

DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS



EDUCATION GUIDE

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

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Arizona Academic and Common Core Standards

The standards below can be achieved through the implementation of the entire guide. Feel free to expand or condense the lessons and standards to fit your classroom's needs.

Arizona Music Standard(s)

Strand 2, Concept 1, PO 1 (Grades 4-5): Identify the use/function of music from various cultures correlating to grade level social studies curriculum.

Strand 2, Concept 1, PO 4 (K-6): Explore and analyze the relationship of music to language arts, visual arts and literature.

Strand 2, Concept 2, various POs (K-6): Understand music in relation to history and culture (identify/describe the origins and developments of instruments; compare and contrast the influences of music in various cultures, etc.).

Strand 2, Concept 3, PO 1 (4-6): Describe, reflect on, and discuss the roles and impact music plays in their lives and the lives of others.

Strand 3, Concept 1, PO 2 (K-3): Name, identify, classify and categorize a variety of instruments.

Strand 3, Concept 2, PO 1 (5-6): Create and apply established criteria (e.g., **dynamics**) to evaluate performances and compositions.

Arizona Science Standard(s)

Strand 1, Concept 1 (K-3): Observe, ask questions and make predictions.

Strand 5, Concept 1 (K-4): Classify objects and materials by their observable properties.

Arizona Social Studies Standard(s)

Strand 1, Concept 2 (K-6): Recognize the Native American are the original inhabitants of North America and describe their culture and contributions Describe their cultures and contributions (e.g., Ancestral Puebloans (Anasazi), Hohokam, Aztec, Mayan).

Strand 1, Concept 3 (K-5): Describe the interaction of Native Americans with the Spanish (e.g., arrival of Columbus, settlement of St. Augustine, exploration of the Southwest, exchange of ideas, culture and goods). Describe the impact of Spanish colonization.

Strand 2, Concept 5 (K-6): Describe the effects and impact of European Exploration, trade and colonization on other parts of the world.

Common Core Writing Standard(s)

Text Types and Purposes (3-5): 1. Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.

Common Core Speaking and Listening Standard(s)

Comprehension and Collaboration (3-5): 1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on appropriate topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CONCERT REPERTOIRE

Son de la Negra
Chiapanecas
Sobre las Olas
La Cucaracha
Procesión (Toussaint)
Le Jardin Féérique
El Sombrero de Tres Picos
Jarabe Tapatio

El Son de la Negra ("The Sound/Tune of the Black Woman") is commonly referred to as the "second national anthem of Mexico." This popular 1940 song, written in the Mariachi style, is by Blas Galindo Dimas (1910-1993), an important and celebrated Mexican composer.

Las Chiapanecas (or "The Mexican Clapping Song"): In the Mexican province of Chiapas, between the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and Guatemala, lives a proud and independent people whose vitality motivates the traditional "Las Chiapanecas." This is a piece you'll certainly recognize.

Sobre las Olas ("Over the Waves") is one of the most well-known waltzes and Latin American songs ever written. It was written by **Juventino Rosas** (1868-1894), a Mexican violin player and composer, when he was only 20 years old. It is so well-known that it is sometimes attributed to the Austrian "Waltz King," Johann Strauss. There is a film about Rosas called *Sobre las Olas*.

La Cucaracha ("The Cockroach") is a traditional Spanish **folk song** with many different lyrics. Because it is so old and has been sung for many generations, it is impossible to tell who first wrote the tune. It was made popular during the Mexican revolution, when the lyrics were changed to reflect anti-Spanish sentiment.

"**Procesión**" ("Procession") is a movement of the work *Days of the Dead*, a ballet in two acts by Eugenio Toussaint and commissioned by Ballet Arizona. It was premiered November 1, 1997 by the Phoenix Symphony and Ballet Arizona. The piece tells the story of the Ateaga family, who is forced to cross the border to the United States. The first act is set in Mexico, while the second act is set in the United States.

"**Le jardin féérique**" ("The Fairy Garden") by Maurice Ravel is a movement from a larger work called *Ma mère l'oye* ("Mother Goose"). It was originally written as a piano duet, but Ravel **orchestrated** (or reworked the piece for orchestra) it in 1911. The orchestra version will be played at the concert.

El Sombrero de Tres Picos (or “The Three-Cornered Hat”) is a famous ballet by Manuel de Falla. The music is based on Andalusian (in Spain) folk songs and has become an audience favorite at orchestra concerts all over the world. Interestingly, the abstract painter Pablo Picasso actually designed the sets and costumes.

Jarabe Tapatío (or the “Mexican Hat Dance”) is type of Mexican folk dance called the **jarabe**. **Tapatío** is the nickname of the people in Guadalajara, Mexico. It was banned by Spanish authorities in Mexico during the 1800s because of its symbolic challenge to Spanish rule (and the risqué nature of the dance). Today, it is representative of Mexican culture and dance.

FEATURED PERFORMERS

Ballet Folklorico

Mexican Folklore Dance Ballet "Ollin Yoliztli" was founded in 1995 by professor and director Ana Bonilla Moreno. She is a graduate of one of Mexico's most prestigious dance academies, the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (INBA). During her career in Mexico, she also held the position of professional dance instructor at El Centro Cultural Ollin Yoliztli.



Puppets Amongus

Puppets Amongus revives the ancient art of story telling with hand sculpted puppets, humor and song. Based out of Tucson, they present puppet shows, parades, and improvised street theatre inspired by traditional folklore from around the world.

Matt Cotten is the Artistic Director of Puppets Amongus. He writes, fabricates and performs the presentations. He is also a painter, and for 17 years he taught painting and drawing at the University of Arizona. Sarah Cotten is an artist, holistic health coach and yoga instructor. She is also the Marketing Manager of Puppets Amongus.

WHAT IS DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS?

Día de los Muertos translated means “Day of the Dead.” It sounds scary, but this holiday is filled with wonderful and happy celebrations and traditions. In Mexico and all over the world, Día de los Muertos is both a time to remember those who have passed on and also a time to **celebrate life**.



ORIGINS

The origins of Día de los Muertos can be traced back 3,000 years to an Aztec festival that was celebrated during the entire 9th month of the Aztec calendar. When Spanish Conquistadores arrived in modern-day Mexico, they tried to stop the celebration by moving the date to coincide with two holidays at the beginning of November: All Saint’s Day and All Soul’s Day. Over time, parts of both traditions blended together to become what we call Day of the Dead. Though it is around the same time as Halloween, Día de los Muertos is a different celebration entirely.



TRADITIONS

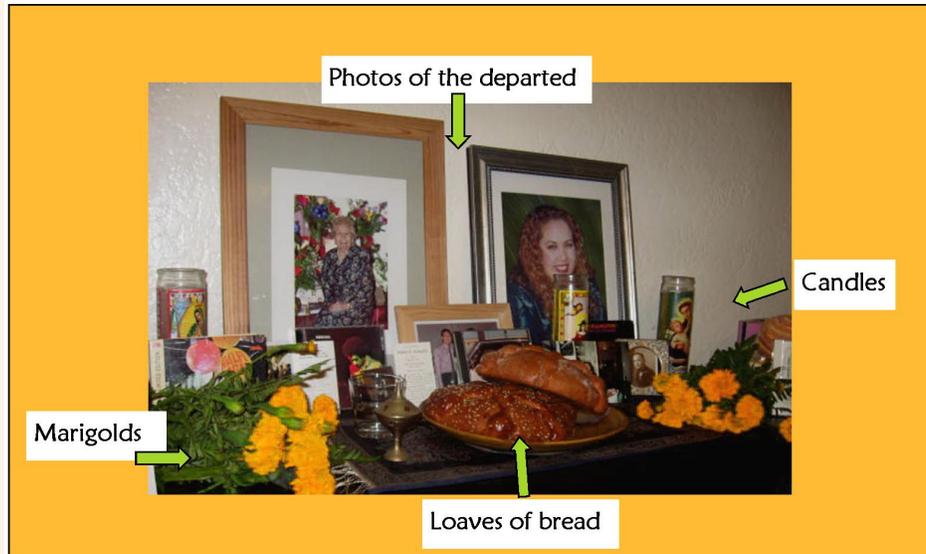
On Día de los Muertos, family members spend the day remembering their loved ones. Some people tell funny stories, while others decorate graves with beautiful flowers, or with the favorite foods of their loved ones. There is music and dancing as well as candlelight vigils and **processions** (parades) honoring those that have passed on.

On Día de los Muertos, relatives put ***ofrendas***, or offerings, by the graves of their loved ones. These *ofrendas* include favorite dishes of deceased relatives, so that they can enjoy their old favorites in the afterlife. Some families spend their entire day at the cemetery, where they have picnics and decorate the graves of their loved ones. One of the most popular ways they do this is by placing orange Mexican marigolds, also called *Flor de Muerto* (Flower of the Dead), on the graves.



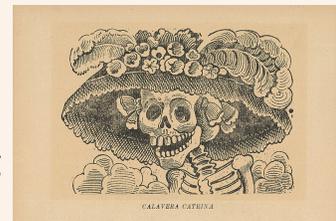
In addition to going to the cemetery, others spend time at home making an altar or shrine to their loved ones. Altars might include pictures, *ofrendas* or candles. Depending on what part of Mexico you're in, you might see other celebrations with special tamales or midnight boat rides. There are numerous ways to celebrate Dia de los Muertos.

Home Altar



SKULLS

One of the most memorable icons of Día de los Muertos is the calavera (skull). Though it may sound a little scary, these skulls come from an early 1900s drawing by the artist José Guadalupe Posada. They were originally meant to poke fun at the upper class. Posada called his drawing *Catrina*, and to this day, the female skeleton named Catrina is a huge part of the festivities.



Calaveras are possibly the most popular symbol of Day of the Dead. People create skeleton masks and costumes to celebrate this symbol, but they also create tasty treats called sugar skulls, which are essentially lollipops in the shape of a skull.

Remember, Día de los Muertos is meant to be a happy time, when we can remember those who have passed on by celebrating life!

MUSICAL STYLES AND PEOPLE



INTRODUCTION TO MEXICAN FOLK MUSIC

There is no perfect way to define folk music; the term comes from the German expression *volk*, which essentially means “the people as a whole.” So, folk music can be thought of as music for everyone. Often, folk music is played and passed down not by professional musicians but by the general public, and it is closely connected to a community’s history. Folk music is not written down; it is taught by one person to another through observing and imitation, which leads to regional variations and traditions.

The folk music of Mexico is no exception; from *banda* and *conjunto norteco* to *marimba* and *mariachi* groups, traditional Mexican folk music includes a wide variety of instruments and styles. Many of these styles have blended together depending on the area of Mexico they are located in. Let’s examine a type of Mexican music called **Mariachi**.

MARIACHI

Mariachi is a type of folk music from Mexico and probably the most well-known type of Mexican music in the United States. **Mariachi is the name of the group, the musicians and the kind of music they play.** A mariachi group is a blend of indigenous (pre-Spanish) music and instruments and Spanish influence. The resulting group has trumpets, violins, guitarrón, vihuela, guitar and, occasionally, a harp.

In particular, mariachi music developed from the *son*, a type of folk music that had many regional styles during the colonial period. Over time, several other types of music were included in the mariachi repertoire, so that, today, we have a blend of several styles. Mariachi music is a wonderful example of folk music because it evolved over time; older mariachi music would sound very different from what is played today.

LA CUCARACHA

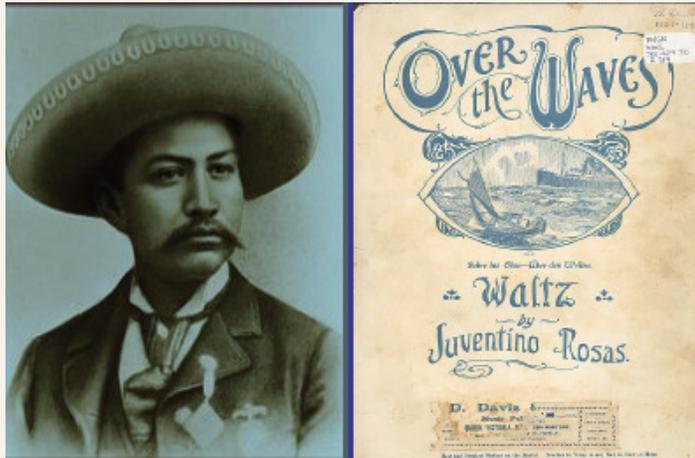
“La Cucaracha,” which means “the cockroach,” is a very old and popular traditional folk song of Spanish origin. During the Mexican Revolution, it was used by the common people to reference the revolution and war. Folk songs were a popular way of spreading ideas or news before radio or the internet.

The song, like many other folk songs, has several different versions. Who actually wrote the original version or what the original version sounded like is unknown. Depending on their need, people used the tune and substituted the words they needed to illustrate their point. Therefore, many, many versions of *La Cucaracha* exist today, just as with other traditional folk songs, like Yankee Doodle.

FOCUS ON A COMPOSER: JUVENTINO ROSAS

Juventino Rosas was a Mexican composer born on January 25, 1868 in Santa Cruz, Mexico. In his youth, he began playing violin in a street band in Mexico City, eventually joining the *Conservatorio Nacional de Música de México* (National Conservatory of Music of Mexico). After school, Rosas joined a military band and eventually joined a professional orchestra, which toured around the world. He even played at the World’s Fair in Chicago in 1893.

The next year, Rosas left for a tour of Cuba, but would never return to Mexico. He fell very ill and, at the age of 26, he died in Cuba. Rosas is best remembered as the Mexican **waltz** king. A waltz is the name of a dance and a type of music that has three main steps (which is in $\frac{3}{4}$ time and can be counted in “three”). He was so good at writing waltzes that his most famous waltz, *Sobre las Olas* (On the Waves), has been attributed to the Austrian composer Johann Strauss, known as the “Waltz King of Europe.” *Sobre las Olas* is one of the most well-known waltzes ever written.



Juventino Rosas is so revered by the country of Mexico that they made a movie about him, called *Sobre las Olas*, and even renamed his hometown of Santa Cruz, changing the name to Santa Cruz de Juventino Rosas.

ASSESSMENT TOOLS: PRE CONCERT QUIZ

Name: _____

- When should you **clap** at the concert?
A) Whenever you feel happy
B) When the conductor drops his hands and steps off the podium
C) Not until the end of the concert
D) The entire time
- How do you know when the concert is about to **start**?
A) The ushers start yelling
B) The lights dim
C) Everyone opens their candy wrappers
D) The musicians retie their bowties
- The resident **conductor** for the Phoenix Symphony is in charge of _____.
A) Education and Family concerts
B) Rock concerts
C) Making school reservations
D) Seating audience members
- A conductor's **job** is to _____.
A) Rehearse the musicians only
B) Lead the orchestra with cues only
C) Select music only
D) All of the above
- The **mood** of the music refers to _____.
A) The title of the piece
B) How the music makes you feel
C) Getting a good seat
D) The sound a cow makes
- You should use the **restroom** _____.
A) Before the concert begins
B) Frequently throughout the concert
C) Every time the orchestra plays a new piece
D) Never
- Mariachi bands play which **instruments**?
A) Flute, cello, bass and drums
B) Several marimbas
C) Trumpets, violin, guitarrón, vihuela and harp
D) Oboe, clarinet, bassoon and contrabassoon
- Who **wrote** "Sobre las Olas"?
A) Alan Tomasetti
B) Hernán Cortés
C) Juventino Rosas
D) Blas Galindo Dimas
- How many **instrument families** are in the orchestra?
A) 1
B) 2
C) 3
D) 4
- What instrument does the **concertmaster** play?
A) Timpani
B) Violin
C) Cello
D) Oboe

1) B; 2) B; 3) A; 4) D; 5) B; 6) A; 7) C; 8) C; 9) D; 10) B

ASSESSMENT TOOLS: POST CONCERT QUIZ

Name: _____

- What is the best way to be **polite** at the symphony?
A) By listening quietly and applauding when necessary
B) By getting up and leaving frequently
C) By touching or playing with your neighbor
D) By talking, eating or chewing gum
- How do you know when the concert is about to **start**?
A) The ushers start yelling
B) The lights dim
C) Everyone opens their candy wrappers
D) The musicians retie their bowties
- The resident **conductor** for the Phoenix Symphony is _____.
A) James Levine B) Kim Leavitt C) Leopold Stokowski D) Joseph Young
- A conductor's **cues** tell the musicians what?
A) How fast or loud to play
B) How they get to Symphony Hall
C) How good or bad they're going
D) Where to sit
- The **mood** of the music refers to _____.
A) The title of the piece
B) How the music makes you feel
C) Getting a good seat
D) The sound a cow makes
- Dia de los Muertos is most frequently **symbolized** by:
A) *Calaveras*, or skulls
B) Ghosts
C) Parrots
D) Tortillas
- Mariachi bands** play which instruments?
A) Flute, cello, bass and drums
B) Several marimbas
C) Trumpets, violin, guitarrón, vihuela and harp
D) Oboe, clarinet, bassoon and contrabassoon
- A **composer**, like Juventino Rosas, does what?
A) Shows you your seat
B) Warms up the orchestra
C) Writes music for the orchestra to play
D) Manages the stage
- An **instrument family** is what?
A) A similar group of instruments
B) Siblings playing the same instrument
C) The orchestra
D) The musicians of the orchestra
- Who **tunes** the orchestra?
A) the timpanist
B) Jordan Drum
C) the conductor
D) the concertmaster

1) A; 2) B; 3) D; 4) A; 5) B; 6) A; 7) C; 8) C; 9) A; 10) D

ASSESSMENT TOOLS: WRITING PROMPTS

Name: _____

Post-Concert Reflection

What are the different ways that Latin American countries celebrate Día de los Muertos?

What are some of the differences between Halloween and Día de los Muertos?

ASSESSMENT TOOLS: FOLK MUSIC QUIZ

Name: _____

1. **Juventino Rosas** was known as the _____.
a) King of Rock b) Mexican Waltz King c) European Waltz King d) King of England
2. *Sobre las Olas* **translates** to what in English?
a) Hat of Olas b) King of the Ocean c) Under the Sea d) On the Waves
3. Juventino Rosas was born in the **town** of _____, which renamed itself after him.
a) Santa Cruz b) Veracruz c) Los Angeles d) El Paso
4. A **waltz** is a type of music and dance with ____ steps.
a) Big b) Three c) Four d) Five
5. **Folk music** is . . . ?
a) composed by professional musicians b) only recorded c) learned by imitation and observation
6. A **type** of folk music in Mexico is:
a) rock-n-roll b) mariachi c) baroque d) avante garde
7. Folk music can **include**:
a) singing, dancing & playing instruments b) singing only c) dancing only d) visual art
8. *La cucaracha* **translates** to:
a) poem b) cockroach c) mariachi d) folk song
9. “La Cucaracha” is **about**:
a) a girl b) an insect c) revolution & war d) food

1) B; 2) D; 3) A; 4) B; 5) C; 6) B; 7) A; 8) B; 9) C

LESSON PLANS

Lesson: Classifying Mariachi Instruments (Science and/or General Music) Suggested Level: K-3

Time:

40 minutes

Standards:

Arizona Music Standard(s)

Strand 3, Concept 1 (K-3): Name, identify, classify and categorize a variety of instruments.

Arizona Science Standard(s)

Strand 1, Concept 1 (K-3): Observe, ask questions and make predictions.

Strand 5, Concept 1 (K-4): Classify objects and materials by their observable properties.

Objectives:

TSW understand the scientific process of classification through instrument families.

Materials:

-Various Mariachi instruments (guitarrón, vihuela, guitar, trumpet)

-If actual instruments are unavailable, use

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NWSWg7c0Ec>

or

<http://www.folkways.si.edu/flash/mariachi.html> and click on “instruments.”

Procedure:

Mariachi bands have a rather standard instrumentation (guitarrón, a deep bass guitar; vihuela, a small Mexican guitar; a standard classical guitar; violins; and trumpets). As this lesson deals with instrument classification, it would be ideal to have at least one string instrument (violin) and one brass instrument (trumpet). This lesson would work well as a follow up to an introduction on organism classification.

A. Introduction

- a. Review the term “classification” as it relates to living organisms
- b. Review criteria for organic classification.
- c. Emphasize classification in terms of the “anatomy” and “behavior” of an organism.

B. Development

- a. Explore idea of “family,” both in society and music (link to the idea of shared traits)
- b. Facilitate guided questioning around “anatomy” and “behavior” as it applies to musical instruments

C. Practice

- a. TSW apply knowledge of classification to make predictions about instrument family classification related to anatomy and behavior.
- b. After making predictions, students use their five senses (minus taste) to define characteristics of each of the instruments, and, by association, characteristics of their instrument families. Concentrate on “anatomy” (what the instruments are made of, what physical characteristics are evident) and “behavior” (in this case, how they make sound).
- c. Compare student predictions to the conclusions they reached concerning the instruments.
- d. Compare and contrast “anatomy” and “behavior” of the brass and string families as a class (using pre-made Venn diagrams for anatomy and behavior or a large chart displayed on the board to be completed as a class).

D. Differentiated Instruction

- a. Provide extra time for students to handle and observe instruments up close and formulate responses.
- b. If possible, allow students to utilize technology skills to expand their knowledge of individual instrument properties. Students can discover additional information not discussed in class by using the website www.sfskids.org/templates/instorchframe.asp?pageid=3

E. Checking for Understanding

- a. Use transitions to continually reinforce “anatomy” and “behavior” so that students are relating classification techniques to those concepts
- b. Use guided questioning to measure individual student comprehension
- c. Use pre-/post-quizzes

F. Closure

- a. Lead students back to beginning by asking for definition of “classification,” “anatomy,” “behavior” and “family.”
- b. Lead students in articulating how the terms “anatomy” and “behavior” can help in classifying musical instrument families
- c. Lead students in summarizing the major qualities that define each instrument family

Lesson: Evolution of the Mariachi Band (Social Studies) Suggested Level: 2-6

Time:

40 minutes

Standards:

Arizona Music Standards

Strand 2, Concept 1, PO 1 (Grades 4-5): Identify the use/function of music from various cultures correlating to grade level social studies curriculum.

Strand 2, Concept 1 (Grades K-6): Understand music in relation to history and culture (identifying/describing the origins and developments of instruments; comparing and contrasting the influences of music in various cultures, etc.).

Arizona Social Studies Standards

Strand 1, Concept 2 (K-6): Recognize the Native American are the original inhabitants of North America and describe their culture and contributions Describe their cultures and contributions (e.g., Ancestral Puebloans (Anasazi), Hohokam, Aztec, Mayan).

Strand 1, Concept 3 (K-5): Describe the interaction of Native Americans with the Spanish (e.g., arrival of Columbus, settlement of St. Augustine, exploration of the Southwest, exchange of ideas, culture and goods). Describe the impact of Spanish colonization.

Strand 2, Concept 5 (K-6): Describe the effects and impact of European Exploration, trade and colonization on other parts of the world.

Objectives:

TSW understand the influence Spanish colonizers had on music of indigenous people.
TSW understand how cultures often blend to create something new.

Materials:

-Recording or video of Native American music. Ideally, find a recording of a local tribe on YouTube or TeacherTube. We recommend this recording (available for download): http://www.amazon.com/Sacred-Spirit-Chants-Dances-Americans/dp/B000009CIO/ref=sr_1_1?s=music&ie=UTF8&qid=1344534544&sr=1-1&keywords=Sacred+Spirit%3A+Chants+and+Dances+of+the+Native+Americans

-Recording or video of contemporary Mariachi music. We recommend Mariachi Vargas: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjJDv1leF8I>

-Musical instrument examples from each (Native American flute; guitarrón or trumpet) or the following websites:

Indigenous: <http://orgs.usd.edu/nmm/AmericanIndigenous/Checklist.html>

Spanish guitars: http://gamutmusic.squarespace.com/spanish-guitar_gallery/

Trumpets and violins: <http://www.wannaplaymusic.com/get-started>

Prerequisites:

This lesson would work well as part of a unit on European colonial history (within the discussion of Christopher Columbus, Hernán Cortés and Francisco Pizarro). Review any necessary ideas about colonialism before beginning the lesson.

Method:

Begin by describing how Spanish colonizers, in addition to technology, customs, disease, etc., also took their instruments with them to the New World. Hernan Cortés and the conquistadors landed in the spot now called Veracruz City in 1519. It was the site of most Spanish immigration into Mexico, and is the oldest city in Mexico. To illustrate what music was like before the arrival of Cortés, play the Native American music, followed by a discussion about the music (especially instruments used); next, to illustrate how the music evolved into its present-day form, play the Mariachi music example, again followed by a discussion (draw attention to the instruments used).

During the discussion, use a chart to highlight the instrumental differences between Native American and Mariachi music. Introduce the idea that, after Spanish colonization of present-day Mexico in the 16th and 17th centuries, musical instruments brought by the Spanish were mixed with musical ideas from native populations and African musical traditions. "**Jarocho**," a term used for the music and people of Veracruz, emerged as a mix between Spanish, Indigenous, and African music and dance. Stringed instruments introduced by the Spanish in the 16th century (violin, harp and various guitar-types) became the traditional band, and for the next 300 years natives and **Mestizos** (those of mixed decent) learned to build these instruments and developed their own regional stringed instruments based loosely on the European models.

This is illustrated by:

- the introduction of string instruments and, later, brass instruments to Mexico by Spain
- the stomping accompaniment in present-day mariachi music (which comes from the indigenous culture of ceremonial marches)

From these traditional bands, the mariachi band developed. To solidify the idea of a blending of cultures through music, present the class with a typical guitar and compare it to a guitarrón or vihuela (or use the online resource noted earlier in this lesson). Have them describe the differences (amount of strings, body size, string material, etc.). Let them know that native musicians made important changes to their construction (by subtracting strings and deepening the bodies of the instruments).

Venn diagrams (with one heading indicating “Pre-Spanish music” and another indicating “Post-Spanish Arrival music”) could also be used to help students compare and contrast.

Lesson: “Procesión” Music Review (Writing, General Music) Suggested Level: Grades 4-6

Time:

30 minutes and up

Standards:

Arizona Music Standard(s)

Strand 2, Concept 1, PO 4 (K-6): Explore and analyze the relationship of music to language arts, visual arts and literature.

Strand 2, Concept 3, PO 1 (4-5): Describe, reflect on, and discuss the roles and impact music plays in their lives and the lives of others.

Strand 2, Concept 3, PO 2 (4-6): Distinguish music preferences from music judgments from cultural judgments.

Strand 3, Concept 2, PO 1 (5-6): Create and apply established criteria (e.g., **dynamics**) to evaluate performances and compositions.

Common Core Writing Standard(s)

Text Types and Purposes (3-5): 1. Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.

Common Core Speaking and Listening Standard(s)

Comprehension and Collaboration (3-5): 1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on appropriate topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Materials:

-A copy of “Procesión” from the ballet *Days of the Dead* by Toussaint, which can be found here: www.classicalarchives.com/work/421964.html (scroll to “Procesión”).

-Writing or typing materials

Objectives:

TSW write concise musical critiques from the perspective of a newspaper music critic.

TSW grasp the cultural importance of Day of the Dead, as well as how the piece *Days of the Dead* came to fruition.

Procedure:

This exercise is intended for older grades and, depending on which prompts are selected, it can cover several music and writing standards. Students will be acting as Classical Music Critics and will write reviews of a piece commissioned by Ballet Arizona called *Days of the Dead*. First, play the piece for them. Then, ask them to write about the following (from the viewpoint of a music critic attending a concert premiere):

Do you enjoy this music? Why or why not? (“I liked it” isn’t enough for a newspaper music review; describe what specific elements they liked or didn’t like with musical concepts and terms, like **tempo**, **rhythm**, **dynamics**, instrumentation, length, etc., found in our Elements of Music guide at <http://www.phoenixsymphony.org/uploads/Elements%20of%20Music.pdf>)

Next, relate the following background program behind the music to the students:

Days of the Dead is a ballet in 2 acts and 15 scenes, commissioned by Ballet Arizona. It premiered November 1, 1997 at Sundome Phoenix by the Phoenix Symphony and Ballet Arizona, conducted by Jesús Medina (a CD recording of the work is available).

In 1993, choreographer American Michael Uthoff, director of Ballet Arizona, came to Mexico with the idea of a Day of the Dead ballet. During his visit, Uthoff met Mexican composer Eugenio Toussaint, whose work made him an ideal candidate for composing music for the ballet.

Toussaint was given the task of composing the music, taking in the fact that the first act occurs on the Mexican side of the border, while the second act happens on the northern side. Thus, the music of the first act has a series of stylized sound touches that make it identifiable as Mexican. By contrast, the second act is fundamentally based on binary (divisible by two) rhythms. While the first act has close links with various Mexican popular music genres, the second is more harmonically more akin to jazz and rock, with some unexpected touches of rap here and there.

Plot Summary

The libretto for *Days of the Dead* tells the story of Arteaga family, originating in Xochiltepec, who like so many other families are forced to undertake the painful journey to the other side of the border to search for bread. They target a site called Avongate, where they have relatives that have made the journey before. During the trip, the Arteagas encounter spirits of the dead.

If possible, play the “Procesión” again or, if there’s time, a movement from the first act and another movement from the second act. After they have heard the program, have them reflect on their review by answering one or more of the following questions:

Does understanding the story change your perception of the music?

Do you like it more or less after hearing the story?

Why did the composer write the music?

What does the music tell us about different cultures in Mexico and Arizona?

Conclude by discussing the various opinions around the “newsroom.” Outstanding music critiques can be posted on a wall or printed in a school newspaper.

Lesson: Language of “La Cucaracha” (General Music, Social Studies) Suggested Level: Grades 3-6

Time:

40 minutes

Standards:

Arizona Music Standard(s)

Strand 2, Concept 1, PO 1 (4-6): Identify the use/function of music from various cultures correlating to grade level social studies curriculum.

Strand 2, Concept 2, PO 1 (K-5): Recognize various uses of music in daily experiences; describe the historical context and/or influence of music on daily life, culture, politics, etc.

Strand 2, Concept 1, PO 4 (1-6): Describe the roles and impact music plays in their lives and the lives of others.

Arizona Social Studies Standards

Strand 3, Concept 4, PO 1 (1): Identify examples of responsible citizenship in stories about the past and present.

Strand 3, Concept 4, PO 3 (4): Describe the importance of citizens being actively involved in the democratic process.

Objectives:

Students will understand alternative reasons for composing music.

Students will create their own lyrics to “La Cucaracha.”

Students will grasp the importance of music as a protest.

Materials:

-Recording of “La Cucaracha” (available on YouTube or other online video source)

-Writing materials

Prerequisites:

Students should have some background in Mexican folk music, especially information offered in this packet concerning “La Cucaracha,” which served as an important protest song during the Mexican Revolution. This lesson would work well during a social studies unit examining revolution or protest, whether French, American or Mexican.

Methodology:

Students divide into small groups and brainstorm past or present social issues they feel are a concern. Depending on the age-level and corresponding social studies curriculum, this could be adjusted for appropriateness or the teacher could assign topics; these topics and issues do not have to be inherently Mexican or Hispanic. Some examples:

- The migrant farm worker in the United States (corresponding with The Grapes of Wrath)
- Taxation without representation during the American revolution
- Civil rights protest songs in the 1960s

Students should then write their own lyrics to the tune of the **chorus** of “La Cucaracha.” Ideally, the 2nd and 4th lines should rhyme, and the **rhythm** (or the flow of the words) should match that of “La Cucaracha” (listen to a recording to get an idea). The lyrics should draw attention to an issue and provide solutions.

Students then present their issues and songs to the class. If possible, type up or make available the lyrics for each group’s rendition so that the entire class can participate. Teachers could require older students to hide the true meaning of their lyrics through symbolism; the Mexican Revolution version made fun of the president at the time (the “cockroach”). Notice how the second and fourth lines of the Spanish version rhyme:

*La cucaracha, la cucaracha
ya no puede caminar
porque no tiene, porque le falta
limonada para tomar.*

The cockroach, the cockroach
Can’t travel anymore
Because he lacks, because he has no
Lemonade to drink.

(An example of a possible student version)

We want more solar, we want more wind power,
Just to save our precious Earth.
All the pollution and all the poison
One day will destroy Her.

Students may create two or three versions of the chorus in order to make the song longer.

Assessment:

Students should be graded on the quality and cleverness of their composition, as well as the worthiness of their chosen social issue. Students can also write post-activity reflections (like the one below) to examine how their song would or would not make an impact on society.

Post-Activity Reflection

What social issue did you hope to draw attention to, and how might this new song might have an impact or bring social change to your issue?

Which lines in particular draw attention to the societal injustice you’re concerned with?

APPENDIX: WEB RESOURCES

Power points for Day of the Dead:

<http://holidays.mrdonn.org/powerpoints/dayofthedead.html>

AZCentral.com packet for Day of the Dead

This is an incredible thematic unit with pictures and lesson plans:

www.azcentral.com/ent/dead/teachers/teacherpacket_edited.pdf

Smithsonian site on Day of the Dead:

<http://latino.si.edu/dayofthedead/>

Mexican folk music:

<http://mexico.pppst.com/art.html>

Mariachi Music Online:

<http://www.mariachimusic.com/>

A biography of Eugenio Toussaint:

www.eugeniotoussaint.com/biography/bio_eng.htm

A biography of Juventino Rosas;

www.johann-strauss.org.uk/composers-n-z.php?id=187