

EAST MEETS WEST-CHINESE TRADITIONAL INSTRUMENTS
LESSON PLAN for 9th -12th Grade
(UNIT 1-lesson 2: Timbre and Instrumental Categories in China

Class/Age: 9th-11th Grade
Lesson Time: 45 minutes

Leading Questions: What are standard classes of instruments?
How do instrument classifications apply to Chinese instruments?
Which Chinese traditional instruments are modeled after European and non-Chinese prototypes?
Which Chinese instruments have inspired non-Chinese instruments?

Objective: Students will gain an understanding of how Chinese musical instruments may be categorized and how this affects timbral qualities. Students will classify and sort a spectrum of Chinese musical instruments.

Unit Critical Vocabulary: timbre, tonal color, organology, envelope, chordophone, membranophone, metallophone, aerophone, Hornbostel-Sachs index.

Content Standard:

- **New York State Standard #1.** Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts. Students will actively engage in the processes that constitute creation and performance in the art
- **National Standard #2.** Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
- **National Standard #5.** Reading and notating music.
- **National Standard #6:** Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
- **National Standard #7:** Evaluating music and music performances

ELA Standards:

- **Standard RL:** Craft instruction; determine meanings through figurative use of language.
- **Standard L:** Use of knowledge of language and conventions.

National Standards for Music: 2. Performing with voice, instrument, alone or with others, a varied repertoire of music.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing and describing music.
9. Students will improvise with instruments and voice.

On board: Objective worded as “How do instruments group into families in China and around the world?”; Do Now; Definitions for chordophone, membranophone, metallophone, aerophone; Images of various Chinese and non-Chinese instruments and labels of instrument classes to be moved around and sorted on board.

Do Now: Without previous prompts or information, students will match Chinese and non-Chinese instruments to the corresponding instrumental categories online with site. They will then compare their conclusions with a partner, justifying their response and explaining on what grounds they drew these conclusions.

Lower-order thinking prompts: How can we sort musical instruments and what are defining features for musical instruments?

In what ways can musical instruments straddle and defy these categorizations?
How do these categories serve in organizing music and musical structures/

Higher-order thinking prompts:

What is the philosophy behind classification systems and what methodology obtains with the Hornbostel-Sachs taxonomy? What would be other viable systems of instrument classification and what would be the corresponding methodologies for ordering and classing instruments?

Students turn and talk focusing on these prompts. Substantiate your hypotheses with supporting details and back these up with secondary proofs and speak to the various elements, which constitute timbre.

Procedure:

1. Students share their observations from the Do Now to the class.
2. Teacher provides mini-lesson overview of the Hornbostel-Sachs taxonomy and traditional Chinese methodologies for grouping instruments both generally and in instrumental orchestras.
3. Group discussion of factors in classifying instruments and creating taxonomies at large. Students collectively formulate a list of general criteria for creating an instrumental taxonomy for Chinese instruments.
4. Students break out in small groups to work on their own classification system, choosing either one individual category such as chordophone, multiple categories, or an instrument, which they believe defies or straddles classification. Students use the online sound samples provided for the various instruments. They plan a visual design to show the way they have classified their instruments to be completed outside of class.

Ongoing Peer-to-Peer and Self Assessment in Instruction:

Methods: Teacher modeling, and student-led modeling, participation with peer-peer and self evaluation, small groups, and group ensemble, if appropriate video assessments.

In pairs, students will evaluate the success of their own and their partners' reflections and critical assessments.

Self-selected student groups will eventually share their visual presentations to the class with selection also based on teacher assessment of respective group work.

Class reflection on impact of classifying instrument families in music and especially as germane to Chinese traditional repertoires.

Written Reflection: Write a reflection of two well-reasoned coherent and substantiated paragraphs on the benefit or impact of developing taxonomies and how this affects how music is conceived and created.

Project Assignment: Small groups realize the visual design projects brainstormed in class to show the way they have classified their selected instruments.

Materials: Audio files of Chinese instruments online, blank paper, images of Chinese instruments, PPT presentation, <http://teacherweb.com/TX/TrinityUniversity/WhatsaChineseChordophone/uh2.aspx>