up into the air,
Serpents creep along the ground,
Boys and girls run round and round.

Title: _____

1. Create an eight bar rhythm pattern in 2/4. Use just ♩ ♪ ♫ ♬. Write the rhythms under the hearts.
2. In your groups, decide which Boomwhacker should play which notes. Do this out loud. Play the Boomwhackers® to decide what you like. Pencil the letter names under the rhythms. Try it out. If you like the way it sounds, keep it. If you don't like the way it sounds, change it.
3. Write your notes and rhythms on the musical staff. Each student should complete one.

Composed by: _____



Activity #20: Write a Song

Activity #20: Write a Song

Objectives:

Standards: 1, 2, 4, 5, 8

♪ The students will create their own poem and a melody for that poem.

Materials needed:

♪ C D E G A Boomwhackers (use pentatonic only the first time you try this activity)

In this activity, the students will write a short poem and create a melody for the poem - in other words, the students will write their own song. If you wish, give the students a topic to write about - choose an animal. Use the example given below to demonstrate the process. Make an overhead of the student page and write out the song using each step.

Step 1: Write a short poem. Sixteen beats is long enough for the first effort.

Step 2: After your poem is written, figure out what the rhythm (the tas and titis) will be. How do the words go? Clap as you say the words. What you clap will be the rhythm. Write the rhythm below the words.

Step 3: Use the Boomwhackers or sing to choose the notes that you will use. Write the letter names under the rhythms. Sing and play your song. Change any part of it that you don't like.

Step 4: When you like the way your song sounds, write it on the staff.

My cat likes to sneak out-side and chase a-way the birds.

C C D D E G G G A A G E D

Why can't he just stay in- side, sit on my knee and purr?

G G A G E D C E G G E D C

My cat likes to sneak out - side and chase a - way the birds.

Why can't he just stay in - side, sit on my knee and purr?

The image displays eight horizontal musical staves, each beginning with a treble clef. Each staff is divided into four equal measures by vertical bar lines. A large, semi-transparent watermark with the word "SAMPLE" in a stylized font is placed diagonally across the center of the page, overlapping the staves.